

**Knowledge, Attitude, Practices and Challenges Regarding Oral Health
Among Pregnant Women in Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District,
Limpopo Province, South Africa**

By

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Oral health is an integral part of general health and wellbeing. It is of particular interest in pregnant women because they are at increased risk of developing periodontal diseases because of hormone fluctuations that occur during pregnancy. This rise in hormone levels often results to swelling of the gums and this provides a conducive environment for microorganism to cause oral infection. The aim of this study is to assess the Knowledge, Attitude, Practices and challenges regarding oral health among pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in Thulamela Municipality.

Methodology: A quantitative study using cross sectional design. The study involved 315 pregnant women attending antenatal clinic in Thulamela. Simple and systematic sampling methods were used to select participants. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Chi-square test was used to compare differences between variables and statistical difference was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results: A total of 315 pregnant women participated in this study, their age ranged between 15 to 44 years of age with a mean age of 25.1 year (SD=5.8). Thirty eight percent were between 20-24 years and 48.9% showed high level of education. Almost 65% of the participants believe that there is a relationship between oral health and pregnancy. Just 55.6% have positive attitude towards the oral health facility and services provided in the antenatal clinic they attend and 47.2% believe that unborn baby can be affected by poor maternal oral care. Twenty six percent of the participants do not visit the dentist at all while 39% will visit the clinic only when there is a dental problem and a 32.1% reported that their antenatal clinic does not offer oral health services. Sixty three percent of the participants indicated that they have challenges accessing transport from home to the clinic and 60.0% of the participants reported fear of pain as the main reason for not consulting with a dentist.

Conclusion: This study shows high level of oral health knowledge (score of 3-4) among 56.6% of the participants but this knowledge has not positively influenced their attitude and practices. Therefore, a specific oral health programme is needed to help inform pregnant women in the community.