

# CAREGIVERS AWARENESS OF ORAL-SYSTEMIC HEALTH CONNECTIONS IN PEDIATRIC POPULATIONS: A CROSSECTIONAL STUDY AT NSU KIDS CLINIC

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## INTRODUCTION

Oral health is an important component of overall systemic health and has been associated with conditions such as infection, nutrition, and chronic disease. In pediatric populations, caregivers play a central role in shaping oral hygiene habits, access to preventive care, and early recognition of oral health problems. However, caregiver awareness of oral-systemic health connections may vary according to educational and socioeconomic factors. Limited awareness may contribute to suboptimal preventive behaviors and missed opportunities for early intervention.

## PURPOSE

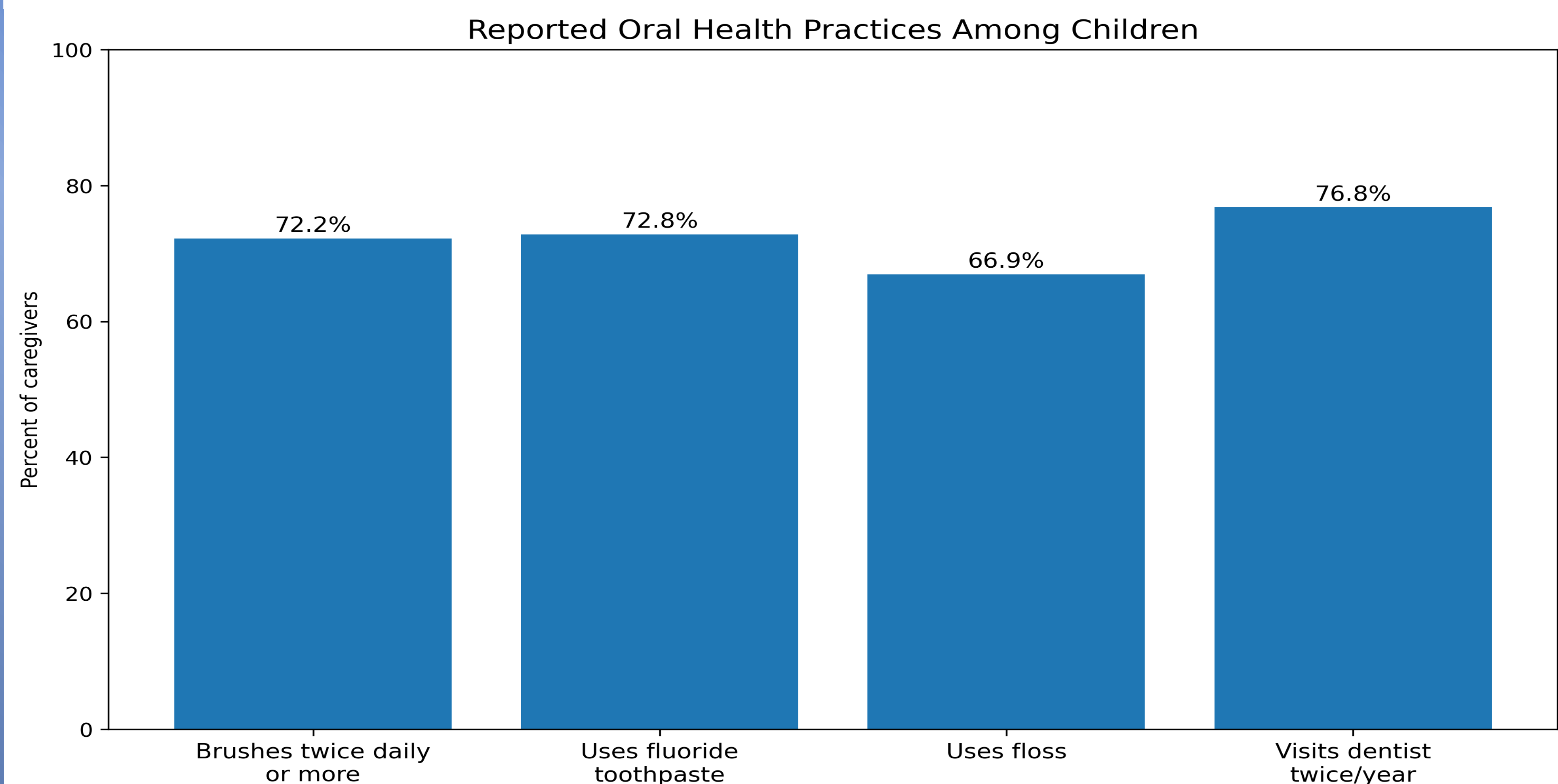
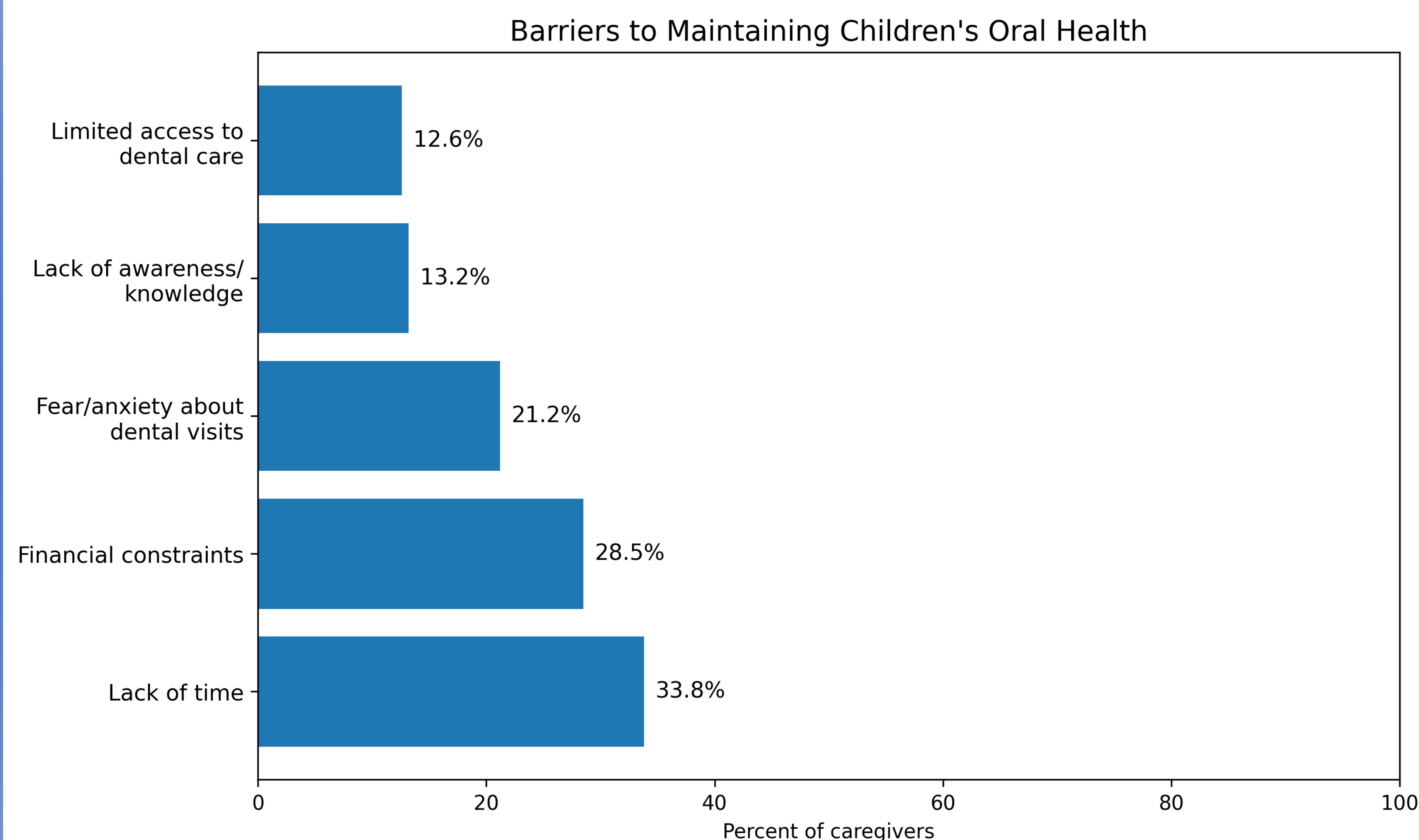
To evaluate caregiver awareness of oral-systemic health connections among caregivers of pediatric patients receiving care at the NSU KIDS Clinic and to examine the association between caregiver awareness, demographic factors, reported oral health practices, and perceived barriers to care.

