

# **Original article:** Variations in Root and Canal Morphology of Maxillary Premolars: A Cross-Sectional Study in Rasht, Iran

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# ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Anatomical variations are common and can significantly impact treatment outcomes. This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of root and canal configurations in maxillary premolars and their association with age, gender, and jaw side in a specific Iranian population.

Materials and Methods: A retrospective analytical cross-sectional study analyzed CBCT images of maxillary premolars from patients treated at oral and maxillofacial radiology clinics in Rasht City, Iran, between 2021 and 2022. The number of roots and canal configurations (based on Vertucci's classification) was recorded. Statistical analysis assessed associations between these variables and age, gender, and jaw side ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

Results: A total of 1,732 maxillary premolars (924 first premolars, 808 second premolars) from 759 CBCT scans were analyzed. Maxillary first premolars showed a nearly equal distribution of single-rooted (46.1%) and double-rooted (52.9%) teeth, while maxillary second premolars were predominantly single-rooted (91.1%). Vertucci types II and IV were most frequent in single-rooted maxillary first premolars, while type I predominated in second premolars. Gender significantly influenced morphology, with males having more double-rooted teeth (P < 0.001) and complex canal types (P = 0.031). Age was associated with canal configuration (P = 0.001), showing increased type II prevalence in older patients. No significant differences were found with the jaw side (P > 0.05).

**Conclusions:** This study provides valuable data on the root and canal morphology of maxillary premolars in a specific Iranian population. The findings highlight significant morphological variations related to tooth type, gender, and age affecting endodontic treatment planning.

#### 1. Introduction

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uccessful root canal therapy (RCT) relies on complete debridement, shaping, and sealing of the entire root canal system (1). Which completely depends on a deep understanding of the anatomy of the roots

and root canals (2). The anatomy of the root canal is often complex and can range from straight to curved canals, varying from simple to more intricate configurations, also with a wide variety of accessory canals and differences in the structure of the apical foramen (3). Inadequate knowledge of root anatomy can compromise treatment

outcomes and lead to difficulties in diagnosis, treatment planning, and selecting the right techniques (4).

Significant variations in root canal anatomy arise from a complex interplay of race, genetics, geographic location, gender, and age (5,6). Racial and ethnic background plays a major role, and populations from different geographic regions often display distinct prevalences of root and canal configurations, even within the same tooth type (7,8).

The wide variation in root canal configurations makes the maxillary premolars one of the most challenging teeth for

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endodontic treatment compared to other teeth (9,10). The first premolars of the maxilla usually have two roots (buccal and palatal), while the second premolars are commonly single-rooted. However, variations occur, including premolars with additional roots and canals (11). It is important for clinicians to be aware of these teeth when endodontic treatments are being carried out (12).

The dental operating microscope and radiographic imaging techniques are the two primary tools used for evaluating root canal anatomy (13). The crucial role of radiography in determining root canal length has been well established (14). Later in 1996, the maxillofacial cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) introduced as a 3D imaging method (15). CBCT's costeffectiveness, reduced radiation exposure, resolution, and rapid scan time have led to its widespread adoption in various dental specialties, including endodontics (16,17). A classification system developed by Vertucci in 1984 categorizes the system of root canals into eight types, ranging from simple single canals to more complex configurations (18).

Numerous studies have explored the root and root canal morphology of maxillary premolars across diverse populations, employing classification systems categorize canal configurations. These investigations consistently reveal significant anatomical variations related to root number, canal complexity, and accessory structures, with notable differences influenced by population, sex, and age (6,7,19-26), but they commonly faced limitations such as focusing on narrow or restricted age ranges, limiting comprehensive coverage of adult populations (26), small sample sizes, limiting statistical power, and generalizability (19,22,24), an investigation lacked strict exclusion criteria regarding restored, resorbed, or pathologically altered teeth, potentially confounding morphological assessments Additionally, many studies focus heavily on maxillary first premolars with less emphasis on second premolars (7,21,23). Within Iran, Nikkerdar et al. (27) analyzed a large sample from Western Iran but lacked detailed analyses of tooth side and age groups, which limited the broad application. Asheghi et al. (28) reported gender differences but had a smaller, less regionally diverse sample. Neither study excluded teeth with restorations or pathology, which may influence results (27,28).

This study aimed to determine the frequency of root and canal anatomy types in maxillary premolars using Vertucci's classification, analyzing a large sample via high-resolution CBCT scans. Strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to patients referred to oral and maxillofacial radiology clinics in Rasht City between 2021 and 2022. The influence of age, gender, tooth type,

and jaw side on anatomical variations was also examined. The findings provide valuable insights to improve the accuracy of endodontic diagnosis and treatment planning in this population.

