



Research Article

AWARENESS ABOUT CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH STATUS AMONG PARENTS - A QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

Sarvesh Kumar, J and Jayalakshmi, S

Saveetha Dental College, 162, P.H Road, Chennai, Tamilnadu 600077

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ABSTRACT

Aim - To do a survey on preventive measures of dental caries

Objective - To know the steps taken by parents to prevent their children from being affected by dental caries

Background - The cause of caries is bacterial break down of the hard tissues of the teeth (enamel, dentin and cementum). This occurs due to acid formed from food debris or sugar on the tooth surface. It is more prevalent among children between the age of 1 - 13

Reason - This survey is conducted to create awareness among people about prevalence of dental caries in children and the steps needed to be taken to prevent them

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INTRODUCTION

Dental caries, also known as tooth decay, is breakdown of tooth surface or tooth structure due to bacterial activity.^[1] It is defined as a post eruptive pathological process of external origin which involves the softening of the hard dental tissues and proceeding to cavity formation. Symptoms may include sensitivity, pain and difficulty in mastication.^{[2][3]} Cavity when left untreated will lead to pulpal and periapical pathology Resulting in functional as well as aesthetic problems. This occurs due to acid made from sugar or food debris on the tooth surface. There is a constant balance between remineralization and demineralization of tooth in the oral cavity, demineralization is due to food and acid activity and remineralization is due to activity of saliva. If there is a shift in balance towards demineralization it will lead to cavity formation. Worldwide, approximately 2.43 billion people (36% of the population) have dental caries in their permanent teeth.^[4] The World Health Organizations (WHO) estimates that nearly all adults have dental caries at some point of time.^[3] In deciduous teeth it affects about 9% of the population or 620 million people.^[5] They have become more common in both children and adults in recent years.^[4] The disease is most common in the developed world and less common in the developing world due to greater simple sugar consumption.^[1]

METHODS

The study was conducted among 600 parents in south Indian population who have children between the age group of 1 to 13 years.

Inclusive factors were, the children must not have any hereditary and chronic diseases like diabetes and must be between the age group 1 to 13 years. A questionnaire containing 13 close ended questions was prepared and given to parents for filling up. Answers were analysed and evaluated using SPSS software version 20. The results obtained were tabulated in bar graphs

RESULTS

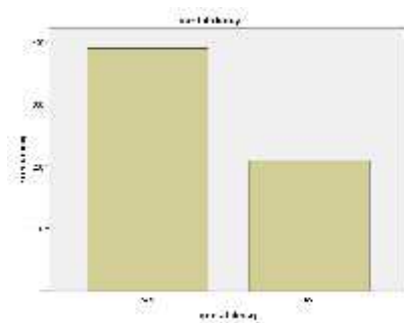


Figure 1 awareness among parents about dental caries

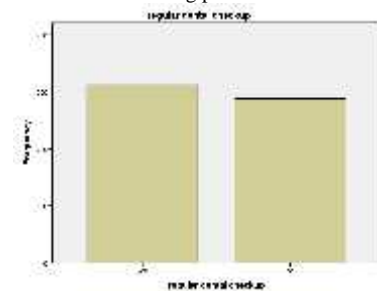


Figure 2 people going for regular dental checkup

*Corresponding author: Sarvesh Kumar, J
Saveetha Dental College, 162, P.H Road, Chennai,
Tamilnadu 600077

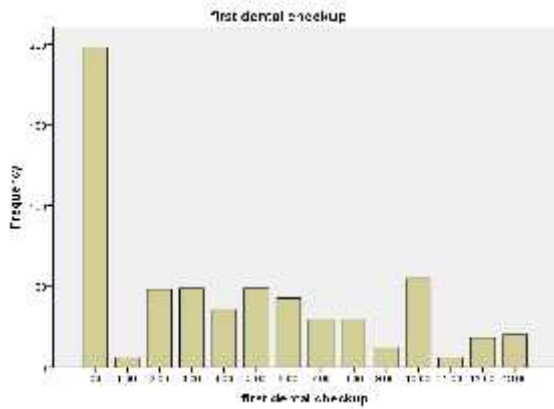


Figure 7 age during first dental checkup. [0 - no dental visit]

