

Dental/ Oral health can be defined as being free of mouth and facial pain, oral sores, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth decay and tooth loss, and other diseases/disorders that affect the mouth and oral cavity. The study population was the rural community of Nyamuyanja parish, Nyamuyanja Sub County in Isingiro district.

A cross sectional study design with a simple random sampling technique was used to assess the factors influencing dental care seeking behaviors ranging from the individual to health system related. Using a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire, a total of 432 responses was drawn from the study and analyzed using SPSS 16.

Seeking/ utilization of dental care services was found to be low; for instance, only 135 (32.1%) often sought medical services regarding oral health, 40 (9.3%) sought dental advice, 67 (16.8%), attended dental check up on timely basis, while 109 (28.2%) had at least a family member who had received dental care services in the last 12 months. There was neither oral health sensitization program by VHTs nor any use of preventive dental care services. Individual factors such as level of education and occupation were significant factors in the study ( $p < 0.05$ ).

At individual level, most of the respondents brushed their teeth at least twice a day or were satisfied with the appearance of their own teeth, and that on average, dental pain greatly influenced seeking of dental care services 274 (69.9%), 271 (62.7%) and 222 (51.4%) respectively. It was established that satisfaction with appearance of own teeth was at least significant in the study. The study also revealed that finding a dentist when in need of treatment was not easy. 171 (55.3%) . most of the respondents were within the 5km distance from the nearest dental care facility with majority of them able to walk 367 (85.2%). At the dental facility, the only dental care service offered was reportedly extraction 432 (100%). Availability of the dentist, distance to the nearest dental care facility and means of transport were partly significant in the study ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Utilization of dental care services in Nyamuyanja sub county is generally low which calls for protracted dental health care promotion, /education programs targeting both individuals and dental health care providers by the government , local leaders, local community and health care

development partners.