

Implementation of The KKN Program in Improving The Dental Health of Early Children in Padukuhan Pereng Dawe

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ABSTRACT

This research is centered on endeavors to enhance tooth-brushing habits in young children through the Community Service Learning (Kuliah Kerja Nyata - KKN) program. This program engages university students as catalysts of change, offering education and interventions to young children regarding the significance of dental care and correct tooth-brushing techniques. The study further assesses the impact of this KKN program on the tooth-brushing behavior of young children and provides guidelines for the implementation of similar programs in other communities. Young children are susceptible to the risk of dental damage, which can have enduring consequences for their oral health. Several factors contribute to this risk, including dietary patterns, oral care habits, and parental involvement. One of the primary causes of the risk of dental damage in young children is the neglect of proper tooth-brushing practices. Our observations reveal that 80% of preschool students aged 2-4 years experience dental issues. Consequently, there is a necessity for special measures to mitigate the risk of dental damage in young children. One of the measures we have taken involves providing training on the correct tooth-brushing techniques. We have also developed interactive and engaging learning materials to enhance students' enthusiasm and engagement in the learning process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Proper care and attention to the teeth and mouth have immeasurable significance in maintaining the overall well-being of the body [1] [2] [3]. It has been proven that when dental and oral hygiene are not carefully attended to, the impact is not limited to dental health problems alone but also creates the potential for extensive damage to health in general [4]. The presence of dental problems can interfere with daily activities, impair chewing and speaking function [5], and have the potential to reduce a person's level of self-confidence [6]. On the other hand, if our dental health is good, it will certainly improve our self-confidence [7]. Therefore, maintaining oral hygiene is not

only an obligation but also a very important action to prevent the emergence of various health problems [8] that could haunt you in the future.

Awareness of the importance of dental and oral care should be instilled from an early age, especially in young children [9] [10]. Parents have an important role in helping children maintain healthy teeth by teaching them how to brush their teeth correctly [11] and doing so regularly, at least twice a day, namely before bed and after breakfast [12] [13].

Awareness of the importance of dental and oral care from an early age [14] is the first step that should not be ignored [15], especially in the context of dental health education for young children [9] [16]. At this stage, the role of parents becomes very significant in guiding children to maintain their dental health [17] [18]. Of course, parents must understand how to maintain good dental health before guiding their children [19] [20]. Parents can act as mentors by teaching them about correct toothbrushing techniques [21] and encouraging them to do it regularly, at least twice a day, namely before bed and after breakfast [12]. Thus, a strong understanding of the importance of caring for teeth and mouth can be instilled in children from an early age [19], helping them build positive habits that will have a positive impact on their future dental health [22] compared to those who have no knowledge about this [23].

There are findings from previous research indicating that both excessive use and lack of attention to oral health can have a significant negative impact on dental well-being (such as the buildup of dental plaque) and increase the risk of developing gum disease. Hayuningtyas [24] emphasizes the urgency of comprehensive dental health care practices. Therefore, it cannot be overlooked the importance of involving yourself in simple but critical preventative steps, such as maintaining a regular frequency of brushing your teeth, choosing a toothbrush that suits individual needs, and being selective in choosing the right toothpaste to maintain healthy teeth. Apart from that, understanding dietary patterns that support dental health is also very necessary [25]. In addition, having regular check-ups with the dentist every six months is a highly recommended preventive measure to ensure optimal dental health [12]. All of these steps together form a solid foundation for maintaining sustainable oral and dental health and preventing the emergence of health problems that could disrupt our quality of life in the future [26].

Apart from following the habit of brushing your teeth regularly, some individuals also choose to include mouthwash as an additional component in their oral health care regimen. However, as recent research by [27] has observed, it is important to consider that excessive use of mouthwash has the potential to have a negative impact on overall dental and oral health.

In this context, although mouthwash can provide benefits in reducing the risk of hard dental plaque formation and lowering the possibility of developing gum disease and bacterial infections in the oral cavity, excessive use or use without a good understanding of how to use it can disrupt the natural balance in the oral ecosystem. This can lead to undesirable changes in the oral bacterial flora and compromise the condition of the teeth and gums, especially when used excessively or without the guidance of a qualified dental health professional.

