4037 Associations between SES, Oral Health Behaviors, and Missing Teeth

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Literature describing associations between socio-economic status (SES), oral health behaviors (OHB), and missing teeth in South Korean adults is sparse. Objectives: To examine the effects of SES and OHB on the prevalence of missing teeth among Korean adults. Methods: The National Health Insurance Corporation (NHIC) is the largest Korean health insurance group catering to government employees. This cross-sectional study analyzed data from 966,693 Korean civil servants insured by NHIC in the year 2000. The dependent variable was the prevalence of °Ý1 missing tooth, as assessed by clinical dental examination. Explanatory variables included age; sex; SES factors such as income, occupation, and residence; OHB such as methods and frequency of tooth brushing, eating habits, and dental service utilization. Following univariate and bivariable analyses, unconditional multiple logistic regression was employed for multivariable analyses modeling the probability of having °Ý1 missing tooth. Results: 30.2% were women, and overall mean (SD) age was 39.1(11.0) years. Overall, 19.1% had °Ý1 missing tooth. Women had significantly fewer missing teeth than men. After adjusting for other variables, income was the most significant independent predictor for missing teeth [Odds Ratio (OR); 95% confidence interval (CI) =1.59; 1.53, 1.66]. Other significant independent predictors included area of residence (OR=1.44; 1.41, 1.47) and occupation (OR=1.15; 1.13, 1.17). The effects of OHB on missing teeth were lower than those of SES factors - e.g., eating sweet food (OR=1.03; 1.01, 1.05), frequent brushing (OR=0.90; 0.89, 0.92), using appropriate brushing methods (OR=0.93; 0.92, 0.95), and brushing before sleeping (OR=0.98; 0.97, 1.00).

Conclusion: We observed that SES factors were associated with missing teeth independently of OHB factors. Furthermore, missing teeth may be affected more strongly by SES factors than by oral health behaviors, such as brushing habits and diet patterns. This study was supported by the NHIC.

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