
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON ACCESSIBILITY OF PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES TOWARDS ADOLESCENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Nur Akmal Ismail
Setiu District Health Office

Surianti Sukeri
Department of Community Medicine, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Azriani Ab Rahman
Department of Community Medicine, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Anis Kausar Ghazali
Unit of Biostatistics and Research Methodology, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Mohd Zulkifli Abdul Rahim
Disability Transformation Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Access to essential healthcare services for adolescents with intellectual disabilities (ID) remains underexplored. OBJECTIVE: This study investigates the accessibility of primary healthcare services for this vulnerable group using Levesque's framework, which encompasses approachability, acceptability, availability, affordability, and appropriateness. The aim is to identify and understand barriers affecting healthcare access within this population in Kelantan. METHODOLOGY: A qualitative research design was employed, involving in-depth interviews with 12 caregivers, 10 primary healthcare providers, and 4 experts specializing in the management of adolescents with ID. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis to uncover patterns and themes related to the dimensions of healthcare accessibility. RESULTS: The analysis revealed deficiencies across all five dimensions of Levesque's framework. Approachability issues were linked to inadequate preventive programs and a lack of health literacy. Acceptability was impacted by parents' denial of their child's condition, personal beliefs, and trust issues. Availability was compromised by the lack of accessible facilities, specialized services, scheduling problems, and transportation barriers. Affordability challenges were related to both direct and indirect costs of treatment. Appropriateness of care was influenced by healthcare providers' attitudes, communication issues, insufficient care planning, and limited knowledge and training on intellectual disabilities. CONCLUSION: Improving primary healthcare services based on Levesque's framework could enhance access for adolescents with intellectual disabilities in Kelantan. The study highlights critical areas for intervention and offers valuable insights for policymakers and healthcare practitioners to address and overcome the barriers identified. Enhancing healthcare delivery in these areas may lead to better health outcomes and more equitable access to care for this underserved population.

Keywords: accessibility, primary healthcare services, adolescents, intellectual disabilities
