Awareness of 8th Grade Students Regarding Personal Health and Hygiene

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ABSTRACT: This work examined personal cleanliness of the children based on bathing, exercise, hair, diet and oral hygiene. One hundred students studying in 8th class from five government schools of Rawalpindi were selected randomly. Poor practices related to personal hygiene cause serious health problems and school children are often exposed to it. This is the result of lack of knowledge about poor practices regarding personal hygiene. Data were collated and analyzed based on descriptive study design. The result showed that students who participated in the study were almost having inadequate awareness regarding personal health and hygiene. All of the respondents were in between 13-15 year of age. The result also showed that majority of the respondents did not have good knowledge of personal hygiene practices including taking bath (54%), brushing teeth (72%) and washing hands (52%). It was found that the awareness of 8th grade students at government schools towards personal health and hygiene practices is not satisfactory. It is therefore recommended that some remedial measures should be taken to develop awareness regarding personal health and hygiene of the 8th class students.

KEY WORDS: Cleanliness, health and hygiene, health problems
INTRODUCTION

An active and a healthy life is a result of proper and complete awareness regarding personal health and hygiene. The concept of ‘hygiene’ is related to cleanliness, medicine, and health. Generally, hygiene is referred to all those practices that are done to prevent the spread of disease-causing microbes. Personal health and hygiene is one of the most important components of our daily life, which is often ignored either due to the busy life schedule or unawareness is the hidden cause.

If we want to spend a healthy life it is essential for us to have an adequate knowledge regarding personal health and hygiene. Keeping our self and clothing neat and tidy should be a part of daily routine life. Personal hygiene may be described as a principle of maintaining cleanliness and grooming external body (Chaudhari, Mansuri, Singh, & Talsania, 2015).

Washing hands is the most essential and initial process of which removes the infectious germs and microorganisms along with dirt and soil, thus achieves hygiene (Bockmühl, 2017). Personal health and hygiene practices such as hand washing before eating anything, brushing and using mouthwash for teeth will definitely help us to be protected from bacteria, virus and illness, which could be both physical and mental. A balanced and healthy diet is likely to benefit individual’s wellbeing, physically and mentally. A balanced diet provides required calories and necessary nutrients for proper functioning of the body. A balanced diet contains all necessary nutrients and energy in a proper proportion. An individual having deficiency of nutrients can never enjoy life as compared to an individual who has acquired all nutrients. Hence unhealthy individuals with poor practices of personal hygiene increases the risk of getting infected by germs and illness, which in turn affects many social and psychological aspects. This effort is intended to know the awareness of 8th grade students towards their personal health and hygiene. Generally, students of this age group have the same habits as going for sports, swimming etc. likewise food, clothing and hygiene habits are same for all these students of same age and grade. These students neglect many health affecting habits as they are unaware of the long-term effects of their today’s negligence. This the prevailing reason of this study because intentionally the young children often don’t feel the importance of these two most essential things i.e. personal health and hygiene which ultimately results in prolong unhealthy life (Kansky, 2017).

Personal hygiene and health deficiency is one of the major causes of diseases, infections, and recurrent health problems. These health problems are common in every human setting especially school going children are mostly affected. This is the result of insufficient knowledge of personal health and hygiene and its practices in daily routine life. This study
is a quantitative study it is conducted to explore personal health and hygiene knowledge and practices of 8th grade students at schools of public sector.

First of all, we all should understand the effect of good personal health and hygiene on longevity. ‘Better health, higher quality of life, and longevity are the benefits derived from a lifetime fitness and wellness programs’ As defined by World Health Organization (WHO), it is a "State of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Veenhoven, 2008). Personal hygiene refers to maintaining cleanliness of one’s body and clothing to preserve overall health and well-being; oral cleanliness: hair trim, nail cut and neat washed clothing, It all includes in cleansing oneself. After using the toilet, proper hand wash with soap or with liquids hand wash is very essential thing which should not be compromised at any cost, because it’s our health that worth it. Many activities of our routine life are categorized as “ADLs” and” IADL “like, bathing, dressing, and using the toilet are considered activities of daily living (ADLs), while washing clothes is recognized as an instrumental activity of daily living (Roehrig, Hoeffken, Pientka & Wedding, 2007). Proper mouth care with good nutrition is important for avoiding tooth decay, toothache and other abnormalities in mouth and associated areas (Allen, Gunaldo & Schwartz,2019).

