

Factors Affecting Oral Health Service Utilization of Differently-Abled School Children in Kathmandu, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Dental caries and gingivitis are the prominent oral diseases among children with social disadvantage such as differently-abled children. Oral health service utilization (OHSU) of these children can be even more challenging. This study evaluates the prevalence of dental caries and gingivitis and determines the factors affecting OHSU of the differently-abled school children in Kathmandu, using the Anderson health care utilization model.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted in the schools in Kathmandu that enroll the differently-abled children from which a total of 400 school children aged 7-18 years old were randomly selected for the study. The children's oral health status was examined by a dentist. Data on predisposing factors, enabling factors, and need factors of the children were collected from their legal guardians, using a self-administered questionnaire. A multiple logistic regression model was performed to assess the association of the predisposing, enabling, and need factors with OHSU.

Results: The prevalence of dental caries and gingivitis of the children was 86.16% and 52.83% respectively. The OHSU of the children is associated with a range of enabling factors including, good oral health knowledge of parents (OR=12.63; 95%CI=3.14-50.76), good oral health behaviors of the parents (OR=11.3; 95%CI =1.01-04.91), and service affordability (OR=5.25, 95%CI=1.51-18.21). Among need factors, only toothache shows a significant increased use of oral health services (OR=9.53, 95%CI=2.15-42.27). The analysis does not find any associations between the predisposing factors and OHSU.

Conclusion: Differently-abled children school children in Kathmandu are facing with an extremely high prevalence of dental caries and gingivitis. It is also found that the parental socioeconomic status and the children's oral health status play a significant role in the use of oral health services. The findings suggest that oral health education for parents and differently-abled children is necessary to promote the increased use of oral health services and thus, reduce the prevalence of dental caries and gingivitis among the differently-abled school children.

Key-words: oral health service utilization, dental caries, gingivitis, differently-abled school children