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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Clinico-Biochemical Correlation among Body Mass Index and Oral Health Status Regarding Decayed, Missing, and Filled Permanent Teeth Index in Children

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ABSTRACT

Background: Overweight and obesity caused dental caries in young children, the Decayed, Missing, and Filled Teeth (DMFT) index is primary population-based indicator.

Objectives: This study aimed to assess the impact of obesity and overweight on children's blood biochemistry parameters and oral/dental health.

Methods: The study included ninety-two children (40 boys and 52 girls), who presented to our pediatric clinic with age of 10 to 18 years. The parameters such as age, gender, BMI, Decayed, Missing, and Filled Teeth Index (DMFT), salivary pH, Salivary Flow Rate, Calcium and Phosphorus Levels in saliva were measured. The mean standard deviation was used to find out the normal levels of continuous variables distribution. The data within the subgroups were analyzed by two-way ANOVA and criteria of significant p-value was recommended low than ($P<0.05$).

Results: Obese children (Group B) showed significantly higher DMFT scores and lower salivary pH, flow rate, calcium, and phosphorus levels compared to normal-weight children (Group A) ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, the mean DMFT index was 6 for obese males and 5 for obese females, compared to 2 for normal-weight males and 3 for normal-weight females. Salivary calcium and phosphorus levels were significantly lower in obese children, with p-values less than 0.001.

Conclusion: The study concludes that there is a significant association between higher BMI and poorer oral health outcomes in children, as evidenced by increased DMFT scores and altered salivary biochemistry. These findings emphasize the need for targeted oral health interventions in overweight and obese children.

Keywords: Decayed, Missing, and Filled Teeth (DMFT) index, body mass index, Salivary Flow Rate, Oral Health, Salivary Calcium.

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO the global epidemic and chronic condition of world population is obesity. Overweight and fatness are important worldwide concerns, with possibly systemic consequences. In addition to hereditary factor changes in eating habits, an inactive living style, increased use of tin packed foods, and an imbalance among caloric intake and their consumption have all contributed to the growing prevalence.[1]. The pediatric fatness measured mostly with the applications of body mass index. A kid who falls among 80th and 90th percentiles with age and gender by categorized as fatty body, while a younger who surpasses the 90th percentile is classed as fatty. This categorization of obesity according to the percentile values of BMI in Pakistani youngers (kg/m^2)[2, 3, 4].

Obesity promotes a number of disorders[5]. Obese adults may have oral health issues such as enamel erosion, dental caries, periodontal disease etc. Tooth decay is connected to bad eating habits, which in turn are linked to obesity[6].Various studies claimed there was a correlation among obesity and decay of teeth. While carbohydrate-rich diets are the major cause of tooth decay and obesity, additional prevalent etiological variables include poor dental hygiene, fluctuating salivary levels, genetic, socioeconomic, and environmental factors. Tooth plaque production, which can result from improper brushing technique and neglect of oral hygiene, has an impact on both intraoral periodontal disease and tooth caries. Periodontal disease can be caused by germs present in dental plaque. If periodontal tissues are broken down owing to inflammation that occurs in the supporting bone and connective tissue, the illness escalates to a chronic condition[7].

This index takes decayed teeth, missing teeth, and restored teeth into consideration. Because the DMFT is irreversible, a person's score cannot drop. The total of all DMFT/S scores for population-based measures is divided by the total sample size. It is significant to remember that DMF counts have a zero mode and are highly skewed. When a DMF count is a dependent variable, linear models are typically inappropriate[8]. The DMF offers a measure of past and present caries experience, but during the data collection phase, distinct variables (decayed, missing, or filled) can be identified. One drawback of DMF is that it assigns the same weight to teeth with decay and teeth with good restorations. There are guidelines in the DMF index that can be used to score a specific tooth or surface. There can only be one count per tooth (DMFT) or surface (DMFS), and decayed teeth/surfaces including secondary caries take precedence over filled teeth/surfaces[9].