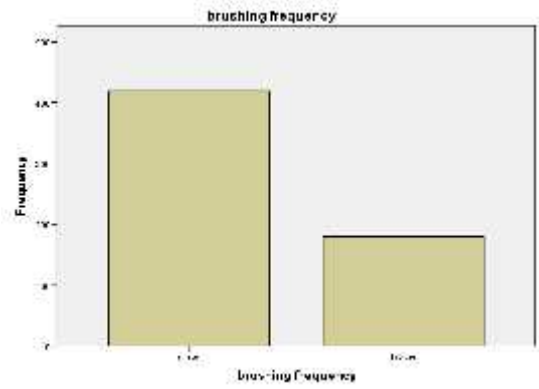


Figure 3 frequency of brushing

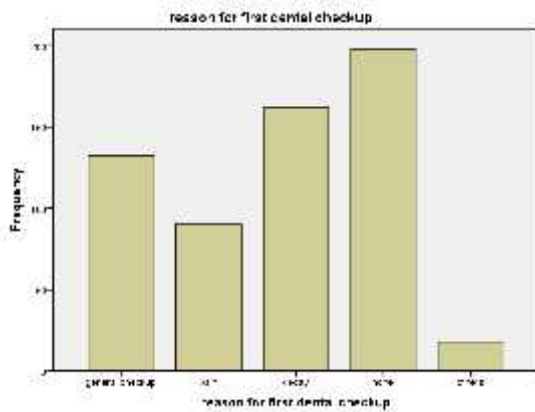


Figure 8 reason for first dental checkup [others - orthodontic treatment, stains on tooth etc.]

