

Effect of School Eye Health Education Program on Eye Health Knowledge and Practice Among School Students in Rural Aligarh: An Interventional Study: Reg No: 346

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ABSTRACT

Background: Vision impairment in children remains a significant public health concern, with undiagnosed refractive errors adversely affecting academic performance and quality of life. Prolonged exposure to digital devices and near-distance activities has escalated the risk of myopia among school-age children. Rural populations are especially vulnerable due to limited awareness and restricted access to eye care services. Despite the recognized role of school-based health education in shaping early health behaviours, few Indian studies have evaluated structured interventions targeting ocular health literacy in rural settings. **Objectives:** To assess baseline knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) regarding eye health among rural school students and to evaluate the effectiveness of a targeted health education intervention in improving these parameters. **Methods:** A single-arm quasi-experimental study was conducted in Jawan Block, Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh. A total of 175 students from Classes VI–VIII across two randomly selected junior high schools participated. A validated KAP questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$) was administered at baseline and at three-month follow-up. The intervention comprised eye health education using IEC charts and posters developed from the AIIMS Primary Eye Care booklet, supplemented by visual acuity testing and referrals. **Results:** Significant improvements were observed across all three domains. Knowledge of ocular symptoms rose from 65.3% to 88.2% ($p < 0.001$), awareness of myopia from 25.3% to 66.0% ($p < 0.001$), and awareness of eye donation from 24.0% to 83.3% ($p < 0.001$). Attitudinally, spectacle-related stigma declined significantly (25.3% to 10.4%, $p < 0.001$), while support for peers wearing glasses increased from 60.7% to 91.7% ($p < 0.001$). In practice, regular outdoor activity improved (70.0% to 84.7%, $p = 0.002$), use of unprescribed eye drops fell (34.0% to 20.8%, $p = 0.011$), and eye clinic attendance rose from 40.0% to 56.9% ($p = 0.004$). **Conclusion:** A structured, contextually appropriate eye health education intervention produced significant improvements in ocular health KAP among rural school children. Integration of eye health education into school curricula, with active participation of teachers, parents, and local health workers, is recommended to sustain these gains and reduce avoidable childhood visual impairment.

KEYWORDS

Eye health education, School Children, School-based intervention, Refractive errors, Ocular health literacy