## METHODOLOGY

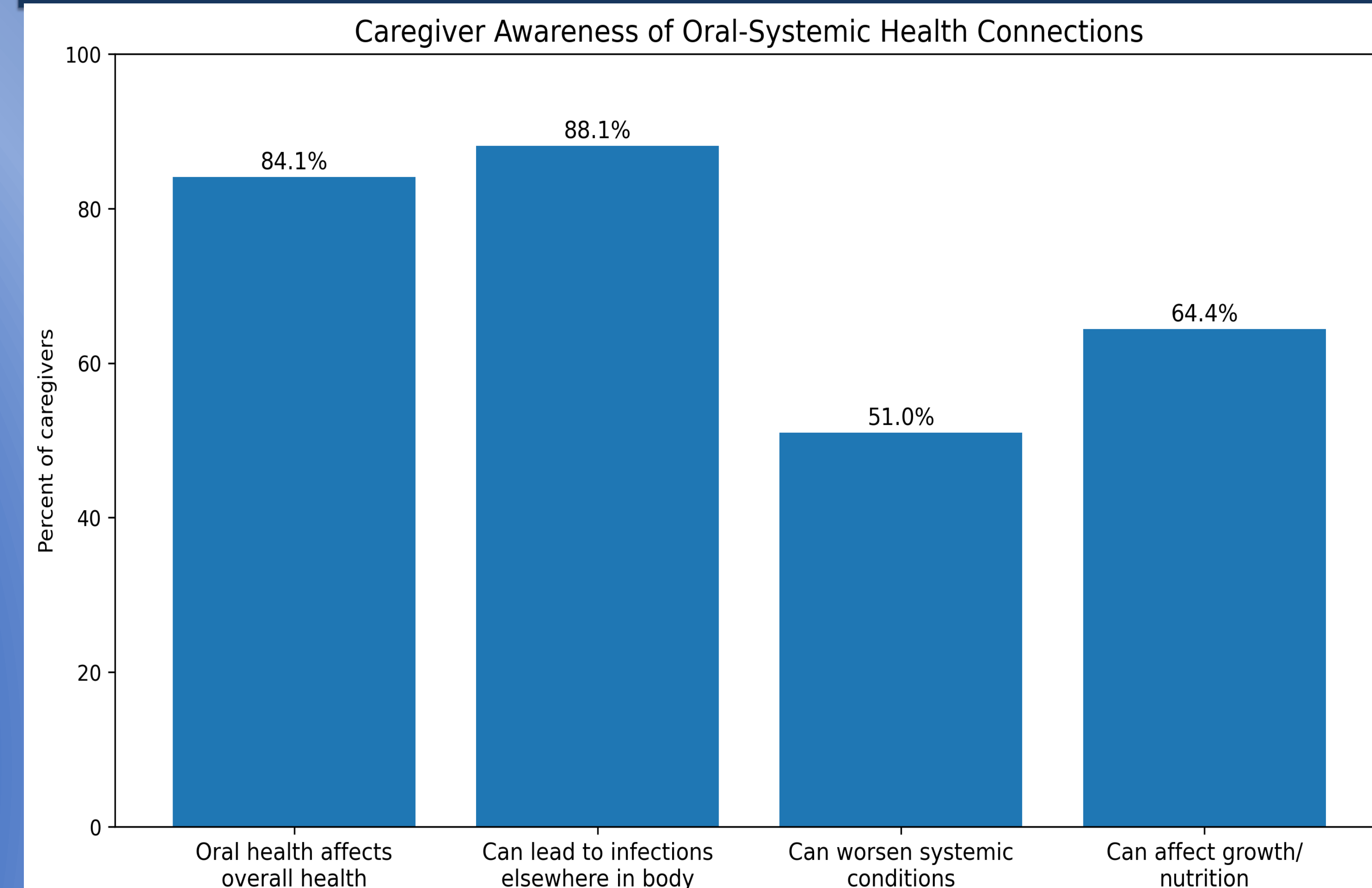
A cross-sectional, survey-based study was conducted at Nova Southeastern University's KIDS Clinic from October 2025 through February 2026. Parents or legal guardians of pediatric patients aged 0–18 years were recruited during routine dental visits. A structured questionnaire assessed caregiver demographics, oral-systemic health knowledge, children's oral health practices, perceived importance of oral health, and barriers to care. Data were collected using REDCap and analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression, and bivariate logistic regression. A total of 151 caregivers participated.

## RESULTS

Among 151 caregivers, awareness of broad oral-systemic health concepts was high, while knowledge of more specific associations was lower. Reported oral health behaviors were generally favorable, and the most common barriers were lack of time and financial constraints.



## RESULTS



## CONCLUSIONS

Caregivers of pediatric patients generally demonstrated good awareness of broad oral-systemic health connections, although important knowledge gaps remained regarding more specific relationships. Higher education level was associated with greater awareness, and greater awareness was linked to selected preventive behaviors such as floss use. These findings support the need for caregiver-centered education and stronger integration of oral health messaging within pediatric healthcare settings.

## REFERENCES



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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