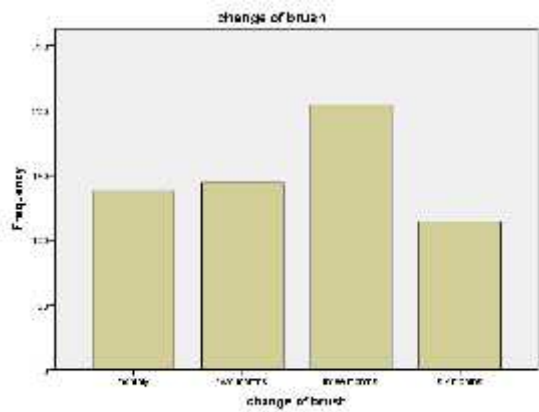


Figure 4 change of tooth brush duration

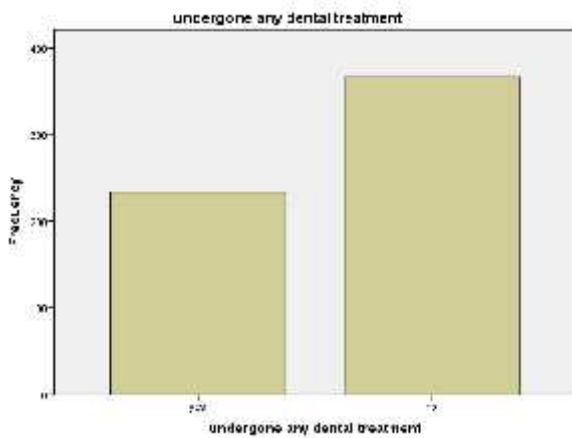


Figure 9 have you undergone any dental treatment

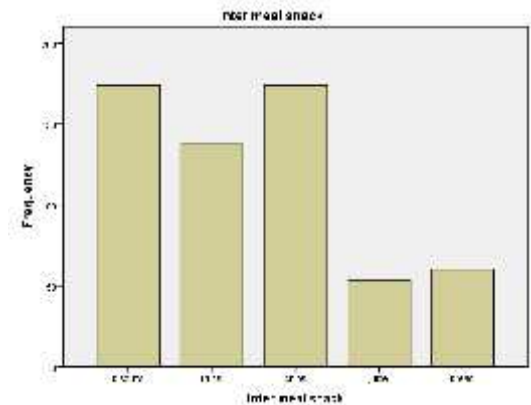


Figure 5 type of inter meal snack

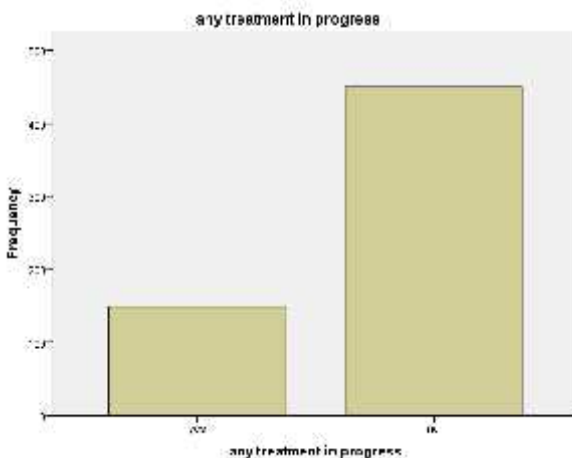


Figure 10 any dental treatment in progress

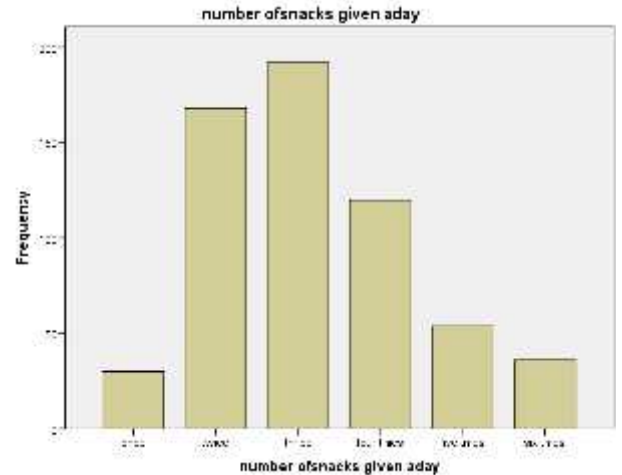


Figure 6 number of inter meal snack a day

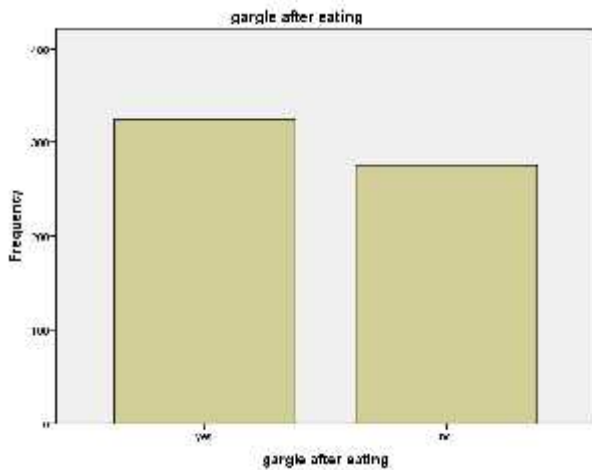


Figure 11 gargle after eating food

DISCUSSION

The study clearly explains that most of the parents are not aware about the prevalence of dental caries. Result showed that 35% of the participants are not aware about what is dental caries. Among the total participants only 52% of people take their children for regular dental checkup mostly between the age of 2 to 6 years and the reason for first dental checkup among the parents was 15% due to pain 27% due to decay and general checkup among 22% of people. 39% of people have undergone a dental treatment and 25% are undergoing treatment. Parents must encourage regular dental checkup because if dental problems are spotted early on and addressed, it not only helps you in curing them, but also reduces the risk of incurring high medical expenses. The primary reason behind this recommendation is to take advantage of preventive care. Visiting your dentist for routine dental checkups may reveal a number of hidden health problems, including bone, heart, digestive, and more. This is because certain warning signs of these diseases exist in the mouth. Consequently, according to the American Heart Association, people who receive regular teeth cleanings are at a 24% lower risk for heart attacks and a 13% lower risk for stroke compared to those who do not. Also tooth loss is found to be lower in regular attenders than in problem oriented attenders to dental clinics.^[6]

Among the participants 70% of people brush only once a day and only 30% of people brush twice a day which is most recommended. When it comes to the topic about change of brush 23% of the people change their brush every month, 24% of people change their brush once in 2 months, 34% of people change their brush once in 3 months and 19% of people change their brush once in 6 months. An important aspect to be inferred from the study is 100% of the participants included in the study don't use dental floss to clean their teeth and only 54% of people gargle after eating food. Brushing the teeth is the primary means of cleaning teeth, one of the main aspects of oral hygiene. Brushing teeth properly helps prevent cavities, and periodontal, or gum disease, which causes at least one-third of adult tooth loss. If teeth are not brushed correctly and frequently, it could lead to the calcification of saliva minerals, leading to formation of calculus. Electric tooth brush is found to be more effective in plaque removal.^[7] Also soft toothbrush must be used because usage of hard toothbrush

showed increased recession of tooth surface.^[8] Brushing twice a day is recommended to maintain a good oral health.

When it comes about inter meal snack 29% of parents give biscuits and junk foods as snack and 23% of parents give fruits and 9% of parents give fresh juices as snacks and the frequency of giving inter meal snack was only once a day among 5% of people, twice among 28% of people, thrice among 32% of people, four times among 20% of people five times among 9% of people and six times among 6% of people. Sugary snacks taste so good but they aren't so good for your teeth or your body. The candies, cakes, cookies and other sugary foods that kids love to eat between meals can cause tooth decay. The bacteria present in the mouth acts on foods rich in sugar and turn them into acids which are powerful enough to dissolve the hard enamel of tooth, so snacks rich in sugars are not recommended. Also sticky and chewy snacks must be avoided as they stick to teeth surface leading to more bacterial activity. So the children are recommended to have inter meal snack less frequently and avoid sweets to maintain oral health

CONCLUSION

On analyzing the results obtained from the present study it is clear that there is not enough awareness among parents about the prevalence of dental caries in their children and further research needs to be initiated in this field to prevent the occurrence of oral problems among children and awareness must be created among south Indian population about the effects of dental caries and its prevention by the government through awareness programs, arranging campaigns and also through implementation of school based oral health promotion and prevention programs.

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