#### 2. Materials and Methods

This retrospective analytical cross-sectional study utilized CBCT images from 759 patients who visited maxillofacial radiology clinics in Rasht City between 2021 and 2022. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Guilan University of Medical Sciences (IR.GUMS.REC.1401.091).

The CBCT images, initially obtained for implant treatment planning, prosthetics, orthodontic surgery, and endodontic treatments. Using a convenience sampling method, all available images meeting the inclusion criteria during the study period were reviewed. The study sample comprised maxillary first and second premolars extracted from these images. Both right and left maxillary premolars were evaluated.

Sample size calculation was performed using the formula for estimating proportions in cross-sectional studies, based on previously reported prevalence of root canal configuration types (28). Assuming a confidence level of 95% (Z = 1.96) and a margin of error (d) of 0.023, the calculated minimum sample size was 1,732 maxillary premolars. Considering image availability and the applied exclusion criteria, a total of 759 patients were included in this study. Among them, 175 patients had three maxillary premolars, 214 patients had two premolars, and 253 patients had only one premolar available for evaluation. In total, 1,732 maxillary premolars were assessed using high-resolution CBCT scans according to the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. This ensured adequate statistical power and precision for estimating anatomical prevalence.

The inclusion criteria for this study encompassed patients aged between 16 and 60 years to cover a broad adult population with fully developed roots while minimizing age-related morphological changes. Only maxillary premolars with intact root morphology, exhibiting complete root formation and no history of root canal treatment, were included. Teeth that had any restorations, including fillings or crowns, regardless of their size or material, and Teeth with posts placed inside the canals were excluded to avoid any alterations in root canal anatomy. Additionally, teeth showing evidence of external or internal root resorption, periapical lesions, and root canal calcifications were excluded. any teeth with poor image



quality or artifacts that impaired the accurate evaluation of morphology were excluded (28,29).

All CBCT images were acquired using a Newtom Go device (settings: 90 kV, 15 mA, 100 x 100 mm maximum FOV, 80 µm voxel size) and evaluated using NNT Viewer software. All image assessments were conducted by a trained dental student under the supervision of an experienced oral and maxillofacial radiologist with over five years of clinical experience. To ensure reliability and accuracy of the observations, all CBCT images were independently re-evaluated by an experienced endodontist, and any discrepancies were resolved by consensus. Image analysis was performed in person using the NNT Viewer software. All observers involved in image evaluation were blinded to the patients' demographic details (age, gender, side) to minimize assessment bias. The evaluation focused on maxillary premolars to determine root number, canal count, and canal morphology. Primary assessment was conducted on axial CBCT slices progressing from the floor of the pulp chamber to the root apex. Coronal and sagittal planes were also reviewed to assist in accurate diagnosis. Teeth were divided into single-rooted, two-rooted, and threerooted based on the number of roots. Based on the Vertucci classification, the canal morphology was divided into Vertucci types I to VIII (30).

After collecting data based on the research checklist, the data were entered into IBM SPSS v26. To determine the frequency of the root anatomy and canal morphology of the examined teeth, frequency, percentage, and 95% confidence intervals were used. The chi-square test was used to compare the frequency of canals based on the

number of roots, tooth type, age, gender, and tooth side. The level of significance of the tests was considered to be 0.05.

#### 3. Results

A total of 1,732 maxillary premolars were analyzed from 759 CBCT images. Maxillary first premolars (n = 924, 53.35%) were slightly more frequent than maxillary second premolars (n = 808, 46.65%). The sample included 774 male and 958 female teeth, with an average patient age of  $36.9 \pm 13.3$  years. Teeth were categorized based on the number of roots (single, double, triple) and canal morphology (Vertucci types I-VIII).

Maxillary first premolars primarily exhibited a single root (46.1%) with Vertucci type II canals. Approximately 52.9% were double-rooted, with both roots displaying Type I canals. Only 1% of teeth presented with three roots, all of which were Type I. Maxillary second premolars were predominantly single-rooted (91.1%), with Vertucci type I canals being the most common. A small proportion (8.8%) had two roots, predominantly with type I canals. A rare finding of a three-rooted second premolar, with all canals classified as Vertucci type I, was observed in a single case (0.1%). Representative CBCT images are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 3 presents a stacked bar chart summarizing the distribution of Vertucci canal types across maxillary first and second premolars. The chart highlights the predominance of Vertucci Type I canals in second premolars, accounting for the majority of configurations, followed by lower frequencies of Types II, III, and IV.

