

Chapter 6

Oral Healthcare Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) of Primary School Students in Rural Areas Using Digital Technologies

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ABSTRACT

This study uniquely employs digital technologies to investigate the relationship between oral care knowledge, attitude, and practice among school students in rural areas of Thailand. The research utilized an online questionnaire survey and convenience sampling to gather data from 438 respondents, parents of primary school students in Thailand. Descriptive data was tested using SPSS version 29, and the research hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM; ADANCO 2.3.3). The results suggest that educators and strategic planners should prioritize digital oral care knowledge to enhance oral healthcare practices and foster positive student attitudes. To ensure sustainable development in student oral care practices, it is recommended that schools, classes, parents, hospitals, dental professionals,

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and digital technology information be improved to enhance student knowledge and attitude. Qualitative investigations such as interviews and focus group discussions are recommended for further exploration.

INTRODUCTION

Oral health is an integral part of total health and contributes to the well-being of the body, the mind, and the social environment. Even though most diseases may be avoided, oral diseases continue to be a severe public health problem and a burden on economies all over the world. Some systemic disorders, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and lung pathologies, are associated with poor oral health, which is a risk factor for these diseases. Oral disease has a disproportionately negative impact on rural populations, as seen by more excellent rates of periodontal disease, dental caries, and tooth loss. There are difficulties in accessing oral healthcare services and inadequate promotion of healthy behaviors in rural communities, both of which worsen these conditions. Several interventions, such as mobile dental clinics, tele-dentistry, dental outreach camps, and educational efforts, have effectively addressed the issues faced in remote areas. To diminish the gaps in oral health that exist among rural areas, as well as to reduce the overall burden of oral health and to promote health equity, public health officials should take into consideration the development of policies and action plans in schools and communities (Theriault & Bridge, 2023).

When it comes to oral healthcare workforce planning, the calculation of dentist-to-population ratios is typically the sole thing that is considered. On the other hand, this strategy must consider several significant factors, such as the burden of oral health requirements. The implementation of workload analysis is done to acquire a full grasp of the actual requirements for oral health. To improve our understanding of the workforce imbalance and how it affects the distribution of personnel serving School Dental Services. It is necessary to use the operator-to-student ratio to accomplish uniform workforce sizing for every school. This ratio refers to the proportion of a single operator to the total number of students. Rural locations have a higher ratio of one operator to the student population than urban areas. This is different in urban areas. On the other hand, schools with more kids require a significant number of children to be handled by each operator. It is abundantly clear that there is a requirement for a weighted workload-based distribution of School Dental Services staff (Atni et al., 2024).

The 7th National Oral Health Survey of Thailand assessed 12 and 15-year-olds' overall and condition-specific oral health quality of life. Child-Oral Influences on Daily Performances Index for 12-year-olds and Oral Impacts on Daily Performanc-

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