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Review Article

The Role of Parents in Preventing Children's Dental Health Issues: A Literature Review on Caries and Dental Trauma

Evy Afiyah Syagran[1*]

[1]Department of Dentistry, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Negeri Surabaya

[*]**Correspondence:** Evy Afiyah Syagran, DDS. Department of Dentistry, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia. Email: evysyagran@unesa.ac.id

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Abstract

Background: Dental and oral health issues in children remain a significant concern in various countries, especially dental caries and dental trauma, which can affect the health, function, and quality of life of children. The role of parents is a crucial factor in preventing various dental health issues in children thru the formation of healthy lifestyle behaviors, supervision of oral hygiene, regulation of dietary patterns, and accompaniment in safe physical activities. This study aims to examine the role of parents in preventing children's dental health issues, particularly dental caries and dental trauma, based on research published in national and international journals. **Methods:** This study used a literature review approach with article searches thru the Google Scholar, PubMed, DOAJ, and Garuda databases published between 2019 and 2025. Articles were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria relevant to the research topic, and then analyzed descriptively and thematically. **Results:** Parental involvement plays a significant role in reducing the risk of dental caries thru supervision of tooth brushing, dental health education, dietary regulation, and regular use of dental health services. In addition, parents also play a role in preventing dental trauma thru monitoring their children's physical activities and their ability to provide first aid in case of dental injuries. Contextual factors such as education level, family function, access to healthcare services, and socio-psychological conditions also influence the success of prevention efforts. **Conclusion:** The study shows that the role of parents is a key component in the prevention of caries and dental trauma in children. Therefore, family-based promotive and preventive strategies are needed to optimally improve children's dental and oral health.

Keywords: Parental role; Children dental health; Caries; Primary teeth; Dental trauma

INTRODUCTION

Children's dental and oral health remains a significant issue and challenge in Indonesia to this day. Based on the Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) data from 2018, it is known that the prevalence

rate of dental caries in children aged 3-4 years is 78.3% and in those aged 5-9 years is 84.8%, which is largely caused by incorrect tooth brushing habits in children from an early age[1]. This indicates that almost all children in Indonesia have dental caries issues. In addition, 57.6% of the cases of dental caries in children do not receive optimal treatment. Caries is a chronic infectious disease that impacts systemic health, nutrition, quality of life, and social-emotional development in children[2]. The International Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 data also show that one of the most common dental diseases occurring in children under 5 years old is the issue of caries[3].

Dental health in children is very crucial, especially in preschool-aged children (0–6 years), because during this period, children are in an active stage of growth and development. Therefore, the formation of preventive behaviors toward dental health, such as the habit of brushing teeth and the application of a healthy lifestyle, needs to be instilled from an early age[4]. Early childhood is an important period in the formation of habits that will carry into adulthood, including the habit of maintaining dental and oral hygiene. If dental health behaviors are not established early, children will be more susceptible to dental health issues such as baby bottle tooth decay. Irregular tooth brushing behavior and improper technique remain the main causes of the high incidence of cavities in children. Brushing teeth twice a day, especially before bedtime, is the simplest yet most effective preventive action in preventing cavities because it can reduce the accumulation of plaque and food residues on the tooth surfaces[3]. In addition, the use of fluoride toothpaste and parental supervision during tooth brushing has also been proven to reduce the risk of Early Childhood Caries (ECC) in young children. The low level of parental knowledge regarding the importance of children's dental health is also one of the factors influencing the high incidence of early childhood caries[5].

The high rate of dental caries in children is influenced by a lack of awareness and preventive behavior related to dental care, such as brushing teeth regularly and correctly. The role of parents is very important in providing guidance and examples to children, one of which is related to dental health care. The importance of parental roles in children's dental care, especially brushing teeth from an early age. Parental involvement in activities such as brushing teeth, accompanying, reminding, and providing examples is a significant action in shaping consistent and correct attitudes and behaviors in maintaining dental health for children[6]. Parents play a crucial role in forming attitudes and behaviors related to tooth brushing in children from an early age, as well as in fulfilling the dental care needs of children. Parents who consistently accompany and supervise tooth brushing habits have a lower risk of caries occurrence[7].

In besides having a role in the prevention of dental caries, parental participation is also important in preventing various other dental and oral health issues in children. One of the problems that often happens to children is dental trauma. Children who are active in playing and participating in physical activities or sports have a higher risk of experiencing injuries to their teeth and oral tissues. Therefore, the role of parents is not only limited to teaching children the habits of maintaining dental hygiene and controlling caries risk factors but also includes efforts to prevent dental injuries by monitoring children's activities and educating them about safety during physical activity. Many people still believe that children's dental health, especially primary teeth, is not important because these teeth will eventually be replaced by permanent teeth. This perception leads some parents to believe that early dental care for children is not very necessary, resulting in low attention to children's dental and oral health. In fact, primary teeth play an important role in the growth and development process of children, such as aiding in chewing function, speech development, maintaining the space for permanent teeth eruption, and supporting the child's nutritional status and overall health. Damage to primary teeth can cause systemic impacts, such as eating disorders, pain, infections, sleep disturbances, and even affect the child's physical growth and overall quality of life[8].

