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Knowledge and attitude of parents on child's oral health: A questionnaire survey

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Abstract

Background: Parental attitude and knowledge on child's oral health will have an impact on their child's oral hygiene or not.

Aim: To evaluate the attitude, knowledge, and practices of parents towards their child's dental health.

Methodology: A questionnaire-based survey was conducted among 100 parents to assess the parental attitude and knowledge regarding the practices to maintain child's oral health. The response was recorded and statistically analyzed.

Result: The primary reason for dental visits has been toothache, but 44% of parents have also avoided it, believing primary teeth will naturally shed. Around 90.63% of parents have only seek dental care when there's pain or swelling, and 29.63% attend regular checkups. Furthermore, an average of 70% of parents have knowledge of all basic treatment procedures. Parents also had knowledge to differentiate good and bad food items with respect to a Child's oral health.

Conclusion: Majority of the parents have knowledge about role of dietary habits in oral health but at the same time there is lack of knowledge regarding role of dental visits in maintaining oral health, treatment options and dental visit during emergency situations.

Keywords: Mouth ulcer, broken tooth, bad breath, or bleeding

Introduction

Young children's oral health maintenance and their outcomes are mostly influenced by their parents' knowledge and beliefs as parents are the first teachers and role model for their kids who are closely associated to their children during early stages of life^[1, 2]. Most of the parents are likely to ignore their children's dental problems because of their thought that the primary teeth will be replaced by permanent teeth and they are unaware of the causes of early childhood caries and their treatment options^[3].

The knowledge and awareness of parents of their children's oral health is a fundamental component that generates preventive measure, leading to establishment of the sound oral health status of their children^[4]. Parents with good knowledge on oral health, healthy dietary and hygiene habits with positive attitude can help the child to develop positive health practices that are carried to their adulthood^[5].

With this background, the present survey was conducted with the aim to evaluate and assess the parent's knowledge and attitude towards child's oral health and awareness about causes of dental problems, treatment options available.

Materials and Methods

The survey was conducted among 100 parents of children aged under 12 years who attended the outpatient department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry at Ragas Dental College and Hospital.

A structured 25-item questionnaire with multiple-choice answers was distributed among 100 parents after obtaining consent. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of Demographic details of the participant such as age, gender, education level of the parent. The second part questions were related to parent's awareness on treatment options available, importance of dental visits/checkup, practicing good oral hygiene for their children and knowledge on impact of food items on their child's oral hygiene.

Table 1: Questionnaire

Questionnaire	
1. Age	Socio-Demographic Based Questionnaire
2. Gender	
3. Applicant’s Relationship (Parent/Guardian)	
4. Parent’s Highest Level of Education	
5. Child’s oral Hygiene	General Awareness
6. Frequency of Brushing	
7. Importance of Brushing	
8. Risk of Tooth Decay	
9. Preventive Measures of Child’s Oral Hygiene	
10. Food Habit based questionnaire	
11. Impact of Food Habit based Questionnaire	
12. Awareness of Treatment plans available	
13. Emergency VS Non-Emergency Situation on Child’s Oral Hygiene	

Response was recorded and the results were statistically analyzed with descriptive statistics and Chi-square test using IBM SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Result

Sociodemographic details of the participants are calculated using descriptive statistics and the results are presented in the below figures (Figure 1, and 2),

