

I. ABSTRACT

Psychosocial impact that emanate from common oral disorders related to dental appearance is an emerging issue, among today's adolescents. Thus establishing the meaning and significance of the psychosocial impact is a priority area in oral health research. However there are limited attempts of research to ascertain the potential link between oral disorders and psychosocial impact of dental appearance. Therefore the aim of the present study is to quantify the psychosocial implications of dental appearance and to understand the oral health status, oral health needs and socio demographic characteristics of the adolescents who subjected to those implications.

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among 626, 15- years- old school children from nine government schools in Anuradhapura municipal council area. Cluster sampling method combined with probability proportionate to size technique was used to select the sample. The data were collected through a self administrated questionnaire survey, using the modified version of psychosocial impact of dental aesthetic questionnaire (PIDAQ). Informed consent of the parents was obtained prior to conduct the study.

According to the results obtained, 37% of students were psychosocially affected due to their dental appearance. Sex, type of school attending, highest level of parental educational attainment and paternal occupation status were the only socio-demographic variables significantly associated with the psychosocial impact of dental appearance. Female adolescents were more psychosocially affected than their male counterparts. It was also able to identify a social gradient in psychosocial impact of dental appearance with children from lower social background being those most seriously affected. This was indicated by the father's occupation status and the parental educational level. Students in mixed schools were less psychosocially affected than the students in girls' or boys' schools. Perceived oral health status and perceived need for oral care also emerged as significant predictors of psychosocial impact of dental appearance.

Since substantial proportion of school children were psychosocially affected the knowledge about the extent and significance of psychosocial impact is important for the planning and evaluation of treatment and preventive options. On the basis of results, it is reasonable to suggest that psychosocial dimensions, different perceived oral health problems, perceived need for oral care and some socio-demographic characteristics should be considered simultaneously during assessment of oral health needs of adolescents.

Key words: Dental appearance; Psychosocial impact; Adolescents.