

**Utilization of Dental Services and Associated Factors Among
Adults Aged 18-45 Years in Lira District**

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Oral health has been neglected globally and yet it has a high burden especially in low- and middle-income countries like Uganda. Uganda has one of the highest burden of oral health conditions globally and yet utilization of the oral health services is still low especially in Northern Uganda. The main objective of the study is to determine the factors associated with utilization of dental care services among adults aged 18-45 years in Lira district.

Methodology: this was a quantitative crosssectional study that was conducted in Lira District. Multistage sampling was used to select 576 respondents. Data was collected using a researcher administered structured questionnaire that was adopted, modified and pretested. Data was analysed in 3 levels including Univariate, bivariate and multivariate levels. Ethical approval was obtained from GUREC-2022-292 and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant authorities.

Results: The response rate of the study was 90%. Utilization of oral health services was 20% among adults aged 18-45 years in 6 months. Multivariate analysis revealed that adults aged 18-45 with incomes above 1,000,000 UGS have higher odds of using dental services (AOR=7.77, $p=0.002$). Those with no formal education (AOR=0.26, $p=0.016$) and poor attitudes (AOR=0.58, $p=0.025$) have lower odds. Cultural influence increases service use (AOR=4.84, $p<0.001$), and private not-for-profit facilities show higher utilization (AOR=4.66, $p=0.001$).

Conclusion: 2 in 10 of the adults aged 18-45 years of age utilize oral services in 6 months. Higher income and positive cultural influences were associated with increased dental service utilization. Conversely, lack of formal education and negative attitudes towards dental care were linked to lower usage. Additionally, private not-for-profit facilities were found to be preferred for dental care.

Recommendation: The Government should support promotion of oral health. The ministry of health should increase utilization of oral health services through raising awareness and improving the quality of services

Keywords: *Utilization, Dental Services, Associated Factors, Adults Aged 18-45 Years, Lira District.*