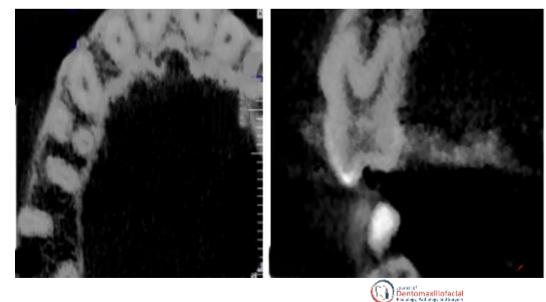


Figure 1. Double-rooted maxillary premolar in CBCT images and in axial (left) and coronal (right) views



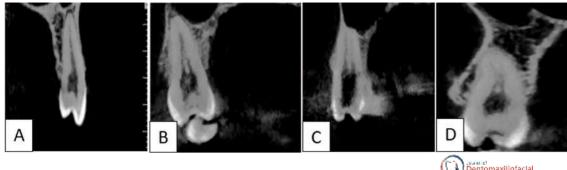


Figure 2. CBCT images of maxillary premolar; A) Type I Vertucci. B) Type II Vertucci. C) Type IV Vertucci. D) Type VI Vertucci

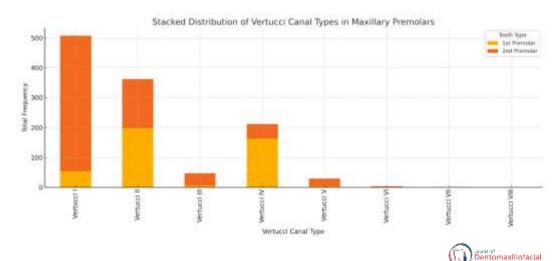


Figure 3. Root canal configuration types of maxillary premolars according to Vertucci classification

Analysis of root numbers revealed a statistically significant difference between genders (P < 0.001). Females showed a significantly higher prevalence of single-rooted teeth (74% vs. 58.6% in males), while males had a higher frequency of double-rooted teeth. No significant differences in root number were observed across age groups (P = 0.453) or between the right and left sides of the jaw (P = 0.599). Table 1 demonstrates the distribution of root numbers by gender, age group, and jaw side, highlighting the significant gender differences and the lack of association with age or side.

Canal morphology analysis revealed a significant association between gender (P=0.031) and age (P=0.001). Specifically, the prevalence of Vertucci type I and IV canals decreased with age, while the frequency of type II canals increased. No significant differences in canal type were observed between jaw sides (P=0.576). Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of Vertucci canal types according to gender, age, and jaw side, illustrating these significant associations.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the number of roots according to gender, age, jaw side

			Number of roots	Total			
Variables		1 N (%)	2 N (%)	3 N (%)	Total N (%)	P-Value <sup>a</sup>	
Gender	Male	454 (58.66)	313 (40.44)	7 (0.90)	774 (44.69)	< 0.001*	
	Female	708 (73.90)	247 (25.78)	3 (0.31)	958 (55.31)		
Age	16-30	350 (65.18)	183 (34.08)	4 (0.74)	537 (31.00)		
	30-50	557 (69.18)	253 (30.34)	4 (0.48)	834 (48.15)	0.453	
	50-60	235 (65.10)	124 (34.35)	2 (0.55)	361 (20.85)		
Jaw side	Right	614 (66.59)	304 (32.97)	4 (0.43)	922 (53.23)	0.599	
	Left	548 (67.65)	256 (31.6)	6 (0.74)	810 (46.77)		

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> chi-square test



<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Indicates statistical significance at p < 0.05".



Table 2. Frequency distribution of the canal type (Vertucci's classification) according to gender, age, jaw side

Variables		N (%)								- v-valueª	
variables	•	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	- p-varue	
Gender	Male	496 (64.1)	171 (22.1)	17 (2.2)	78 (10.1)	9 (1.2)	3 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0.031*	
	Female	581 (60.6)	191 (19.9)	29 (3)	135 (14.1)	20 (2.1)	1(0.1)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)		
Age	16-30	346 (64.4)	86 (16.0)	10 (1.9)	78 (14.5)	16 (3.0)	1 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0.001*	
	30-50	513 (61.5)	182 (21.8)	31 (3.7)	97 (11.6)	9 (1.1)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)		
	50-60	218 (60.4)	94 (26.0)	5 (1.4)	38 (10.5)	4 (1.1)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)		
Jaw side	Right	572 (59.7)	201 (21.8)	20 (2.2)	112 (12.1)	15 (1.6)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	0.576	
	Left	505 (62.3)	161 (19.9)	26 (3.2)	101 (12.5)	14 (1.7)	3 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)		



## 4. Discussion

A comprehensive understanding of root morphology and canal anatomy is a prerequisite for achieving a clean and disinfected root canal during endodontic treatment. Many challenges encountered during root canal therapy can be directly attributed to an inadequate understanding of dental morphology (31). CBCT is one of the methods for evaluating root canal morphology, playing a significant role in endodontic diagnosis, treatment planning, and follow-ups (32).

This study utilized CBCT imaging to investigate the prevalence of root and canal configurations in maxillary premolars within a population of Rasht City, Iran, and to explore the influence of age, gender, and jaw side.

