

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THE ORAL HEALTH OF THEIR SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT:

Understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of parents towards the oral health of their school-going children is crucial for promoting good oral hygiene habits and preventing dental issues. Oral health is a reflection of general health, and any neglect concerning it will affect the general well-being of an individual. A cross-sectional study was conducted amongst 312 parents who reported to the outpatient Department of Pediatrics and Preventive Dentistry. Data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions about the knowledge, attitude, and practice of parents toward the oral health of their school-going children. Results of the study showed that 32.6% of the total parents had knowledge of the total number of teeth in their children, while very few, that is, 14.1%, were absolutely unaware of it. The majority of the parents knew that milk teeth were important in children and hence should be treated if needed. This present study was designed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice of parents of school-going children toward the oral health of their children in Faridabad. It has been proved in the literature that appropriate behaviors of school-going children can promote health, but they did not develop an awareness of this relationship until the third and fourth grades. We can conclude from the present study that the knowledge of parents regarding the oral health of their children in Faridabad city is relatively good, but in a few aspects, it's been observed that this knowledge is not implemented, and the attitude of the parents toward oral health needs to be improved more.

Keyword : Children, Oral health, Pediatrics, Preventive Dentistry, medicine

1. INTRODUCTION :

Understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of parents towards the oral health of their school-going children is crucial for promoting good oral hygiene habits and preventing dental issues(1). Oral health is a reflection of general health, and any neglect concerning it will affect the general well-being of an individual(2). Children enact the behavioral habits of their parents by observation at home, with parents here acting as the primary models(3). Parental attitude toward their oral health has a direct influence on the dental health of their children as it is an evidence-based fact that the more positive the parent's attitude toward dentistry,(4) the better will be the dental health of their children(3,5). Children facing dental problems are very common these days. In today's millennial era, parents are very concerned about the dental well-being of their children, and these millennial parents prefer to visit a pediatric dentist over a general dentist for the same(5). It has been noticed over the past 50 (4,6) years that there has been an improvement in the oral health of children due to the increased awareness (7) of parents toward dental health(8). In the present times, dental caries is a global health problem and is the primary dental disease in children(9). Prevention of dental caries is an extreme challenge for parents, (10) so increasing parental knowledge and implementing various preventive methods like incorporating healthy eating habits, use of fluoridated toothpaste,(11) monitoring proper tooth brushing, seeking professional care with respect to pit and fissure sealants, fluoride varnishes, etc(12). may lead to decreased dental caries and hence improved health of their children.

This study focuses on the importance of parental knowledge about oral health, their attitude toward it, (6) and how oral health practices are being carried out(13). It has been shown in many studies that parents directly influence the oral health of their children right from their formative years' grade(14). Therefore, in order to advocate healthy oral hygiene habits, there is a need to know about dental knowledge, attitude, and practices (4) of parents toward the oral health of their school-going children. Hence, the present study was conducted.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD :

A cross-sectional study was conducted amongst 312 parents who reported to the outpatient Department of Pediatrics and Preventive Dentistry. Data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions about the knowledge, attitude, and practice of parents toward the oral health of their school-going children. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the institution, and permission to conduct the study was granted by the Department of Pediatric and Preventive Dentistry. Parents' participation in this study was voluntary, free of constraint, and in a fully informed manner. The questionnaire prepared was asked on an interview basis from the parents of children. Parents explained the entire questionnaire in the local language comprehensible to them, and their responses were elicited.

2.1 Statistical Analysis: Data was first entered into the Microsoft Excel sheet using SPSS (version 18) software. As the variance was categorized into nature, thus summarized as absolute and relative frequencies. Inferential statistics were computed using the Chi-squared test. The level of significance was set at 0.05

3. RESULTS :

3.1: FIGURE 1:

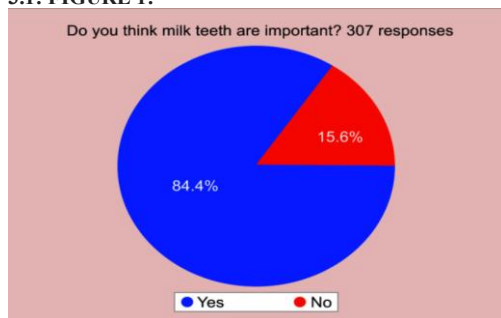


Figure 1 shows that 84.4% believe milk teeth are important and 15.6% do not consider them important.

