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EFFECT OF DENTURE STATUS ON ORAL HEALTH RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE OF INSTITUTIONALIZED OLDER INDIVIDUALS IN SRI LANKA

**I. P. Thilakumara¹, R. M. Jayasingha², M. L. Pathirathna³,
S. Kularathna⁴, R. D. Jayasinghe⁵**

*¹Department of Prosthetic Dentistry,
Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya
²Teaching Hospital, Kurunegala*

³Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya

⁴Department of Health Economics, University of Griffith, Melbourne, Australia

*⁵Department of Oral Medicine and Periodontology,
Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya*

Tooth loss can have a considerable impact on the oral health related quality of life (OHRQL) of the elderly by affecting the ability to chew and esthetics. Dentures are often recommended for those who have missing teeth assuming that dentures could restore function and esthetics and thereby improve the OHRQL. Even though the effect of tooth loss and the denture status have previously been investigated in free living older individuals in Sri Lanka, no studies have been carried out to assess the same in institutionalized older individuals. The objective of the present study was to assess the effect of the denture status on oral health related quality of life of institutionalized older individuals in Sri Lanka.

The sample consisted of 408 institutionalized older individuals who were 60 years and above with at least one missing tooth. Those who were very sick, bed ridden, mentally disoriented or with hearing and speech impairments were excluded from the study. An interviewer administered validated Sinhala version of the Oral Health Impact Profile-14 (OHIP-14) was used to assess the oral impacts experienced by the participants. The overall prevalence of oral impacts was determined by the percentage of subjects who reported one or more impacts on a 'fairly often' or a 'very often' basis. The prevalence of an individual oral impact item was determined by the percentage of subjects who had reported that impact on a 'fairly often' or a 'very often' basis. An oral examination was carried out following the interview.

Thirty six percent of the sample was edentulous, out of which 31.7% was wearing complete dentures. Sixty four percent of the sample had 1 to 31 missing teeth, out of which only 16.5% was wearing partial dentures. In the partially dentate group, the overall prevalence of impacts was 28.6% and 44.2% in non-denture wearers and denture wearers, respectively. In the edentulous group, the overall prevalence of impacts was 26.7% in non denture wearers and 55.3% in denture wearers. Oral impacts were significantly associated with denture wear (Chi-square=16.8, P<0.05). The most commonly reported impact items in partially dentate and edentulous groups were 'pain' and 'unsatisfactory diet', respectively. 'Uncomfortable to eat' and 'dissatisfaction with food' were the other commonly reported impacts.

Denture status appears to exert a significant impact on the oral health related quality of life in institutionalized older individuals in Sri Lanka.