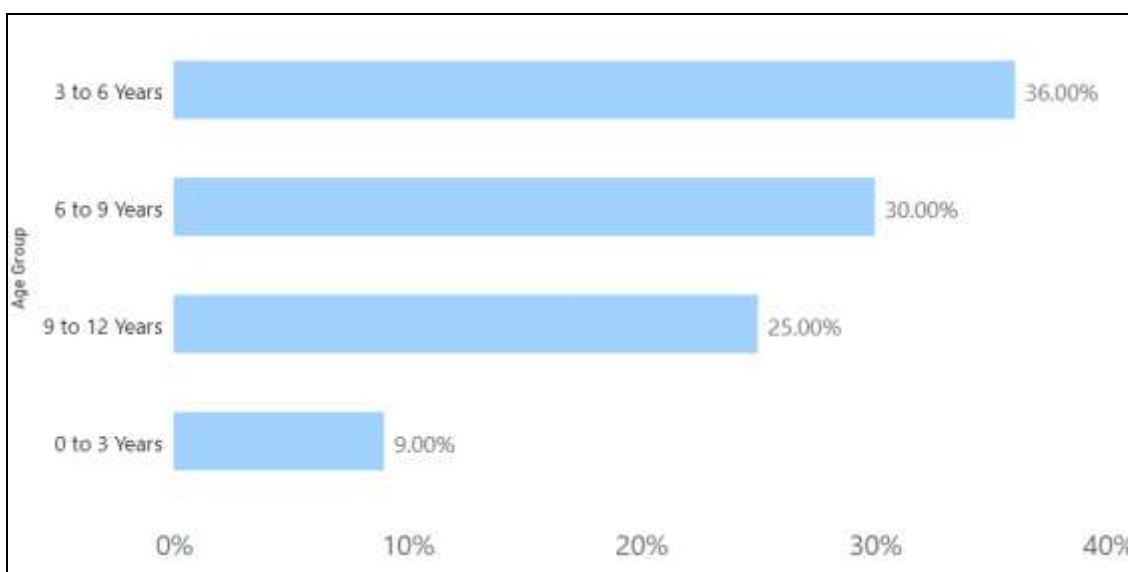


Fig 1: Age Group

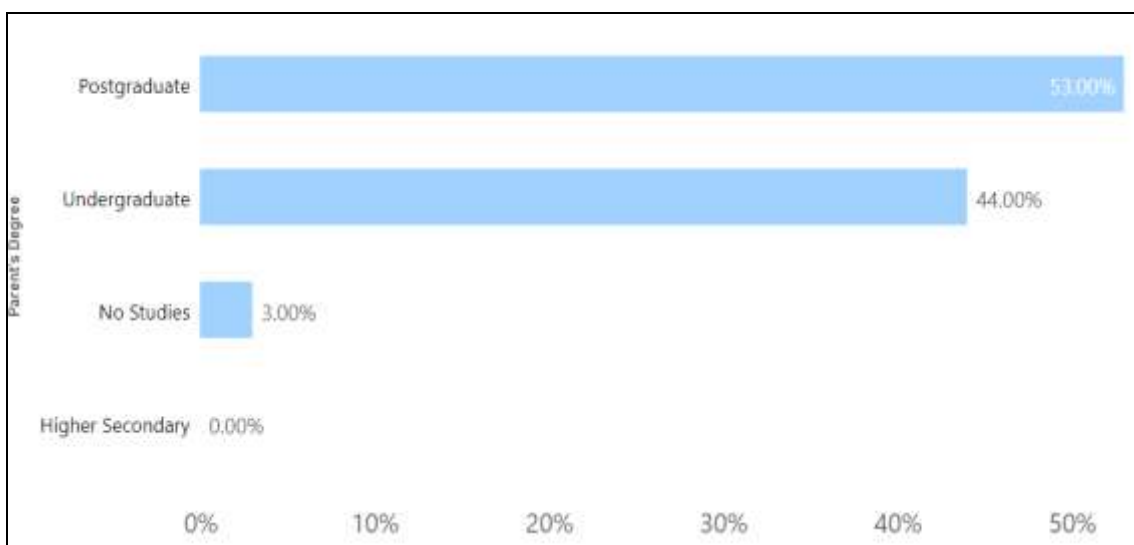


Fig 2: Parent Education Level

In figure 1, it shows that around 36% of parents who filled out the survey are parents of 3 to 6 years old children which seems to be the highest placeholder followed by parents of 6

to 9 years old which is 30%. And, in the Figure 2, it shows that most of the parents who participated are highly educated having a post graduate degree with a range of 53%.

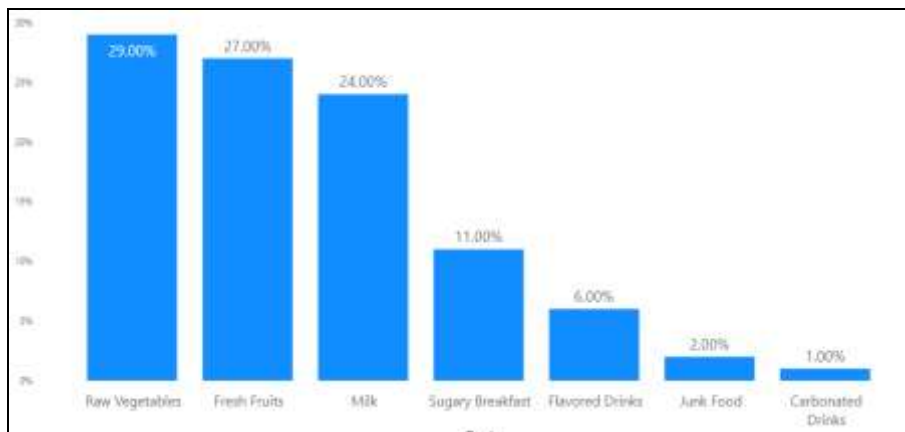


Fig 3: Food Items with Low Impact

As per parents' perception on the food items that are detrimental to child's oral health are chocolates, carbonated drinks, junk food and good for health are raw vegetables,

Fresh Fruits and Milk. There was significant association between parents' knowledge on overall impact of food habits with respect to dental problems ($p < 0.001$) [Figure 3,4].

