Discussion
In this study, 75 (19.6%) anganwadi and 153 (39.6%) kindergarten children had visited a dentist. It was also observed that out of the 382 anganwadi children who were examined, 81.4% were affected by dental caries as compared to 62.3% among the 386 kindergarten children. The prevalence of dental caries is higher than those found in another study conducted in Mangalore\(^4\).

Dental caries prevalence in the present study is similar to those found in some regions of Brazil such as Natal-RN and Rio de Janeiro State, as well as in the public schools of Argentina\(^5\). In this study caries prevalence was higher in those studying in anganwadi than those studying in kindergarten. Freire MGM, Melo RB, Silva SA reported in their study that caries prevalence was higher in the group of children attending public nursery schools than those attending private ones\(^6\). Koloway B, Kailis DG\(^1\) observed caries prevalence of 90.5% in urban and 95.9% in rural children in Indonesia. Tewari A, Chawla HS\(^8\) observed higher caries prevalence among children living in urban areas in high socio-economic status (52.31%) than those from low and middle socio-economic status (50.30%).

In the present study the mean dmft was 4.62 among anganwadi and 3.42 among kindergarten children. These scores were comparable to the mean dmft score (3.8) observed by Seow WK, Amartunuge A, Bennett R\(^7\) in Aboriginal pre-school children in Brisbane and 3.0 by Al-Mohammadi SM, Rugg-Gunn AJ, Butler TJ\(^5\) in 1994 among boys aged 4 years in Riyadh. In Brazil, the mean dmft at the age of 3 was 1.33, at the age of 4 it was 2.48 and at the age of 5 it was 3.50. The mean dmft found in this study was higher than those of Freire MCM, Melo RB, Silva SA\(^8\) Sudha P, Bhasin S\(^8\) and Holbrook WP, Kristinsson MJ, Gunnarsdottir S, Briem B (mean dmft 2.4)\(^8\). Similar findings were seen in a study reported by Kumar MP, Joseph T, Verma RB, Jayanthi M\(^8\) in 2005.

In the present study, the mean number of decayed deciduous teeth (dt) for the anganwadi children was 4.86 (3.70) and 3.70 (3.70) for the kindergarten children. These findings are in accordance with the observation of Sayegh A, Dini EL, Holt RD et al\(^10\).

The mean number of filled teeth among anganwadi children was 0.63 (0.51) and in kindergarten children 0.95 (0.75). The mean number of filled teeth was 0.3 (1.00) in Seow WK, Amartunuge A, Bennett R et al study\(^7\).

Summary and conclusions
- Majority of children from both the groups used toothpaste and toothbrush for cleaning. Majority of anganwadi children cleaned once daily compared to kindergarten where majority of children cleaned twice daily.
- A significant negative association between dental caries experience and frequency of cleaning the teeth was found in this study.
- Regarding previous visit to a dentist, more number of kindergarten children had visited the dentist compared to anganwadi children and the main reason to visit the dentist was tooth pain in kindergarten children.
- The caries prevalence and mean dmft was higher among anganwadi children. Prevalence of filled teeth was higher among kindergarten children.

Recommendations
The high caries experience in anganwadi and kindergarten children in this study is a cause for concern. With approximately 25 million children aged 0-5 years, a dentist-based and treatment-based oral health service would consume a very large part of the nation’s resources. Therefore, an oral health programme aimed at increasing preventive measures and dental health education needs to be initiated.

Monitoring of dental health should take place before the age of five. Educational programs involving direct contact with pregnant women, parents and other caretakers, such as baby sitters and grandparents, are essential.

Parents should be educated about the need for earlier and regular dental attendance. They should be made aware of the brushing methods, daily use of an accepted fluoride dentifrice, usage of pit and fissure sealants and the importance of topical fluoride application for children.

References