The role of parents is a key factor in efforts to minimize dental health problems in children through the development of healthy behaviors, monitoring of dental and oral hygiene, control

of eating habits, the access to dental health services, and support of safe physical activities. Participation by parents is believed to contribute to the reduction of the risk of dental caries and dental trauma in children. Therefore, this literature review aims to analyze various forms of parental involvement in maintaining children's dental and oral health, as well as to identify factors related to the prevention of caries and dental trauma based on scientific evidence from national and international research.

METHODS

This research uses a literature review type of study with data sources obtained thru the search of scientific journals in the Google Scholar, PubMed, and SINTA databases using the keywords "parental role," "children's dental health," "caries," "primary teeth," parental role, early childhood caries, and children dental health. The article search was conducted systematically to obtain literature relevant to the research topic. The inclusion criteria in this study include scientific articles published in the last 5 years (2019–2025), available in full text, both national and international in scope, written in Indonesian or English, and discussing the relationship between parental roles and the incidence of dental caries in children. The exclusion criteria include articles without full text, duplicate articles, and research that is not relevant to the study focus.

The articles that have been obtained are then selected based on the title, abstract, and content alignment with the research objectives. Next, a descriptive analysis and synthesis of the data are conducted to identify the forms of parental roles, factors influencing the occurrence of dental caries in children, and the main findings from each study. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of narratives and evidence review tables to facilitate the interpretation of the research data.

RESULTS

The review results of the 10 articles obtained according to the desired journal criteria (Table 1), which are related to the role of parents in the occurrence of dental caries in children, yielded 7 international journal articles and 3 national journal articles.

Table 1. Evidence Review Research Article

No	Author & Year	Journal Title	Type of Study	Population and Sample	Main Results	Conclusion
1	Elnaz Aliakbari et al. (2021) (9)	Home based toothbrushing interventions for parents reduce dental caries	Systematic review	Intervention studies on children aged 0–8 years	Educational interventions and parental supervision reduce caries by up to 80% (OR ≈ 1.8).	Parental involvement thru systematic education effectively reduces ECC.
2	Momeni et al. (2022) (10)	Mothers' Knowledge and Self-Reported Performance Regarding the Management of Traumatic Dental Injuries	Cross-sectional	277 mothers with children aged 8–12 years in Iran	The mothers' knowledge score regarding dental trauma is still low (average 3.43/10).	Education and the mother's profession are significantly related to the level of knowledge and ability to handle dental trauma.
3	Razeghi et al. (2021) (11)	Effect of Two Educational Interventions Regarding the Management of Traumatic Dental Injuries on Mothers of 8-Year-Old Children	Cross-sectional	201 mothers	Parents with higher education have better knowledge of dental trauma and emergency procedures.	Educational status affects parents' ability to prevent and manage dental trauma in children.

4	Boustedt, K. et al. (2019) (12)	Tooth brushing habits and prevalence of ECC…	Prospective cohort	300 Swedish children aged 2–5 years	Brushing teeth regularly since <1 year and using fluoride toothpaste 2×/day reduces the risk of cavities by ~31%.	The practice of early dental brushing has proven effective in preventing ECC.
5	Nur Nabila & Ristiani (2023) (13)	Hubungan Pengetahuan Orang Tua tentang Pemberian Susu Botol terhadap Karies Gigi Anak Prasekolah	Systematic review	10 latest Indonesian articles	90% of the articles show that low parental knowledge is significantly related to the occurrence of bottle caries.	Education on milk consumption and brushing habits for children is very important for parents.
6	Maramis & Yuliana (2019) (14)	Peran Orang Tua dalam Memelihara Kesehatan Gigi Mulut bagi anak kelas 1 3 SD	Cross-sectional	60 elementary school children in grades 1–3 in Wori Village, North Sulawesi	The analysis results show a significant relationship between parental involvement and the DMF T caries index (p = 0.021).	Parental involvement makes a significant contribution to the dental health protection of elementary school children.
7	Mufarrohah et al. (2025) (15)	Hubungan Peran Orang Tua Dalam Personal Hygiene Gigi Dan Mulut Dengan Kejadian Karies Gigi Pada Anak Usia Prasekolah	Descriptive correlation with a cross-sectional approach	55 preschool children and parents at TK Desa Ngabeyan and TK Aisyiyah Ngabeyan II	There is a significant relationship between the role of parents in dental personal hygiene and the incidence of dental caries in children (p = 0.044).	The role of parents influences the incidence of dental caries in preschool children.
8	Duijster et al. (2024) (16)	Family related risk indicators and dental attendance…	Register-based	206 preschool children in Finland (1–6 years old)	Family challenges (proxy for family function, dental visits) are significantly correlated with caries.	Functional families who regularly visit dental services have a lower risk of cavities.
9	Vu et al. (2023) (6)	Parental knowledge and practices on childhood caries prevention in northern Vietnam	Cross-sectional	316 preschool children's parents	Parents' knowledge is low (~6.3/12), practices are moderate (~6.1/9); significant relationships with education, occupation, and perceptions about children's oral care.	Education and knowledge of parents significantly influence ECC prevention practices.
10	Saquicela Pulla et al. (2025) (17)	Parental Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices and Their Association with Dental Caries…….	Cross-sectional	Children aged 5–9 years and rural parents	Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of parents are significantly related to the occurrence of dental caries in children.	Educational interventions for parents are very important in reducing children's dental caries.

