

ABSTRACT

Background: The World Health Organization recognizes that; although child mortality has reduced globally, there are still some challenges pertaining to poor child health care such as the belief in false teeth (“ebiinyo”) particularly Africa, leading to poor practices like the removal of deciduous canine tooth-buds of infants below 2 years, referring them to as “maggots”, “false teeth”, nylon or worms, also considered responsible for diarrheas, vomiting, fever as well as growth retardation in children. The study objective was to: find out the beliefs and practices of care-takers in regard to false teeth in infants within low economic communities such as Kisugu and to identify the demographic characteristics commonly affected.

Methodology: The study targeted Kisugu slum resident caretakers aged 18 years and above, who brought children to Kisugu health centre, for health care services as respondents. Descriptive study design was used in order to describe the results quantitatively. This enabled the researcher to collect data by using a questionnaire in a densely populated area with low standard of living and other challenges in its environment and health care services and determine how these factors eventually lead to the belief and practices of false-teeth. The study then looked at all these areas-mentioned, so as to assess the influencing factors.

Results: 75% of the respondents believed in the presence of false-teeth, 63% of these highly associated their cause with witchcraft, and 95% of all care-takers interviewed took their children to the with-doctors for either false-teeth extraction or application of local herbs as treatment for false-teeth. It was discovered that; 86.6% of the care-takers were young parents (18-35years) they can easily be misled. 44.2 % of the respondents were Roman Catholics, and these are well-known for discouraging family planning and thus produce higher numbers of children per family. Finally 75% of cater-takers in this study had lower level of education or no formal education at all, which was also a factor considered to fuel such beliefs and practices related to false-teeth.

Conclusion: False-teeth is still a big threat to the health of infants, and greatly contributes to infant mortality in Uganda