According to Blumenthal & McGinnis (2015), Clear, bright skin and eyes, strong teeth, gums, nails and hair, fresh breath and body odor, meals are digested with ease – no gas, bloating, heartburn, feeling energized when you wake, good energy level throughout the day, regular, healthy bowel movements, clear urination, wounds and bruises heal quickly, joints and muscles flex with ease, efficient circulation, consistent body temperature, free from cravings for certain types of food and drink, able to maintain a suitable weight for your height and build, rarely affected by colds, flu and other infections. clear and focused thinking, good memory and concentration. even and balanced temper and able to tolerate stress well are some signs of good health.

Proper personal health and hygiene practices are directly related to minimum ailments and good health. It can also increase the attendance of students at school. Poor personal health and hygiene practices can attribute to some mild side effects, like bad body odor, yellow teeth, oily skin which is prone to pimples and recurrent diseases like flu typhoid.

“Poor hygiene can be a sign of self-neglect, which is the inability or unwillingness to attend to one's personal needs. Poor hygiene often accompanies certain mental or emotional disorders, including severe depressions and psychotic disorders. Dementias’ another common cause of poor hygiene. Other people may develop poor hygiene habits due to social factors such as poverty or inadequacy of social support. Physical disabilities can also
interfere with one's ability to care for oneself and may result in an individual being unable to attend to personal hygiene. There is no treatment for poor hygiene, although antipsychotic and antidepressant medications are used when certain mental illnesses are the cause of this behavior (Mlinac & Feng 2016).

**Importance of Personal Health and Hygiene for Fitness**

Physical fitness is a normally a state of health and well-being, this fitness or health is utilized in performing different physical activities of daily routine life like sports or occupations. Correct nutrition according to the requirement of age, exercise, hygiene practices and rest or proper sleep is a source of physical fitness. This is the set of characteristics that people have to achieve to gain energy for performing physical activity.

For taking care of our body, we should eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get proper sleep”. Practice balance and moderation in all aspects of your physical health. Also, avoid extremes in diet that could lead to eating disorders. Do not intentionally harm your body. Avoid dangerous activities that put your body at risk of serious injury. If we keep our body clean it is Hygiene. Keeping body clean is an important part of keeping healthy and it helps us to feel good about our self (León-Quismondo, García-Unanue & Burillo, 2020).

**Importance of Personal Health and Hygiene Awareness for Students**

In addition to the practice of hand wash, all small children most promptly those who go to school need to learn other ways to keep their self-safe from the germs spread in external environment. Health education must be given to children regarding personal health and hygiene practices. They should be taught to cover their mouths when they cough and sneeze in this way they will not be among germ spreaders, they should use a tissue (rather than their shirt sleeve or shirts) when they want to wipe their nose or mouth. They should also be informed of ill results of sharing cups and eating utensils like spoons and forks, particularly at school, as it is an easy way of picking germs and become sick, therefore should be avoided.

Promoting good personal hygiene habits does more than protect children from the threat of germs and disease. It also helps keep them looking and smelling clean and fresh, and promotes their general health (Meysenburg, Albrecht, Litchfield, & Ritter-Gooder 2014). Good and proper personal health and hygiene means complete cleaning and caring for our own body. good personal hygiene includes taking bath, if possible daily especially in summers to avoid bad body odor which is due to frequent sweating, washing hand
especially before intake of meals, brushing teeth twice a day to have health strong teeth free from any decay or plague and putting on neat and clean dress daily. It also includes making safe and healthy choices when interacting with others for instance properly follow the precautionary measures while meeting with a person having any infectious disease. Implementing good personal health and hygiene practices has both individual and social benefits

Maintaining good personal health includes eating appropriate healthy nutritious diet according to one’s age requirement and need. For example, a child needs diet full of protein calcium and carbohydrates because these things take active part in children growth and development (Manore, Meyer & Thompson 2009). The effects of poor health and hygiene practices ultimately push one towards unhealthy life. We should be aware of the horrible consequences of ill health and hygiene practices. Sometimes these consequences are irreversible. Like tooth decay is a result of poor oral hygiene it adds up if child is not taking milk, so it ends up in tooth extraction

Some Common Hygiene Mistakes

According to Klymenko & Kampf (2015). Here is the list of some common mistakes we make unintentionally which results in any unpleasant situation. As we.