The study results show that parental involvement has a significant relationship with the occurrence of dental caries in children. The forms of involvement include accompanying tooth brushing, providing dental health education, monitoring children's eating patterns, utilizing dental health services, and fostering healthy living habits from an early age. In addition, several studies also show that factors such as parental education, level of knowledge, socio-economic conditions, family function, and parents' perception of the importance of children's dental health also influence the risk of ECC.

Generally, the results of the evidence review show that children with parents who have good knowledge, active involvement, and consistent preventive behavior tend to have a lower risk of caries compared to children with low parental involvement. Here is the evidence review table from the analyzed articles.

DISCUSSION

1. The Importance of Parental Involvement and Active Role in Preventing Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Parental involvement in children's dental health to reduce the risk of caries in primary teeth has been found to have a significant relationship with parental contribution in research findings. In the study by Elnaz Aliakbari et al. (2021), it was found that parental involvement in educating children about dental hygiene can reduce the risk of cavities by up to 80%[9]. In the study by Duijster et al. (2024), it was also found that brushing teeth with parental supervision and using fluoride toothpaste in children under 1 year old can reduce the risk of cavities by 31%[16]. The role of parents in maintaining their children's dental health requires planning, self-efficacy, and action control[3]. In addition, parents need to have the ability to plan their children's dental health habits (planning), self-efficacy in accompanying their children (self-efficacy), and action control (action control) so that tooth brushing behavior can be performed consistently[18].

Several national studies also support the importance of parental roles in preventing children's dental caries. Showed that most parents with a lesser role in maintaining their children's dental health have children with a high prevalence of cavities. Mufarrohah et al. (2025) research also found a significant relationship between parental roles in personal dental and oral hygiene and the incidence of caries in preschool-aged children ($p<0.05$)[15]. Additionally, the study by Sinaga et al. (2020) shows that parental supervision in brushing habits and monitoring sweet food consumption is associated with a lower incidence of dental caries in preschool children[19].

The active involvement of parents as role models and supervisors of their children's healthy behaviors is necessary to maintain the child's health. Children's dental health does not depend solely on the child themselves, but the role of parents is also needed. Parental involvement has a significant relationship with the incidence of dental caries in elementary school-aged children[14]. Thus, this emphasizes that the active role of parents in preventive efforts to prevent and reduce the incidence of dental caries in children is very important.

2. Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors of Parents as Supporting Factors for Primary Teeth Health

Factors of knowledge, attitude, and behavior of parents influence and determine the dental health condition of children. The study by Foláyan et al. (2024) shows that the level of parental education has a significant relationship with the incidence of ECC[5]. Parents with higher levels of education tend to have a better understanding of the importance of children's dental and oral hygiene, the use of fluoride toothpaste, and the importance of regular dental check-ups. Another study also confirms that parental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors are directly related to the incidence of caries in children aged 5–9 years[17]. Parents who have a positive attitude towards dental health tend to be more active in supervising their children's brushing habits and limiting the consumption of sugary foods that can trigger cavities.

ECC is one of the most common dental health issues found in young children and has an impact on the quality of life of the child. ECC not only causes pain and discomfort

but can also disrupt eating, sleeping, physical growth, and children's learning activities[20,21]. Inchingolo et al. (2023) also explain that dental caries in children can cause infections, nutritional disorders, and decrease the overall quality of life of the child[22]. Additionally, a systematic review by Kirthiga et al. (2020) mentioned that family behavioral factors and low parental awareness are the main risk factors for the occurrence of ECC in early childhood[23].

