

ORAL HEALTH, NATIONAL WEALTH: EMPOWERING YOUNG ADULTS FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

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Introduction

The National Oral Health Survey of Adults 2010 (NOHSA) reported that young adults are the majority of the population with dental problems and need dental treatment. This indicates alarming signs that an enhancement of oral health education is crucial among young adults. Hence, Kubang Pasu Dental Health District Office came up with the initiative to conduct a Healthy Setting Project involving a total of 42 students from the Bandar Darulaman Community College 2023/2024 intake. This project aims to produce young adults with the knowledge, awareness and skills to maintain oral healthcare and the ability to educate the society about its importance through social media.

Methods

This project was carried out in 3 phases over a period of one year with a pre and post-test questionnaire. A series of educational activities, including dental check-ups and treatments, and the appointment of Gen-Z influencers to promote oral health messages were conducted. Additionally, a dental health video-making workshop was held, with the resulting content shared on social media to further disseminate key oral health information to their peers and public. Dental examination and diagnosis was performed to reassess the oral health status after one year post-implementation of the project. This was conducted to ensure that the participants' oral health could be maintained at an optimal level.

Results

All participants were Malay (100%), with a gender distribution of 34 males (81.0%) and 8 females (19.0%). The participants involved were aged between 18-25 years old with the mean age of 19 years. There was an increase in the participants' oral health status, knowledge and their ability to share dental health information to the public after the intervention. Participants with a Basic Periodontal Examination (BPE) score of 0 increased from 42.9% to 78.6%. Comparison of the pre and post test results (Figure 1) showed an 18% increase of their overall knowledge, attitude and practice. The trained Gen Z influencers also successfully obtained an exceptional engagement from their social media postings.

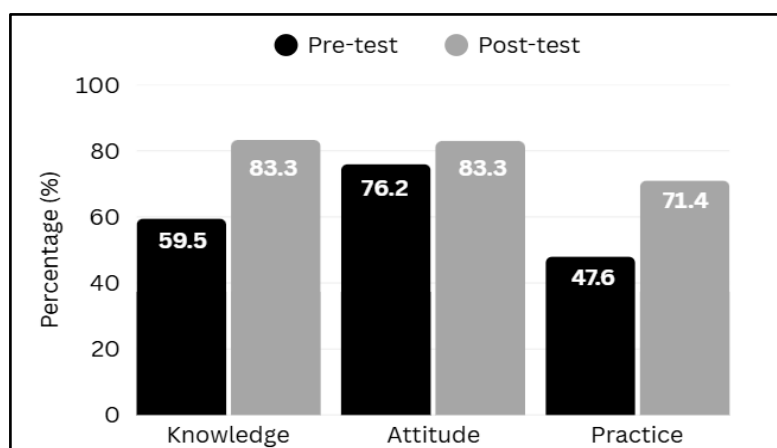


Figure 1. Comparison of pre- and post-intervention scores

Discussion

The findings from this project indicate a notable increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores across the domains of knowledge, practice, and attitude toward oral health care following a year-long educational intervention. The success of this project acts as a catalyst in cultivating productive youth with excellent oral health standards and who can then become dental icons in the community and contribute to national development. This study has its limitations in which it relied on self-reported behavior, which may be subjected to reporting bias. Additionally, while knowledge and practice improved markedly, the gap between knowledge acquisition and attitude change suggests that it requires more persistent reinforcement beyond a one-year intervention.

Keywords: Young adults, Gen Z, caries, plaque, mouth, health, nation