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ABSTRACT BOOK



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Oral Health-related Quality of Life of Preschool Children based on their Caries Status and Severity

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Oral health-related quality of life (OHRQOL) in early childhood is an important health indicator, but data on its association with dental caries among Malaysian preschool children, especially in Kuantan, Pahang, are limited. This study presents one of the first detailed assessments of OHRQOL in relation to caries status and severity among preschoolers in Malaysia, providing baseline insights for national and regional oral health policy. This study aimed to assess OHRQOL in relation to dental caries status and severity among preschool children in Kuantan. **Materials and methods:** Using a cross-sectional design, 55 children aged three to six years were recruited from two purposively selected kindergartens. OHRQOL was measured through caregiver responses to the Malay-ECOHIS, capturing child and family impacts, while caries status was clinically assessed with dmft scores. Caries status was categorised as absent (dmft = 0) or present (dmft ≥ 1), while severity as no (0), moderate (1-2), or high (≥3). Data were analysed using Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis, Pearson Chi-square, and Spearman correlation tests. **Results:** Caries prevalence was 89.1%, and children had a median ECOHIS score of 15.8 (IQR: 13.2-17.2), indicating substantial OHRQOL impairment. OHRQOL was poorer among children than families. The lowest scores were observed among those with high caries severity and low household income, i.e., <RM 4,850/month; $p = 0.02$. **Conclusion:** Caries status and severity are important determinants of OHRQOL among Malaysian preschoolers. Nonetheless, the small sample size, non-random selection, and reliance on proxy reporting limit generalisability, underscoring the need for larger studies to guide public health interventions nationwide.

Keywords: Cross-sectional studies; dental caries; Malaysia; oral health; quality of life