Therefore, while mouthwash can be a valuable aid in maintaining oral health, it is crucial to use such products in accordance with the guidelines provided by your dentist or other dental health professional and maintain the right balance between effective dental care and the potential risks that can result from excessive use.

Tooth decay is often caused by the caries process, which damages tooth enamel and leads to inflammation. This process is typically triggered by food debris that hasn't been adequately cleaned, providing a food source for bacteria in the oral cavity, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, which then converts it into acid. Habits like consuming sweet and sticky foods, as well as negligence and errors in tooth brushing, along with infrequent dental check-ups every 6 months at the nearest community health center or dental clinic, can exacerbate this condition [28].

In addition to that, there are other bacteria, such as *Streptococcus mutans*, that can lead to tooth decay and even gum tissue infection [29]. It's important to remember that dental health problems left untreated can have a broader impact on overall body health. Organs like the kidneys and joints may be negatively affected by poor oral health conditions. Therefore, the aim of the KKN program is to improve the habit of brushing teeth in young children as a preventive measure that can reduce the risk of future dental health problems. It also seeks to emphasize the importance of good dental care in the context of overall body well-being.

2. METHODS

The initial step in implementing the activity is to request confirmation from the PAUD Teacher by the KKN 144 Team. This request is made by submitting a letter of cooperation to the PAUD teacher situated in Pereng Dawe Hamlet. In the letter, the KKN Team provides a comprehensive explanation of the objectives of the planned activities and their implementation plans.

Upon receiving the application letter, the PAUD Teacher confirms with the KKN Team, signifying their readiness to proceed with the activities on the specified date.

To ensure the smooth implementation of activities, the KKN Team also made preparations by arranging all the necessary facilities and tools. This involved preparing toothbrushes, toothpaste, toys for engaging children in the activities, and providing snacks for the participants. All of these preparations were carried out meticulously to guarantee the successful execution of the activity and the achievement of its objectives.

The PAUD teachers proceed with the next step by announcing the activities to parents and guardians through notification letters or text messages, ensuring a careful and thorough distribution. Through this communication, PAUD teachers not only provide information about the upcoming activities but also request confirmation of children's attendance to ensure the correct number of participants.

On the scheduled date, which is August 9, 2023, the activity is set to take place from 08:00 to 10:00 at the PAUD Dusun Pereng Dawe RT 02 location. During this time, the KKN Team and PAUD teachers gathered together with enthusiasm, eagerly awaiting the presence of the PAUD children. Parents and guardians also attended the event with enthusiasm to show their support.

Before commencing the practical tooth-brushing activity, the KKN team proactively organized informative and interactive counseling sessions for the PAUD children and their attending parents and guardians. The goal of these counseling sessions was to offer a comprehensive understanding of the significance of maintaining healthy teeth and the routine of regular tooth brushing.

During this counseling session, PAUD children were encouraged to actively participate by attentively listening to the explanations and practicing tooth brushing simultaneously. The KKN students, with full dedication, offered clear and practical guidance to each participant, which included both PAUD children and the parents and guardians of the students engaged in this activity. The purpose of this guidance was to ensure that each participant could fully grasp the correct technique for tooth brushing and gain firsthand experience in carrying out this action with the assistance of their guardians.

In addition to providing information about correct tooth-brushing techniques, this educational session also underscores the importance of dental care as an integral part of overall health. The objective is to enhance the awareness and understanding of parents and guardians regarding their active role in fostering good tooth-brushing habits in their children and maintaining their own dental health. Thus, this educational session not only imparts knowledge but also encourages positive behavioral changes in caring for their and their children's dental health in the future.

Following the successful completion of the tooth-brushing practice, the next step is to conduct a question and answer session and discussion. This serves to ensure that all participants, both PAUD children and parents, acquire a deeper understanding of correct dental care practices.

During this session, the KKN team and PAUD teachers collaborated enthusiastically to answer questions and provide additional explanations to the participants. They also facilitated discussions to encourage participants to share their experiences, thoughts, and questions related to dental care. The goal was to create an inclusive environment where each participant felt comfortable actively engaging and contributing to the collective learning process.