- Don’t say no, to share comb, towel, or clothes with other.
- Don’t wash workout gear everyday
- Don’t cook food on low flame
- Don’t wash vegetables properly before cooking or eating raw.
- Don’t wash hands before and after meals
- Don’t use perfume for appropriate reasons
- Don’t drink enough water
- Don’t clean steering wheel
- Don’t wash clothes after couple of uses
- Don’t bath regularly
- Don’t keep separate napkin for utensils and hands
- Don’t wash socks
- Don’t keep ears clean
- Don’t wash hair thoroughly
- Don’t cover mouth while sneezing or coughing
We can keep our self safe and sound if we follow simple rules of personal health and hygiene.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Poor knowledge of personal health and hygiene among the students of 8th grade, leads to many social and psychological issues. Normally, students of this age group are involved in many other extracurricular activities thus results in neglecting proper exercise, food and clothing matters. Just to know the reasons behind this unawareness this study has been conducted.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Objectives of the study were to:

- To explore the awareness of 8th grade students regarding personal health and hygiene.
- To identify the reasons of unawareness of 8th grade students regarding their personal health and hygiene.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- Do the students know the aspects of personal health and hygiene?
- What is different indicator of personal health and hygiene?
- Do the teachers teach about personal health and hygiene?
- Do the teachers check the students about personal health and hygiene?
- Do the parents create awareness about personal health and hygiene?
- Do the students observe the guidelines /instructions about personal health and hygiene?
- What are the reasons of unawareness of students about personal health and hygiene?

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was descriptive in nature. One hundred class 8th students from five Government schools of district Rawalpindi were selected randomly. Structured close ended questionnaire consisting of 18 questions was used to collect the data. The data collected
through tool was coded and analyzed through. Microsoft Excel and assigned an arbitrary value to Yes and No (0-yes, 1-no), in terms of percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The questionnaire consists of 18 questions related to the daily practices regarding personal health and hygiene. The first question was related with their prior concept of the personal health and hygiene knowledge. Data was analyzed and 52% students of 8th grade students were having knowledge about personal health and hygiene whereas, 48% were having no previous knowledge about personal health and hygiene.

A Healthy sleep leads to a healthy mind and body; 50% students of 8th grade were taking healthy sleep of 8 hours, whereas 50% students are not completing their nap time. There were different reasons for this some consider it worthless while other waste their precious sleeping time in activities like net surfing or chatting with friends.

Daily exercise and sports are a part of routine life of 42% of student of this age group whereas 58% students of 8th grade are not aware of the importance of physical activities for a healthy lifestyle.

One cannot deny the importance of waking up early in the morning. 58% student of 8th grade wakes up early in the morning whereas 42% students of these don’t realize its importance and often reaches late to the schools.

Data regarding hand wash shows that 52% students of 8th grade do wash their hands before eating anything, whereas 48% of these students don’t bother to wash their hands before eating.

Conscious people do realize that we carry maximum germs with us from outside environment as we enter our home, data depicts that 50% of students of 8th grade wash their hands as soon as they enters their home where as 50% of these students don’t feel its importance and don’t wash hands after entering their homes.

The data regarding washing hands with soap depict that 60% of 8th grade students use soaps every time for washing their hand whereas 40% of these students just rely on rinsing hands with simple water for hand washing.

Oral hygiene is an integral part of daily personal health and hygiene practice. The study shows that 72% of 8th grade students brush their teeth daily, whereas 28% of these students don’t feel the importance of daily teeth brushing.
Brushing teeth before going to bed is an essential healthy practice for lifelong healthy teeth. The data show that 40% of students of 8th grade do brush their teeth before going to bed whereas 60% of these students don’t realize it need and don’t brush their teeth before going to bed.

