

Assessment of oral health knowledge and preventive practices among school-aged children in tripoli, libya: A community-based survey

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Introduction: Oral health is a vital component of overall well-being, especially in children. In Libya, limited access to preventive dental care and awareness has contributed to rising cases of dental caries among school-aged children. This study investigates the level of oral health knowledge, attitudes, and preventive practices among primary school students in Tripoli.

Methodology: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted involving 600 students aged 7 to 12 years across six government schools in Tripoli. A structured questionnaire was administered to assess students' oral hygiene knowledge, brushing frequency, dietary habits, and frequency of dental visits. Parental education levels and socioeconomic status were also recorded. Clinical oral examinations were conducted to evaluate the presence of dental caries using the DMFT index. Data were analyzed using SPSS with chi-square tests for significance.

Results: The study revealed that only 38% of children brushed their teeth twice daily, and 27% had ever visited a dentist. Around 65% had a poor understanding of the relationship between sugar intake and dental caries. The mean DMFT score was 4.1, indicating a high prevalence of untreated dental decay. Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrated better oral health practices and lower caries incidence.

Conclusion: There is a significant gap in oral health awareness and preventive behavior among children in Tripoli. School-based oral health education programs and parental involvement are essential to instill lifelong oral hygiene habits. This study underscores the urgent need for community-based preventive initiatives and policy reforms in Libya's oral health sector.

Biography

Amina El-Gharyani, BDS, MSc, is a dental public health specialist from Tripoli, Libya. She holds a Master's degree in Community Dentistry from Cairo University. Dr. El-Gharyani has over a decade of experience working with school and community health programs focused on improving children's oral health outcomes. She is actively involved in outreach projects and policy advocacy for preventive dental care in underserved populations across Libya.

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