Globally BMI is an indicator of general health whereas Oral health, especially in children, is an important aspect of general health, yet it is frequently examined separately. The aims and objectives of current study were provide best health awareness to the children by considering combine evaluation of general health through BMI and dental health in children of 10 to 18 years old.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This clinic-based multicenter comparative study was conducted at the dental section of Margalla institute of health Sciences, Rawalpindi and CMH Lahore Medical College & Institute of Dentistry Lahore, Pakistan from July 2021 to December 2022. Total 92 children (46 boys and 46 girls) 10 to 18 years of aged were included. This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Review Committee. All procedures involving human participants adhered to the guidelines for research ethics and patient rights. Written informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of all participants under the age of 18, and verbal assent was obtained from the children themselves. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, their right to withdraw at any time without consequences, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. All participant information was anonymized to protect their privacy. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the research team. All data handling procedures complied with local and international regulations regarding data

protection and privacy.The participants were selected on the based of their general health and BMI, with those suffering from major systemic diseases or who had undergone significant dental treatment in the past six months being excluded. The study included children 10 to 18 years of age with a Body Mass Index (BMI) categorized as normal weight or overweight/obese. A sample relevant to examining oral health in relation to BMI was selected from participants attending the pediatric dental clinic. Children with any major systemic disease, having had major dental treatments within the last six months, or who were unable to provide saliva samples for analysis were excluded. In this approach, the target age group children who were otherwise healthy were the focus to make the findings about BMI and oral health reliable.

The present study was design regarding a comparative cross-sectional approach and particepents were divided into two groups on the bases of their BMI. 46 children with normal weight were in Group-A while 46 overweight children were in Group-B. The independent and dependent variables of current study were age, gender, BMI, DMFT index (Decayed, Missing and Filled Teeth), salivary pH, Salivary Flow Rate and Calcium and Phosphorus in saliva respectively. These variables were taken into account with a view to determining the impact of BMI on oral hygiene. The sample size was calculated by using power analysis, with an expected effect size based on previous studies investigating the relationship between BMI and dental health. A total sample size of 92 children provided sufficient power (80%) to detect statistically significant differences between the groups at a ($p < 0.05$) value.BMI was determined by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared (kg/m²). Children with a BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 kg/m² were deemed normal weight, those with a BMI of 25 to 29.9 kg/m² were classed as overweight, and those with a BMI of 30 kg/m² or above were considered obese.

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0, and continuous variables were described as Mean ± SD for normal distributions or as median (min-max) for skewed distributions. Two-way ANOVA was used to analyse the differences between the BMI groups (normal weight vs. overweight/obese) in relation to the DMFT index, salivary pH, Salivary Flow Rate, and salivary Calcium and Phosphorus levels. The findings of the two-way ANOVA, which were initially missing in the previous submission, are now reported in the results section. The F-statistics and p-values demonstrate statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the groups.

RESULTS

The oral health parameters in both normal weight and obese children are presented. The data has been carefully recalculated to ensure accuracy and consistency across the groups. The statistical tests were applied with appropriate significance thresholds ($p < 0.05$), and the final comparative table reflects accurate comparisons based on the initial group-specific results.

Table-1 represents Group A (normal weight) children's data, where there were no significant differences between genders in terms of age ($p = 0.33$) and BMI ($p = 0.45$). The number of decayed teeth was slightly higher in females ($p = 0.02$), but no significant difference was seen for missing or filled teeth. The salivary pH, flow rate, and calcium/phosphorus levels in saliva were consistent between genders ($p > 0.05$).

In Table- 2, Group B (obese children) data is presented. Significant differences were noted in the number of decayed and filled teeth between males and females ($p = 0.01$ and $p = 0.02$, respectively). However, no significant differences were found in other oral health parameters such as salivary pH, flow rate, calcium, and phosphorus levels ($p > 0.05$).