Taking bath daily is very important personal health and hygiene practice, 54% students of 8th grade student take bath daily whereas 46% students of this grade don’t take bath daily.

Changing dress daily and wearing washed clean dress should be everyday routine of every student. It is evident from the data that 48% of these students change their dress everyday whereas 52% students don’t change their dress everyday.

Daily intake of calcium in form of milk is very important for the growth of these children. Data regarding intake of milk for calcium show that 46% of the student’s daily drink milk at least once whereas 54% of these students don’t drink milk on daily basis.

Daily intake of protein is essential for the children of this age group. Egg is the most important and easily available source of protein, 50% of students eat an egg daily whereas 50% don’t take egg daily in breakfast.

Healthy and health-conscious people always include vegetables in their daily intake diet. The data reveal that 52% student of this grade students eat vegetables whereas 48% students don’t add vegetables in their diet.

Fruits are a major part of healthy diet for a healthy lifestyle, 58% students of 8th grade students do eat fruit daily whereas 42% students of this grade don’t eat fruit daily.

Eating Junk food has become so much common in our daily life that we cannot image life without eating junk food at least once in a day the study shows that 52% student of this grade prefer to eat junk food whereas 48% try not to eat junk food at least daily.

The purpose of this study was to know the awareness of 8th grade students regarding their personal health and hygiene knowledge. It is evident from the data that 90% of the student are satisfied with their life style in terms of health and hygiene whereas 10% are not satisfied with their life style.
FINDINGS

In the light of data collected and analyzed the findings of this study are:

- The concept of personal health and hygiene is present in the mind of most of the children, they knew little or more about this thing. this knowledge is either given them by their parents or teachers at school.

- The knowledge about sleeping hours is equal among the students of 8th grade student as half of the students take 8-hour sleep daily. In their view good sleep is also essential for a healthy body as it keeps mind fresh throughout the day, but half students utilize this precious time in other activities for instance net surfing chatting or late-night studies hence cutting down the healthy sleep hours.

- For a healthy life, it is important to keep body physically active and for this purpose we all should adopt the habit of doing exercise daily, no matter in morning or in the evening or opt for playing any sports daily that will keep us physically and mentally active throughout the day. According to the analysis of this study less no. of students has adopted this habit whereas most of them don’t feel its importance. The reason behind this is the busy schedule or having inadequate knowledge about the importance of exercise or sports for a healthy lifestyle.

- Overweight or obese students should be guided by parents or teacher to make them to realize the importance of appropriate weight according to the height, age and gender. According to this study there are more students who do not have appropriate weight they are obese or overweight whereas less no. of students falls in an appropriate weight category.

- Waking up early in the morning directly effects the health of all human beings .it is not only good for physical health but have remarkable positive effect on mental health as well. this study shows that more students do understand the importance of waking up early in the morning whereas less no. of the students don’t consider it that much important for health. these students often reach school late i.e., after school timing without breakfast and proper uniform.

- The best way of maintaining health at its peak is to adopt a preventive measure that is washing hands. This personal hygienic practice keeps us away and safe from many known and unknown germs. According to this study more students are washing hands before eating anything whereas less no. of students does not wash hands before eating anything.

- Our environment outside the house is full of germs. children play and interact with other students and take these germs along themselves into the house which results in the sudden ailment of him or his family members. as I have already written about
practicing preventive measures of washing hands to get rid of any unpleasant situation, we all should also wash hands as soon as we enter our house. According to this study awareness about this thing is equal among all the student of 8th grade like half of them do wash hands but half of them having no awareness regarding this issue.

- As far as the awareness about using soap for washing hands is related more students of 8th grade use soap every time, they wash their hands whereas less no. of students don’t use soap every time they wash their hands. For personal health and hygiene, one should take care of the oral health through brushing everyday twice or at least once. this study shows more students brush their teeth whereas less no. of students don’t even brush teeth every day.