Maxillary first premolars in our sample exhibited a prevalence of single roots (46.1%), closely mirroring findings by Mashyakhy (33), and Al-Zubaidi et al. (2). However, this contrasts with studies reporting higher proportions of single-rooted teeth (9,28,34), potentially reflecting ethnic or geographic variations. The higher prevalence of double-rooted teeth (52.9%) in our cohort aligns with Loh's observations (35). However, it differs from some studies that report a different distribution (2).

For maxillary second premolars, the overwhelming predominance of single roots (91.1%) is consistent with several studies (28,33,36), but other reports show a substantially higher frequency of two-rooted teeth (29,37,38). These discrepancies likely stem from variations in sample populations, methodologies, and potentially genetic influences.

In single-rooted maxillary first premolars, Vertucci types II, IV, and I were most prevalent (46.5%, 38.3%, and 12.7%, respectively), broadly consistent with Asheghi et al. (28), and Popovic et al. (38). Nevertheless, diverging from others shows a higher prevalence of type I (37), or different rank orders (9,39,40). The absence of types VII and VIII mirrors many studies, suggesting these are rare configurations. Double- and triple-rooted teeth predominantly showed type I canals in buccal and palatal

roots, a pattern observed in other studies. In maxillary second premolars, the prevalence of types I, II, and IV in single-rooted teeth was high and aligned with several studies (2,28,37,38,40,41), but not all (42,43). These discrepancies underscore the heterogeneity of canal morphology across diverse populations.

Our findings reveal a statistically significant association between gender, root number, and canal configuration. Males showed a higher prevalence of multiple-rooted teeth and complex canal configurations, while females demonstrated a higher frequency of single-rooted teeth. This is consistent with some studies (44,45), but contrasts with others, who found no gender association (12). This divergence suggests that the influence of gender on root morphology may be population-specific and warrants further investigation.

While the number of roots remained relatively consistent across age groups, a statistically significant age-related variation in Vertucci types emerged. Specifically, a decrease in type I and IV configurations and an increase in type II configurations were observed with advancing age, consistent with some studies (25,46). but not others (29,47). These changes may be attributed to developmental processes, hormonal fluctuations, dietary factors, mechanical stresses, or genetic predispositions, necessitating further research to elucidate the mechanisms fully.

No statistically significant differences were observed in root number or Vertucci-type distribution between the right and left sides of the jaw. This aligns with most studies (12,33,44), suggesting systemic factors may be more influential in determining root canal configurations than local variations. However, this contradicts some findings reporting laterality differences (48), potentially due to population-specific factors.

These findings highlight the critical need for determining root and canal morphology, especially in maxillary premolars, where anatomical variation is common. Awareness of age- and gender-related differences can guide clinicians in anticipating complexity and adapting

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> chi-square test

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Indicates statistical significance at p < 0.05".



treatment plans. For instance, older patients often require more meticulous canal scouting. Additionally, male patients' tendency toward multi-rooted premolars warrants heightened diagnostic scrutiny to prevent missed canals and ensure treatment success.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the retrospective nature of CBCT image selection may introduce sampling bias, as most of the images were obtained initially for clinical purposes unrelated to endodontic evaluation. Second, the study was confined to a single geographic region, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations with different ethnic and genetic backgrounds. Additionally, although CBCT offers high-resolution imaging, the interpretation of canal configurations remains partially operator-dependent and subject to interobserver variability.

Future studies should include larger and more diverse populations across multiple regions to validate and expand upon these findings. Incorporating advanced machine learning algorithms for image analysis could also enhance the objectivity and reproducibility of morphological assessments. Moreover, prospective studies evaluating clinical outcomes about anatomical complexity would further elucidate the clinical relevance of canal morphology variations and support the development of predictive models for treatment planning.

# 5. Conclusions

This cross-sectional analysis offers a comprehensive anatomical assessment of maxillary premolars in an Iranian subpopulation using CBCT imaging. The study confirms substantial morphological variability, with maxillary first premolars exhibiting a nearly equal distribution of single and double roots and maxillary second premolars predominantly presenting a single-rooted configuration. Canal morphology patterns, particularly the predominance of Vertucci types II and IV in first premolars and type I in second premolars, were

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significantly associated with gender and age. These findings underscore the necessity for individualized preoperative assessment to optimize endodontic treatment strategies.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Guilan University of Medical Sciences (Approval code: IR.GUMS.REC.1401.091). Informed consent was obtained from all participants or their legal guardians prior to inclusion in the study.

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#### **Authors' Contributions**

Narges Simdar Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis Farnoosh Khaksari Methodology, Data Curation Sobhan Agheshteh Supervision, Writing-Review and Editing Ali Rahiminezhad Kisomi Investigation, Visualization, Writing-Original draft.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest relevant to this study.

# Availability of data and material

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding authors on reasonable request.

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