

AN INSIGHT INTO THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES SURROUNDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF DENTAL CARIES AMONGST SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN AT MAHOPO COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA.

INTRODUCTION

Oral hygiene is a major determinant of health and tends to affect an individuals' physical, emotional and social interaction with the society. Early childhood caries, for a long time, posed a major health and economic burden on a global level, having being cited as the most common cause of chronic childhood disease, globally, affecting all populations, regardless of the socioeconomic status, gender and geographical location. Even with the cost-effective preventive measures available to curb this public health concern, most low- and middle-income countries depend highly on curative measures to combat dental caries, which has proven to be costly for most people.

OBJECTIVE

To determine the knowledge, attitudes and practices surrounding the development of dental caries amongst school going children at Mahopo Community School in Lusaka, Zambia.

METHODOLOGY

- **Study Design:** A mixed-methods, interventional study design was used to administer questionnaires to 50 participants
- **Target Population:** Senior primary pupils at Mahopo Community School
- **Sampling Technique:** Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used.
- **Data Analysis:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 26 for quantitative and thematic analysis for qualitative analysis.
- **Ethical Clearance:** Lusaka Apex Medical University, Mahopo Community School Management
- **Pre-Survey:** To ascertain the level of knowlegde, attitudes and practices possessed by learners surrounding dental caries.
- **Intervention Stage:** Introduction of oral educational programs on prevention of dental caries.
- **Post-Survey:** To determine the influence of educational programs in prevention of dental caries.

RESULTS

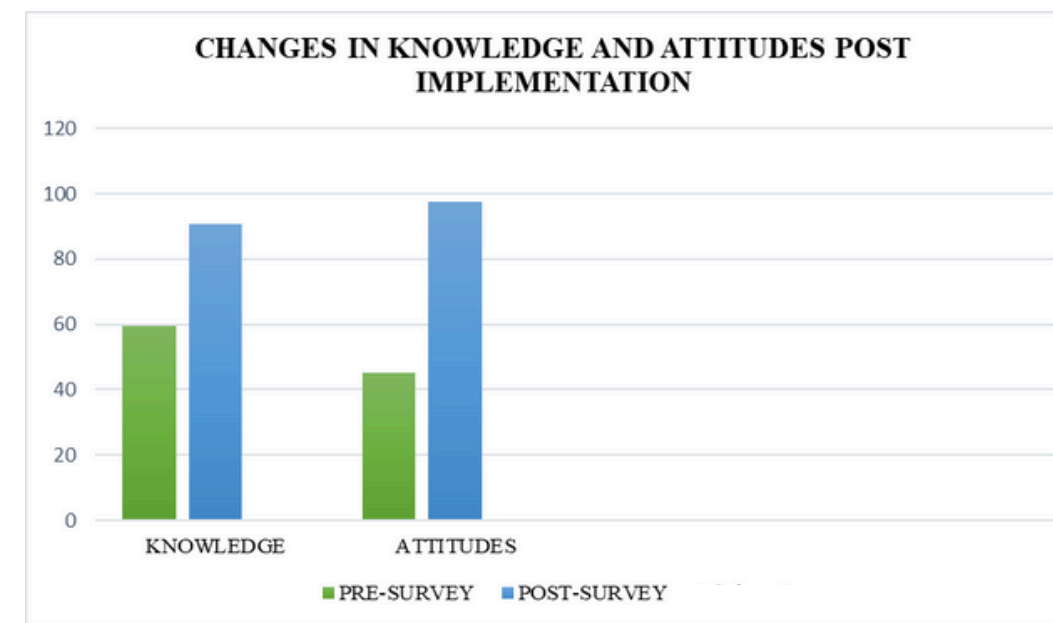
- The study obtained an 84.0% (n=42) response rate in the presurvey and post-survey, respectively.

Demographics

GENDER		Age	
Male	45.2% (n=19)	Mean	14.1 years
Female	54.8% (n=23)	Mode	14 years
		Standard Deviation	2.0 years
		Range	10 years

Knowledge and Attitudes

- There was a 31.0% increase in knowledge regarding the development of dental caries.
- There was a 52.4% shift in positive attitudes towards the prevention of dental caries.



Practices

Thematic analysis towards prevention of dental caries revealed the following practices;

- ***I brush my teeth every morning***
- ***I use a toothbrush or my fingers to brush my teeth***
- ***I use toothpaste, sometimes, to brush my teeth***

DISCUSSION

To our knowledge, this study was the first of its kind to utilize oral health education programs in attaining behavioral change towards the prevention of dental caries at Mahopo Community School.

In comparison to a study carried out in Bangladesh, oral health education programs similarly yielded positive results in the knowledge and attitudes possessed by school going pupils.

The positive results yielded could be attributed to a number of factors such as preparedness of the investigator in the delivery of OHE, active participation of teachers and willingness of the pupils to learn new beneficia habits.

CONCLUSION

The study proved that implementation of oral health education programs improved the knowledge and positive attitudes of prevention of dental caries amongst pupils at Mahopo Community School.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancement of oral health education in the school curricula to ensure good oral hygiene amongst school going children.

REFERENCES



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