- Brushing teeth before going to the bed is important for oral hygiene and health. This study shows that less no. of students of this grade brush their teeth before sleep and more students sleep without brushing their teeth.

- This study shows that the awareness of students of grade 8th is better for taking bath everyday as more students take bath daily and fewer students don’t take bath daily.

- Less no. of students changes clothes daily whereas more no. of students doesn’t change clothes daily.

- Milk is the best source of calcium, and it is an important nutrient for the children of this age group. According to this study students drinking milk daily at least one time a day is less than the students not drinking milk daily.

- Eating egg daily in breakfast is important for the students of this age group as egg is best source of protein, which helps in the growth and development of the children. This study shows half of the students are aware of the benefits of eating egg daily, so they eat egg daily whereas half of them don’t eat egg daily hence don’t have enough awareness about healthy diet.

- A healthy diet contains portion of vegetables daily or thrice a week. This study shows more students are aware of the importance of veggies for healthy diet and less no. of student don’t like to eat veggies.

- Eating fresh fruits and vegetables daily or maximum within a week show person awareness for healthy diet. This study shows more students do eat fruit at least one fruit per day whereas less no. of students doesn’t have good knowledge about eating fruits daily.

- Eating junk food has become a fashion or a need of time, whatever but it is confirm that junk food is not at all healthy and regular eating junk food will lead to serious health issues. This study shows no. of students eating junk food per week is more than the no. of students’ not eating junk food.
Despite of all the above findings, still more students of grade 8 claims that yes we are satisfied with our present life style or pattern whereas few are not satisfied with the standard of awareness regarding personal health and hygiene in their life style.

The findings of this study show that the awareness of 8th grade students regarding personal health and hygiene is not up to the mark of satisfaction. Most of them are not aware of the harmful lifelong effects of today’s delay or negligence for instance less awareness regarding personal oral hygiene, sleeping without brushing teeth which ends up in tooth extraction after tooth decay.

CONCLUSIONS

The level of awareness of 8th grade students regarding personal health and hygiene is not adequate. The age of these students is in between 13 -15 years, and this phase is very important for both physical and mental growth and development of the children. The concerned knowledge regarding personal health and hygiene is not enough for them to live a safe and healthy life. According to the findings of this study, most of the students of 8th grade don’t wash hands if they do, they don’t use soaps for washing hands and above of all they are not having relevant enough knowledge regarding oral hygiene. All the findings of this study converge at the point that the scarce knowledge of the students of grade 8 regarding personal health and hygiene ultimately lead to the unhealthy life. Children should be equipped with the relevant knowledge and information regarding personal health and hygiene so that they can choose between right and wrong for themselves as poor nutrition can contribute to stress, tiredness and less capacity to do work, and play, it can be a major cause of developing some illnesses and other health problems such as: being overweight or obese. One of the first and most prominent consequences of bad hygiene is body odor. Body odor may also come from poor bathroom habits. Poor dental hygiene led to bad breath; it can also lead to dental disease. Personal Hygiene practices, such as washing hands can prove to be the most effective way to prevent from infectious and contracting diseases such as the common cold, influenza (flu) and spread of this disease, as our hands are in constant contact with both the environment and our face, thus providing easy transportation of germs from the surface of an infected object or person to our nose or mouth. Washing hands with clean running water and soap help in reducing the number of bacteria and other germs on our skin and lessen our chance of being ill. Besides this, intake of diet which is having low nutritional value or not appropriate according to the body requirement and need will eventually result in malnutrition as having an imbalanced diet and making poor food choices affects ones overall health. The foods we eat, directly impact our health.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers provide the following recommendations as a result of this study:

- Every school should integrate this topic in their course textbook.
- At least once in a month every school should arrange session for the awareness of personal health and hygiene issues.
- School should integrate Islamic teachings with this topic for religious touch.
- At government level such arrangements should be made in which these health and hygienic practices are demonstrated live to the students for more motivation.
- Junk food in lunch boxes must be discouraged by teachers and remind parents about the harmful effects of junk food in this age.
- All teachers should be instructed to repeat this topic in front of their students whenever they get suitable opportunity.

REFERENCES


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