Other than knowledge, parents' attitudes towards the importance of milk teeth also influence children's dental health maintenance behavior. Lotto et al. (2020) explain that some parents still consider milk teeth unimportant because they will be replaced by permanent teeth, resulting in low attention to children's dental health. That incorrect perception can lead to delays in the treatment of cavities in children[24]. Hamilton et al. (2018) also showed that parents' self-efficacy in assisting their children with brushing their teeth is related to the consistency of the children's oral hygiene behavior. The higher the confidence and awareness of the parents, the better the dental health habits formed in the child[7].

Several other studies also point out that parental supervision during children's tooth brushing has a significant impact on children's dental health. A randomized controlled study shows that educating parents about supervising tooth brushing can significantly improve children's tooth brushing skills, enhance oral hygiene, and reduce dental plaque[25]. Furthermore, the parental supervised toothbrushing program has also proven effective in establishing consistent toothbrushing habits for children at home[26].

3. The Role of Parents in Preventing Dental Trauma in Children and Their Support for Safe Physical Activities

Beside dental caries, dental trauma is one of the common dental and oral health issues that often occur in children. Dental trauma can manifest as tooth fractures, luxation, or avulsion, generally caused by falls, accidents, play activities, or sports[27]. School-aged children have a higher risk of experiencing dental trauma due to their high levels of physical activity and participation in various sports activities. Although physical activity provides benefits for children's growth and development, such activities can also increase the risk of dental and oral tissue injuries if not accompanied by adequate preventive measures[28].

Parents' knowledge regarding the initial management of dental trauma is also a determining factor in the success of treatment. The research by Momeni et al. (2022) shows that the majority of mothers have a low level of knowledge regarding emergency actions for children's dental trauma[10]. Many parents are still unaware of the proper handling methods when a tooth is avulsed or fractured due to an impact. However, prompt and proper handling can increase the chances of successful treatment and maintain the function of the traumatized tooth. These findings are in line with the research by Tewari et al. (2023), which shows that the level of parental knowledge regarding emergency management of dental trauma is still low in various countries, indicating the need for increased dental health education for families[29].

If in the prevention of caries parents play a role thru the formation of brushing habits, dietary regulation, and the utilization of dental health services, then in the prevention of dental trauma parents play a role thru supervision of physical activities, the use of protective gear during sports, and the ability to provide first aid when dental injuries occur. Thus, efforts to improve children's dental health need to be carried out comprehensively thru a family approach that not only focuses on the prevention of dental diseases but also on the prevention of injuries that can affect children's health and quality of life[27,29].

4. Family Contextual Factors: Function, Access, and Perception

Family factors in the development and growth of children play a very important role, especially in shaping health behaviors, including dental and oral care as part of fulfilling children's basic health needs. The family environment is the first unit that influences the formation of children's habits, so

the quality of family functioning will directly impact children's dental health status. Various studies show that parents play a fundamental role in shaping children's health behaviors through parenting styles, daily habits, and health-related decision-making[30].

Family factors in the development and growth of children play an important role in the significance of children's dental care to meet basic health needs. A study in Finland shows that families with good and positive activities in daily routines have a lower incidence of dental caries[16]. This is in line with other research that states that healthy family functions such as communication, behavioral control, and emotional correlate with a lower incidence of cavities in children[31]. Higher incidences of dental caries were found in children from families with low social functioning, lack of emotional support, and low parental involvement in daily activities. Recent research shows that children who do not receive parental assistance in brushing their teeth have a higher risk of cavities compared to children who receive supervision[32].

A study in Brazil found another perspective that parental limitations related to dental caries in children, access to healthcare services, lack of time, and challenges in dealing with children's behavior become obstacles in children's dental care[24]. This is supported by other research that shows that parents' perceptions and knowledge about dental health greatly influence preventive behavior and the pursuit of dental health services for children[32]. This is supported by other research that shows that parents' perceptions and knowledge about dental health greatly influence preventive behaviors and the pursuit of dental health services for children[33]. Additionally, other contextual factors such as parental motivation, economic pressure, education level, as well as the availability and affordability of dental health services also play a role in determining the success of caries prevention efforts. Children from families with low socioeconomic status tend to have a higher risk of caries, which is related to limited access to healthcare services and a lower priority given to dental health. Research shows that the socioeconomic status of parents affects the frequency of dental visits, the pattern of cariogenic food consumption, and the child's oral hygiene habits[34]. Additionally, higher parental education and income levels are proven to be associated with lower caries prevalence in children, as they relate to better preventive behaviors and more optimal use of healthcare services[35,36].

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the literature review, the role of parents is closely related to the prevention of children's dental health problems, particularly early childhood caries and dental trauma. Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of parents influence the formation of children's dental health habits, including brushing teeth, dietary regulation, utilization of dental health services, and supervision of safe physical activities. In addition, family factors such as education, access to healthcare services, and socio-economic conditions also contribute to children's dental health. Therefore, it is important to intensify promotive and preventive programs involving families to improve children's dental and oral health and reduce the risk of caries and dental trauma from an early age.

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