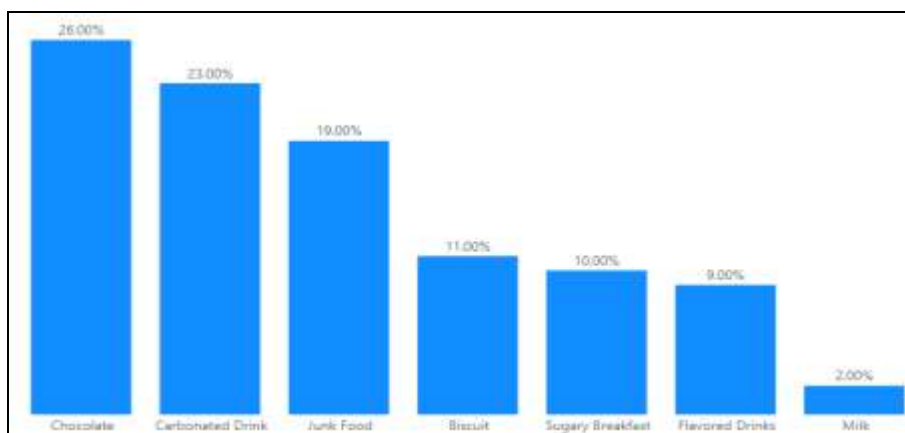


Fig 4: Food Items with High Impact

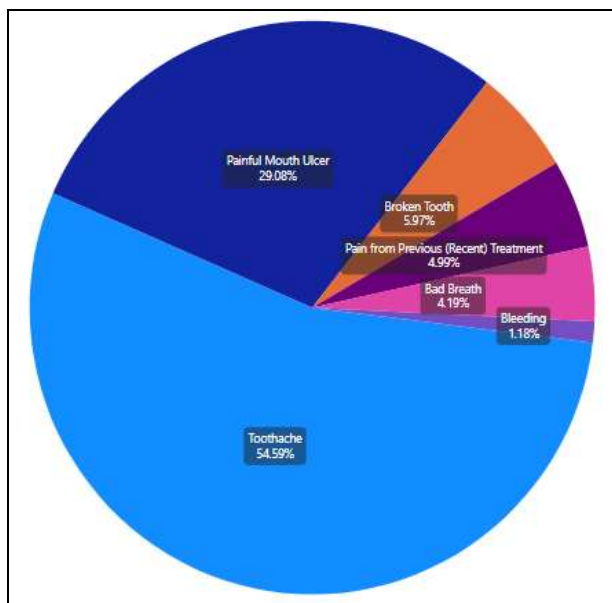


Fig 5: Child's Oral Health

The reason to visit dentist by the parents are as follows with 54% of the parents have taken their child to the dentist for toothache, followed by 29% have taken for painful mouth ulcer and the remaining 17% of the population comprises of broken tooth, pain from previous treatments, bad breath, or bleeding (Figure 5). Result shows no statistically significant

difference between frequency of the visit and child's oral health. ($P=0.834$)

Table 2: Reason for Ignoring Dental Visit and Situation-Related Visit

Factors/Questions	Options	Percentage
Reason for ignoring dental visit	Anyway, Tooth will shed off – (Own assumptions)	44%
	Difficulty in getting an appointment	32%
	Fear or dislike on environment	12%
	Doesn't generally like visiting the dentist	12%
Dental Visit during	Emergency	90.63%
	Non-Emergency	29.63%

The reasons for ignoring dental visits by parents and differentiating visiting a dentist during emergency and non-emergency situation were analyzed. 44% of the parents thought that primary tooth will shed off, or pain will disappear by home remedies. The second most voted answer was difficulty in getting an appointment (Table 2).

There were around 90.63% reported that they would take their child to the dentist only when there is pain, or any kind of intraoral or extraoral swelling. 29.63% of parents reported that they would take their child to the dentist even during non-emergency situation i.e., regular dental visit.