Additionally, this session served as a brief evaluation moment to assess the results and progress achieved by PAUD children in correctly practicing tooth brushing. The Community Service Team and PAUD Teachers worked together to record developments that had occurred, identify areas that still needed improvement, and plan further actions to support the continuation of healthy dental care practices among PAUD children and their parents and guardians. Thus, this question-and-answer and discussion session not only deepened understanding but also served as a valuable evaluation tool to measure the positive impact of the dental care activities that had been conducted.

As a gesture of appreciation for the children's active participation in this activity, they were rewarded with delicious snacks and interesting toys. The provision of snacks and toys aimed to express gratitude and show the children that their engagement in learning about this important dental care was valued.

Upon concluding the activity, heartfelt thanks were extended to all participants who had taken part in this event, ranging from the enthusiastic children and supportive PAUD teachers to the parents and guardians of the participating students. This expression of gratitude reflected the appreciation for the cooperation, dedication, and support contributed by all parties, which played a vital role in the success and benefits of this activity. This collaborative spirit forms a solid foundation for ongoing efforts to enhance the understanding and practice of good dental care among children and the early childhood education community.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of this research, the objective is to prioritize and emphasize the importance of young children in maintaining their dental health through the simplest means, namely by regularly brushing their teeth. However, more than merely regarding these practices as a daily routine, it is vital to deeply understand why and how these good dental care practices significantly impact their overall well-being.

Understanding the connection between appropriate dental care and the quality of life of young children is a crucial initial step in preventing future dental health problems and enhancing their overall well-being. This pertains to how good dental care practices can influence children's ability to lead their daily lives, including comfortable food consumption, clear speech, and the confidence to interact effectively with their surroundings.

Furthermore, a profound comprehension of the significance of taking good care of one's teeth also encompasses an understanding of the long-term impact on dental health that can extend throughout life. This includes how consistent and effective brushing practices can aid in preventing various severe dental issues, such as tooth decay, gum disease, and even potential adverse effects on other bodily organs.

In essence, this research seeks to delve deeper into the relevance of dental care practices in early childhood and how understanding this can be a crucial step in ensuring a healthy and meaningful quality of life for these children in the future.

It's important to acknowledge that, alongside the importance of proper dental care, a lack of good oral care habits can also lead to an increased risk of various dental issues in young children. In

the early stages of their lives, some children may not yet possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of how to brush their teeth correctly, and they may lack the skills to do it effectively.

Certainly, it's crucial to understand that children are not at fault for this, as it's a natural part of their developmental learning process. However, if they are not given adequate guidance or taught the correct way to care for their teeth, bacterial plaque can easily adhere to and accumulate on the surface of their teeth. In such cases, the improper removal of bacterial plaque can be a major factor contributing to dental health problems, including the development of cavities or tooth decay and an increased risk of gum disease.

Therefore, it's essential for us to realize that effective education and learning about proper dental care from an early age is a key step in maintaining children's dental health. By instilling in them a strong understanding of the importance of taking good care of their teeth from an early age, we can help reduce the risk of dental problems in the future and, at the same time, provide them with a solid foundation for maintaining healthy teeth throughout their lives.

Furthermore, it's important to acknowledge that various other habits can lead to dental problems in young children. Some of them may have a tendency to repetitively suck their thumb or bite hard objects, which can ultimately have negative consequences for their dental health and even impact the growth of their developing adult teeth.

Habits like thumb sucking or biting on hard objects, when continued over an extended period, can exert excessive pressure on children's teeth and jaws. This pressure can lead to unnatural changes in the position of the teeth or damage to the tooth structure. Moreover, such habits can also influence jaw growth, which, if not properly managed, can affect the positioning of the growing adult teeth.

Therefore, in addition to understanding the importance of good dental care practices, it's essential to monitor and address habits like thumb sucking or biting on hard objects that can have adverse effects on children's dental health and jaw growth. By doing so, we can aid their healthy development with well-aligned teeth and properly developed jaws, reducing the risk of dental problems that may arise in the future.

It's crucial to acknowledge that parents play a highly significant role in reducing the risk of dental problems that can affect young children. Parents hold a vital responsibility in educating their children about the importance of maintaining healthy teeth, and this can begin with the food choices they make at home. Providing nutritious foods and avoiding items that are rich in sugar or artificial sweeteners, which can harm teeth, is essential.