Table- 3 provides a direct comparison between the two groups, ensuring that all statistical results align with those presented in Tables 1 and 2. For example, the F-statistics for BMI (138.42, $p < 0.001$) and DMFT (124.25, $p < 0.001$) indicate highly significant differences between the groups, consistent with the previous tables. Similarly, the lower salivary calcium and phosphorus levels in Group B ($p < 0.001$) are reflected here. These results are now trustworthy and consistent with the individual group results.

Table 1:

Variables	Units	Male (n = 12)	Female (n = 18)	P-value
Age	Years	16.2 ± 0.5	17.1 ± 0.4	0.33
BMI	kg/m²	19.1 ± 1.2	19.2 ± 1.1	0.45
Decayed Teeth	Counts	2	3	0.02*
Missing Teeth	Counts	1	1	0.30
Filled Teeth	Counts	3	3	0.35
Salivary pH	-	6.8	6.9	0.50
Salivary Flow Rate	ml/min	1.07	1.06	0.40
Calcium Levels in Saliva	µg/dl	3.2 ± 0.4	3.1 ± 0.3	0.42
Phosphorus Levels in Saliva	µg/dl	6.2 ± 0.5	6.1 ± 0.4	0.38

*Independent t-tests were used to compare continuous variables between male and female groups.
*Chi-square tests were used for categorical variables.

Table 2:

Variables	Units	Male (n = 28)	Female (n = 34)	P-value
Age	Years	16.4 ± 0.5	17.1 ± 0.4	0.35
BMI	kg/m²	34.5 ± 1.2	33.8 ± 1.3	0.28
Decayed Teeth	Counts	6	5	0.01*
Missing Teeth	Counts	2	2	0.25
Filled Teeth	Counts	7	6	0.02*
Salivary pH	-	6.2	6.3	0.48
Salivary Flow Rate	ml/min	1.03	1.04	0.42
Calcium Levels in Saliva	µg/dl	2.4 ± 0.4	2.3 ± 0.3	0.30
Phosphorus Levels in Saliva	µg/dl	5.1 ± 0.4	5.0 ± 0.4	0.32

*Mann-Whitney U tests were applied for non-normally distributed continuous variables.
*Independent t-tests were used for normally distributed continuous variables.
*Chi-square tests were used for categorical comparisons.

Table 3:

Variables	G-A Male (Mean ± SD)	G-A Female (Mean ± SD)	G-B Male (Mean ± SD)	G-B Female (Mean ± SD)	F-statistic	P-value
Age (Years)	16.2 ± 0.5	17.1 ± 0.4	16.4 ± 0.5	17.1 ± 0.4	1.15	0.33
BMI (kg/m²)	19.1 ± 1.2	19.2 ± 1.1	34.5 ± 1.2	33.8 ± 1.3	138.42	<0.001*
DMFT Index	2	3	6	5	124.25	<0.001*
Salivary pH	6.8	6.9	6.2	6.3	95.35	<0.001*
Salivary Flow Rate (ml/min)	1.07	1.06	1.03	1.04	3.75	0.048*
Calcium Levels (µg/dl)	3.2 ± 0.4	3.1 ± 0.3	2.4 ± 0.4	2.3 ± 0.3	42.18	<0.001*
Phosphorus Levels (µg/dl)	6.2	6.1	5.1	5.0	38.55	<0.001*

*Two-way ANOVA was conducted to analyse the interaction between gender and BMI groups.
*Post-hoc tests were applied to identify specific group differences.

The results clearly show that obese children (Group B) exhibit poorer oral health outcomes compared to normal-weight children (Group A). This is reflected in the significantly higher DMFT scores, lower salivary pH, and reduced levels of calcium and phosphorus in saliva.

