

**Evaluating the awareness level of orthodontic treatment among school children:
a survey of selected schools in owerri municipal**

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Background: Malocclusion is known to have several ill effects on school children which can be corrected with Orthodontic appliances. However, school children are still seen with different forms of malocclusion. Little is known on the awareness and willingness to go for this appliance therapy among school children in Owerri Municipal. The study is guided by the following objectives: To assess the level of awareness of orthodontic appliances among school children, determine the influence of the awareness on the willingness to go for treatment, ascertain the attitude towards orthodontic appliances among school children, investigate school children's satisfaction with their facial and dental appearance, and determine other possible factors influencing awareness.

Methods; The cross sectional study design was adopted for this study. Sampling method was simple random sampling. Study population is school children. To collect data, a total of two hundred questionnaire were distributed and same returned. Descriptive statistics was carried out to indicate frequencies and percentages. Hypothesis is tested using chi-square statistic test.

Results; two hundred questionnaires were retrieved, age range of respondents is 9 – 15years with mean age of 13.02 ± 2.146 . Our findings show that school children (85%) were found to see crooked teeth as unpleasant condition. 69% are willing to go for treatment if they are aware of treatment while 31% do not. This shows that awareness affects willingness to go for treatment. 92% believed that crooked teeth have ill effects on school children. But only 20% are aware of orthodontics appliances. Greater number of respondents reported being satisfactory with their facial and dental profile (75%) as only 15% indicated little need for orthodontic appliances. Other factors that can influence the awareness for orthodontic appliances among school children are seen to be adequate sensitization. The result of the hypothesis testing shows that $(X^2_{cal}{}_{(72)} > X^2_{tab}{}_{(3,84)}(p=0.005)$, which indicates that there is a significant relationship between awareness of orthodontic appliances and willingness to go for the treatment.

Table 1: Distribution of the factors affecting orthodontic treatment awareness.

Options	Frequency			Percentage %		
	Yes	No	Uncertain	Yes	No	Uncertain
Crooked teeth unpleasant	170	30	-	85	15	-
Awareness	40	150	10	20	75	5
Willingness	138	26	36	69	13	21
Ill effects	150	30	20	75	15	10
Limiting factors						
Cost	120	-	-	60	-	-
Discomfort	80	-	-	40	-	-

Discussion :From the study result, the awareness of orthodontic appliances among respondents show mere 20% of selected school children while 80% are not. Hence, poor the awareness. The study is in agreement with a study conducted by Onyeaso et al in India where 20% of adolescents were aware of orthodontic treatment. However, lower than that reported by Utomi et al among Lagos school children, difference attributed to Lagos having more orthodontists and higher awareness campaign.

Conclusion: These school children have shown dissatisfaction with seeing fellow pupils with misaligned teeth. An increased sensitization program on orthodontic treatment among school children should be encouraged to aid seeking for orthodontic appliance therapy so as to improve their overall general wellbeing.

Keywords: Awareness, malocclusion, orthodontic appliances, school children

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