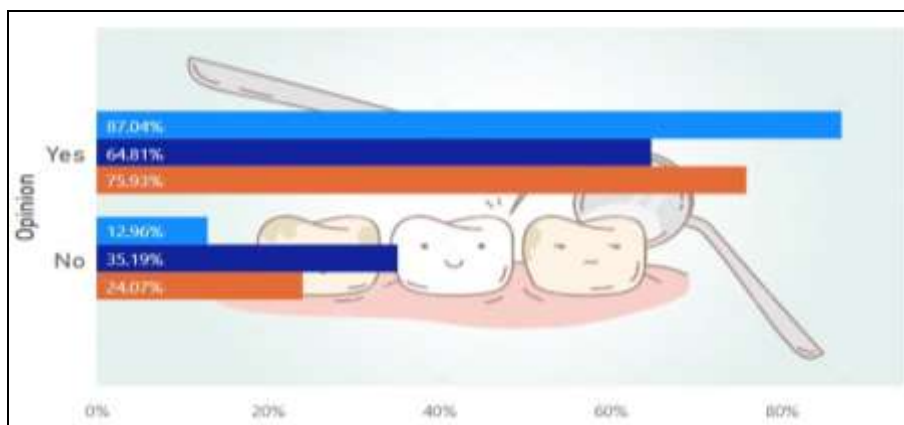


Fig 6: Treatment Plans

Based on parents' awareness of treatment plans available, 87.4% of parents have knowledge of scaling, 75.93% had on

restorative treatment and 64.81% of pulp therapy as in Figure 6.

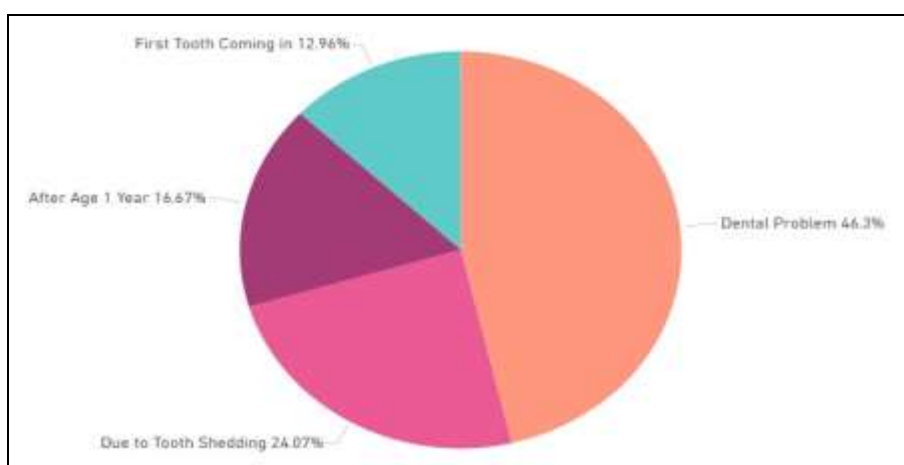


Fig 7: First visit

When asked about the first dental visit ever, 46.3% has visited only if any dental problem arises, 24% during tooth shedding, 16.67% after the age of 1 for a checkup and remaining parents have taken their child immediately after first tooth falls (fig 7).

Discussion

The oral health of children depends on the awareness and knowledge of their parents as these factors contribute to the oral health status and its related habits of the children established during infancy and maintained in early childhood [6]. This survey provides data about knowledge, attitude, and perception of parents towards their child's oral health. Based on attitude on a first dental visit, in the present study, a greater number of parents reported that they visit a dentist only when the child experienced pain. This was in accordance with the study done by Kumar *et al.* (2019) [7] and Santhosh Babu *et al.* (2017) [8]. And 90% of parents reported that they take their child to the dentist only during emergencies. In this study, the majority of parents were aware that sugary items and junk like chocolates have a high impact on child's oral health. Similar results were reported in the study done by Khanduri *et al.* (2018) [9]. If the carious deciduous teeth are left untreated it leads to various other complications such as pain, oral infection, alterations in growth and development and premature loss of teeth [10]. In the present study majority of parents reported that the reason for ignoring dental treatment is due to the fact that these are temporary teeth, and they will anyway thus they do not require treatment or proper care.

Overall, the survey shows that the parents were relatively knowledgeable regarding their child's oral health.

In relevance to this study some other studies were conducted in the past by Alshammari *et al.* in 2021 [11], they concluded that the perception of children's oral health status by their parents was medium and suggested the need of general awareness program.

Similarly, Kumar *et al.* in 2019 in their study concluded that parental awareness and attitudes regarding their children's oral health are relatively good [7]. But in contrary to the present study Abed Hamasha *et al.* in 2019 [4] and Pooja Bodhale *et al.* in 2014, in their study concluded that overall parent's knowledge and awareness of oral health were poor [12].

The limitations of this study were carried out in only one institution by random sampling with small sample size.

Conclusion

Based on the results, the study concluded that around 80% of the participants have good and accurate knowledge with positive attitude towards dentistry and takes care of their children's dental hygiene but there is lack of knowledge regarding role of dental visit in the maintenance of child's oral health, treatment options and dental visit during emergency situation and it is recommended to conduct parental awareness programmes to enhance their knowledge for the betterment of the child's oral health.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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