Reviewer's report

Title: Caries Prevalence and Dental Health of 8-12 Year-Old Children in Damascus City in Syria during the Syrian Crisis; a Cross-Sectional Epidemiological Oral Health Survey

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Reviewer: Lynn Al-Zwaylif

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Caries Prevalence and Dental Health of 8-12-Year-Old Children in Damascus City in Syria during the Syrian Crisis; a Cross-Sectional Epidemiological Oral Health Survey

Muhammed Al-Huda Ballouk and Mayssoon Dashash

This study is a school-based oral health survey assessing the dental health of children aged 8 to 12 years in Damascus, Syria.

In regard to methodology, a longitudinal study would have been preferred to explore the aim of the study. A cross-sectional design is still appropriate; however, it is important to keep in mind that this type of study design does not permit assessment of causality.

There was no statement regarding intra-rater reliability, thus risking bias assessment. Additionally, there was also no mention of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

The authors have not acknowledged the limitations of the study, nor have they specified what has been done to overcome them or the impact they have on the results. Unbiased and frank discussion of study limitations by authors represents a crucial part of the scientific discourse and progress, therefore it is important to be added.

Discussion:

The findings of the study only reflect the 8 to 12-year-old children living in Damascus, Syria; therefore, it cannot be applied to the whole population. Nor are the results generalizable to those living in rural or suburban areas.

This study provides information regarding the dental health status in Syrian children, as the current available literature is lacking. The caries prevalence for Damascus city was (79.1%), with the most affected tooth being the first molar. The authors also found a significant relationship between the used indices and the children's distribution as to the city's localities. However, the
authors did not report for the socio-demographic factors of the participants, which could have helped in better understanding the caries prevalence in Syrian children. The intra-rater reliability was not mentioned, nor did they acknowledge the limitations of the study which is crucial for an unbiased and frank discussion.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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