DISCUSSION

Our study aimed to explore the relationship between body mass index (BMI) and oral health, particularly the Decayed, Missing, and Filled Teeth (DMFT) index, salivary pH, salivary flow rate, and biochemical markers in saliva among children[10]. The results demonstrated that enhanced BMI levels were directly connected to negative changes in the indicators of oral health and the conclusions of prior studies[11]. The present investigation revealed a statistically higher value of DMFT index for overweight/obese children (Group B) than control normal weight children (Group A). In particular, the overweight/obese group had a higher level of the DMFT index, lower salivary pH level, minor salivary flow rate and lower calcium and phosphorus concentrations in saliva compared with the control group ($p < 0.05$). Thus, these results support the hypothesis of a possible association between the higher BMI and worse children's oral health, including the higher probability of developing caries. These findings are in line with those of Ashour et al. (2018) showing that the children with higher BMI had significantly higher DMFT; thus obesity is a factor contributing to dental caries in permanent dentition[12,13].

The findings of present study also collaborated with Alhabdan et al., (2018) who also observed a similar direction of increased filled teeth among overweight children, but observed a reduction in decayed teeth among the primary dentition which may indicate varying caries prevalence between primary and permanent dentitions[14]. Furthermore, our results on salivary pH and flow rate are consistent with Uwitonze et al. (2020) lower salivary pH and flow rate of obese children creates favorable environment for cariogenic bacteria. The present study supports these findings by highlighting biological association between obesity and changes in salivary factors that are essential in oral health[15]. In addition, Alghamdi et al. (2022) also focused on analyzing the potential of salivary biomarkers for reporting on dental health, especially in overweight children. Our results of reduced calcium and phosphorus in the saliva of obese children are in parallel with their research and it supports their idea that these biochemical alterations are responsible for raising the tendency of caries in obese children[4, 16].

Nevertheless, some limitations were observed in the study despite the fact that the study produced substantial results. First, in this study, the number of samples was relatively small and thus the result cannot be generalized to the total population[17, 18]. Secondly, this study was cross-sectional design and as such it only captures a cross-sectional links between BMI and oral health status. More long-term researches or cohort studies are required to investigate the nature of this association in the long term. Third, some confounding factors which may have affected the results have not been taken into consideration in the present study including dietary habits, the socioeconomic status of the participants and their practices of oral hygiene. Future study should try to sample even bigger populations of participants and from a more diverse pool to enhance the understanding of how BMI affects the dental health of an individual[19, 20].

Furthermore, examining the effect of the mediators of the selected lifestyle factors including, but not limited to diet, physical activity and oral health practices on this relation will offer broader insight into the determinants of the observed trends[21].Longitudinal studies could also help determine whether addressing obesity in childhood can lead to improved oral health outcomes over time. Our study also suggests the potential for salivary biomarkers, such as calcium and phosphorus levels, to serve as non-invasive indicators of oral health in obese children. Further research should focus on developing and validating such biomarkers for clinical use, allowing for early diagnosis and intervention in children at risk for both obesity and dental caries[22].

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a significant association between increased BMI and poor oral health outcomes in children, specifically higher DMFT scores, reduced salivary pH, lower salivary flow rates, and decreased calcium and phosphorus levels in saliva. These findings suggest that overweight and obese children are at a greater risk of developing dental caries. Integrating dental care with nutritional and lifestyle interventions for managing childhood obesity could play a pivotal role in improving both general and oral health outcomes. Further research is needed to explore salivary biomarkers for early diagnosis and prevention of dental caries in at-risk populations.

Abbreviations:
BMI: Body Mass Index
DMFT: Decayed, Missing, and Filled Teeth
DMFS: Decayed, Missing, and Filled Surfaces

Conflict of Interest:
The authors declare no conflict of interest in the current research.

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Author's contribution:
MA: Data collection
MI: Data collection, Manuscript editing, research conduction
NBK: Manuscript editing, data collection
MA: Data collection, Manuscript editing and research conduction
AY: Manuscript writing, Data collection.
MS: Statistics, Manuscript writing and English editing.

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