

ABSTRACT

Although health and hygiene is an individual responsibility, it is also vital that institutions and the government provide adequate teaching, guidance and support. Current data on the status of student health is still insufficient, especially in the area of personal hygiene among elementary students. However, the data provided, for example by DMF-T = 3.6 suggested that the main reason for the low standards in personal hygiene and the main causes of illness are due to poor oral hygiene and the lack of knowledge of importance of dental health. In other words, major changes are needed in the behavior of students towards hygiene to improve their current status of health. Behavioral changes are influenced by many factors and great efforts have been implemented to modify behavior regarding personal health issues. Through this study, the researcher attempted to find out more information on the current trends of attitude and behavior towards personal health and, particularly dental hygiene, and the possibilities for change and improvement.

The quasi experiment study design was applied to year five Elementary level school students. The 134 sample students were divided into two groups. One group was quite experimental, whereas, the other was more controlled. The data was obtained by carrying out tests and observations and the analysis was processed on LISREL software to determine the results.

The results clearly showed that the covert behavior of the students was sequential. This was directly in agreement with B.S. Bloom's theory of stages in behavior where it is shown that the mechanism of covert behavioral changes began with cognitive, leading to affective and finally ending in psychomotor behavior. Compared to this the changes in overt behavior jumped directly to overt behavior from cognitive without going through the stages of affective and psychomotor behavior. The students proper behavioral changes started from covert and ended with overt. This indicated that there are weaknesses in the teaching and learning process.

Due to poor teaching on the importance of dental hygiene and a lack of understanding by the students, the attitude and behavior in dental health was of a very low standard. It is suggested that teachers should increase the support and guidance to students to help them develop affective and psychomotor behavior for the development of their own individual health.

Key word : The behavioral change mechanism, elementary student behavior, reinforcement, oral hygiene