3.2: FIGURE 2:

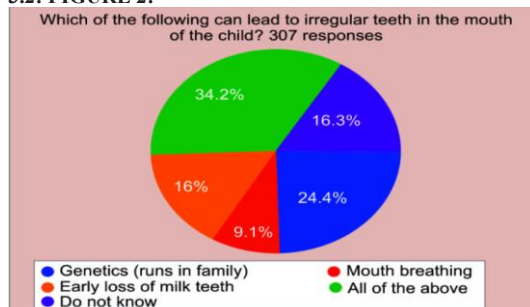


Figure 2 shows that 34.2% correctly identified that all factors (Genetics, Early loss of milk teeth, and Mouth breathing) contribute to irregular teeth, 24.4% attribute it solely to Genetics, 16.3% admit they do not know the cause, 16% believe early loss of milk teeth is the primary cause and 9.1% cite mouth breathing.

3.3: FIGURE 3:

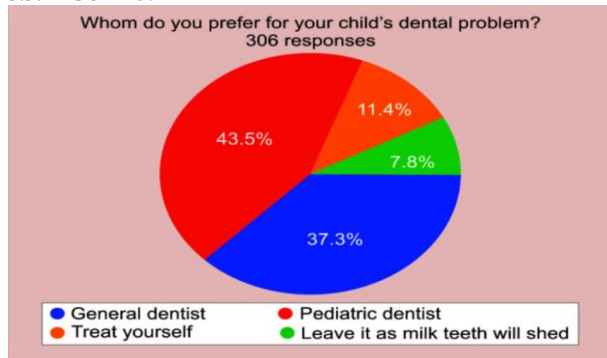


Figure 3 shows that **43.5%** prefer a **Pediatric Dentist**, showing a preference for specialized care, **37.3%** would visit a **General Dentist**, **11.4%** opted to "Treat yourself," which suggests a risk of using unverified home remedies or over-the-counter solutions without professional guidance and **7.8%** would "Leave it," assuming the problem will resolve when the milk teeth shed.

4. DISCUSSION : This present study was designed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice of parents of school-going children toward the oral health of their children(15). It has been proved in the literature that appropriate behaviors of school-going children can promote health, but they did not develop an awareness of this relationship until the third and fourth grades.(16). As it has been shown in Bandura's social cognitive theory,(17) overt behaviors of significant others represent important sources of social influence; hence knowledge, attitude, and practices of parents toward their dental health directly influence their children's attitude toward the maintenance of their oral hygiene(1).

The questionnaire used in the study was prepared with different aspects, parents were asked about the importance of primary teeth, and results showed that a good percentage of parents knew that milk teeth were important(2), while some authors like Ng have reported that certain cultures place little value on primary teeth and that caries and early loss of the primary dentition is an accepted occurrence.(18)Frequently, it has been noticed in pediatric dental practice parents ignore the importance of the primary tooth and its function. They are always in conflict regarding the treatment to save and maintain the milk tooth function.(19). Responses about the child's first dental visit showed that maximum parents had knowledge that the first dental visit of their children should be around the first birthday. According to the latest guidelines given by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, a child's first dental visit should be within the 1st year of life; hence parents are aware of this aspect.

Prenatal counseling of the mother plays a very important role in the maintenance of oral hygiene of the children. According to Furze and Basso, the first dental visit of the mother should be scheduled around the 4th month of pregnancy. During this visit by the expectant mother, the dentist has an opportunity to explain the importance of the dental visit at 6 months of age, educate the mother on the eruption of teeth and preventive procedures, and provide parent counseling.10. Pediatric dentists should emphasize to parents to seek regular preventive oral care for their children along with a routine oral hygiene recommendation.11 Parents should have proper knowledge about the dietary habits of the child; the proper watch has to be there regarding their sugar intake, etc.

5. CONCLUSION :We can conclude from the present study that the knowledge of parents regarding the oral health of their children in Faridabad city is relatively good, but in a few aspects, it's been observed that this knowledge is not implemented, and the attitude of the parents toward oral health needs to be improved more. As pedodontists, we can help to bring this change to the present society by counseling the parents to take appropriate oral hygiene measures, which will help in improving the oral health of their children.

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