Furthermore, parents also play an essential role in teaching their children correct tooth brushing techniques. This involves instructing children to brush their teeth twice a day in accordance with recommended dental hygiene guidelines and to use fluoride-containing toothpaste to minimize the risk of tooth decay.

Additionally, parents should encourage their children to make regular visits to the dentist. Regular dental check-ups aid in the early detection of dental health problems and enable appropriate preventive measures, if necessary. Thus, the role of parents extends beyond direct dental care; it involves imparting an understanding and fostering a culture of good dental health in their children. This, in turn, helps reduce the risk of future dental problems and ensures that they grow up with healthy and strong teeth.

In conclusion, it is vital to comprehend that awareness of the risk of dental problems in young children and taking appropriate preventive measures are fundamental elements in maintaining their oral health, which will have a lasting impact on their quality of life over their lifetime.

A profound understanding of how to practice proper dental care, such as regular teeth brushing, avoidance of excessive consumption of sugary foods and drinks, and making regular visits to the dentist, can provide robust protection against various dental problems that might arise in the future. These preventive measures not only diminish the risk of tooth decay or gum disease but also

play a significant role in upholding the quality of life for children. This allows them to comfortably carry out everyday activities like eating and speaking while maintaining a high level of self-confidence.

Hence, the role of parents, educators, and society as a whole is of utmost importance in educating and supporting young children in maintaining their dental health. With a strong understanding of the significance of good dental care and appropriate preventive measures, we can establish a solid foundation for future generations to grow up with healthy teeth and mouths, thereby enhancing their quality of life in the long term.

This outreach activity can be deemed highly successful, involving as many as 15 young children from the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) group in the Pereng Dawe Hamlet area. To execute this outreach activity effectively, we followed several structured stages:

The first stage is the preparation for outreach activities, commencing with the initial step of seeking permission from the PAUD teacher. During this stage, KKN students meticulously prepare the counseling material intended for the participants, ensuring that the material can be presented in a clear and engaging manner.

The second stage encompasses the execution of outreach activities, involving direct interaction with the participants. The activity commences with a warm-up, including group singing and a prayer as a means of introduction and creating a comfortable atmosphere for the participants in the counseling session.



Figure 1 Photo of Singing Together

This stage also includes the distribution of toothbrushes, toothpaste, and toys to the participants as tools for practicing proper dental care. Subsequently, the KKN students present educational material by demonstrating the correct way to brush teeth, offering practical guidance, and delivering individualized instructions to the participants. This is aimed at ensuring that they comprehend and are capable of executing the correct techniques.



Figure 2 Photo While Practicing Toothbrushing

The final stage involves closing and evaluating the activities. The activity concludes with the distribution of snacks as a gesture of appreciation to the participants for their active involvement in the counseling. Additionally, a photo session is conducted with the participants as a memento of this activity.



Figure 3 Photo during the distribution of snacks Figure 4 Group photo at the end of the session

From this activity, the results obtained are in the form of research reports that reflect the positive impacts achieved. There is a greater understanding among PAUD children in Pereng Dawe Hamlet about how to brush their teeth correctly and the importance of maintaining a healthy mouth and teeth. These results were evaluated based on the positive responses and active participation of participants in the question and answer session.

As a follow-up to this activity, based on the evaluation results we conducted, we recommend that similar activities continue on an ongoing basis. This is with the aim of enhancing children's knowledge about the importance of maintaining a healthy mouth and teeth from an early age. This way, it is hoped that a better understanding and sustained behavioral changes can take place among children in Pereng Dawe Hamlet regarding dental and oral health in early childhood

4. CONCLUSION

This outreach activity has had a profoundly positive impact on increasing knowledge and altering children's habits related to dental health. Following their participation in this counseling,

PAUD children in Pereng Dawe Hamlet not only acquired new knowledge but also initiated the development of improved dental care habits. This activity has effectively made a positive contribution by fostering a greater understanding and creating awareness about the importance of maintaining dental health among the children at PAUD Dusun Pereng Dawe. This, in turn, establishes a strong foundation for enhancing the quality of life for these children and reducing the risk of future dental health issues.

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