

ABSTRACT

Objective – The objective of this study was to assess the prevalence and impact of oral pain in 8-year old school children in Badulla Education Division.

Method – A descriptive cross-sectional study carried out and a total of 614 eight-year-old children were selected from Badulla Education Division using multi-stage cluster sampling method combined with Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) technique. All 614 subjects were interviewed and oral examination was done. Children were given a parental questionnaire, to be filled by their parents. Data on impact of oral pain on parents were collected in terms of effect on their daily activities, taking leave from job, effect on sleep and mental suffering. With respect to children, impact was assessed in terms of effect on school attendance, eating, sleep and play.

Results – Lifetime prevalence of oral pain was 49% according to the children while it was 53% according to the parents/guardians. Prevalence of oral pain within the last 2 months was 24% according to the children and 31% as reported by parents. Sixty-five per cent experienced more than one episode of oral pain within the last 2 months. But only 19% sought professional attention for their oral pain. Statistically significant associations were observed between the experience of pain and ethnicity ($P<0.001$), parents' level of education ($P<0.001$), monthly family income ($P<0.05$) and dmft index ($P<0.001$). Of the total sample, 19% of children and 20% of parents reported one or more impact due to child's oral pain within the last 2 months. The most commonly reported impact by child was 'eating affected' (14%) while the most commonly reported impact by parents was the mental suffering they had to undergo due to child's oral pain (16%). Statistically significant associations were observed between the degree of pain and effect on eating ($P<0.05$) and sleep ($P<0.05$) in children. There was a significant association between the degree of pain and mental suffering to parents due to child's pain ($P<0.05$).

Conclusions and Recommendations – The study revealed that prevalence of oral pain is high among this group of school children and has a considerable impact on child's quality of life, education and other activities. It also revealed that the child's oral pain has a substantial impact on parents' daily living. Therefore the study shows the importance of identifying and treating children suffering from oral pain, especially at the School Medical Inspection (SMI). The study also reveals the importance of assessing the actual burden of disease in terms of "impact" and the importance of incorporating 'assessing of impact of oral conditions' to the national and regional level oral health surveys.