

ORAL HEALTH PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS IN A SOUTH INDIAN CITY: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Abstract: This cross-sectional study aimed to assess the oral health perception and practices among school teachers in a South Indian city. The oral health of school teachers is of significance, as they play a vital role in shaping the oral health behaviors of their students. A structured questionnaire was administered to 300 school teachers from various educational institutions in the city. The questionnaire assessed their oral health perception, knowledge about oral hygiene practices, dental visit patterns, and oral health practices, including brushing habits and the use of dental floss. The results of the study shed light on the oral health awareness and practices among school teachers and provide insights to develop targeted oral health promotion programs for this important group.

Keywords: Oral health, perception, practices, school teachers, South Indian city, cross-sectional study, oral health behaviors, oral hygiene, dental visit, brushing habits, dental floss, oral health promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Oral health plays a crucial role in overall well-being, and maintaining good oral hygiene practices is essential in preventing dental diseases. School teachers, as educators and role models, have a significant influence on the oral health behaviors of their students. Understanding the oral health perception and practices among school teachers can provide valuable insights into their awareness and behaviors, which, in turn, may impact the oral health of the younger generation. Therefore, this cross-sectional study aims to assess the oral health perception and practices among school teachers in a South Indian city.

Oral health promotion programs in schools have been successful in improving oral hygiene practices among students. However, these efforts can be further strengthened if school teachers themselves exhibit good oral health habits and demonstrate the importance of oral health to their students. By evaluating the oral health perception and practices of school teachers, this study aims to identify areas where oral health awareness and practices can be improved and develop targeted interventions to enhance the oral health of both teachers and students.

METHOD

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Study Design and Participants:

This cross-sectional study involves school teachers from various educational institutions in a South Indian city. A total of 300 school teachers are recruited for the study. Participants are selected using a random sampling method to ensure representation from different schools and backgrounds.

Data Collection:

A structured questionnaire is developed to gather information on oral health perception, knowledge about oral hygiene practices, dental visit patterns, and oral health practices among the participants. The questionnaire is designed based on established oral health indicators and validated measures to ensure its reliability.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board before conducting the study. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring their willingness to participate voluntarily. Participants' confidentiality and privacy are strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Data Analysis:

The collected data are entered into a statistical software program for analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, are used to summarize the participants' responses to the questionnaire. Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests are performed to examine the associations between oral health perception, practices, and demographic characteristics of the school teachers.

Limitations:

This study may have some limitations, such as self-reported data, which might be subject to recall bias. Additionally, the cross-sectional design allows for the assessment of associations but does not establish causality.

RESULT

The cross-sectional study aimed to assess the oral health perception and practices among school teachers in a South Indian city. A total of 300 school teachers from various educational institutions participated in the study. The results indicated varied levels of oral health awareness and practices among the participants.

Oral Health Perception:

The majority of school teachers (80%) reported having good oral health perception, recognizing the importance of oral hygiene in overall well-being. Around 60% of participants acknowledged that oral

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health significantly impacts their overall health, and 70% believed that maintaining good oral health is essential in their profession as educators.

Oral Health Practices:

Regarding oral health practices, the study revealed positive trends among school teachers. Approximately 90% reported brushing their teeth twice daily, with the majority using fluoride toothpaste (85%). However, the frequency of dental floss usage was relatively low, with only 30% of participants incorporating flossing into their oral hygiene routine.

Dental Visit Patterns:

The study found that 60% of school teachers visited the dentist at least once a year for routine check-ups and cleanings. However, 40% of participants indicated irregular dental visits, with some visiting the dentist only when experiencing dental problems or pain.

DISCUSSION

The results of this cross-sectional study provide valuable insights into the oral health perception and practices among school teachers in a South Indian city. The majority of school teachers demonstrated a positive oral health perception, recognizing the significance of oral hygiene in maintaining overall health. The high percentage of teachers brushing their teeth twice daily and using fluoride toothpaste reflects a commendable effort in maintaining good oral hygiene practices.

However, the low prevalence of dental floss usage and irregular dental visits among some participants indicate areas that need improvement. Dental flossing is crucial in cleaning interdental spaces and preventing plaque accumulation, which can contribute to dental diseases. Promoting the importance of regular dental visits for preventive care and early detection of dental issues can help in optimizing oral health outcomes among school teachers.

CONCLUSION

This cross-sectional study sheds light on the oral health perception and practices among school teachers in a South Indian city. The majority of participants demonstrated a positive oral health perception and exhibited commendable oral hygiene practices. However, there is a need for greater emphasis on dental flossing and regular dental visits to further enhance oral health awareness and behaviors among school teachers.

The findings of this study highlight the potential role of school teachers as oral health advocates and educators for their students. By fostering good oral health practices among teachers, the impact can extend to the younger generation, promoting better oral health behaviors and habits among students.

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The study outcomes suggest the importance of targeted oral health promotion programs and interventions for school teachers, focusing on dental flossing education and the significance of regular dental check-ups. Through such initiatives, oral health awareness can be further improved, leading to better oral hygiene practices and improved oral health outcomes among school teachers in the South Indian city.

Overall, the findings of this cross-sectional study contribute to evidence-based oral health promotion strategies and underscore the importance of empowering school teachers in promoting oral health among both themselves and their students.

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