

**Reasons for the non-use of hearing aids
among six hearing-impaired children aged
9-14 years who attend mainstream schools**

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to identify the reasons why some hearing-impaired children do not use their hearing aids. The benefits of hearing aid amplification usage among school-aged children is widely researched and established. However, research investigating why some children with a hearing loss do not wear their hearing aids is limited. Six cases of hearing aid non-usage among children aged between 9-14 years were investigated using mixed-methods research, incorporating a semi-structured interview, questionnaire and speech-discrimination testing. All six participants attend mainstream schools and some of the speech-discrimination tests were conducted in noise to replicate listening conditions in a 'typical' classroom. The results of this study indicate that the reasons for the non-use of hearing aids are multi-layered. The principal reason for non-use was found to be issues related to the stigma of wearing hearing aids. Alongside stigma, the difficulty of listening with hearing aids in noise was seen to be a significant factor in non-use. Also, the degree of hearing loss, the age when fitted with hearing aids, the comfort and fit of the equipment and the participant's own perception of their need for hearing aids were all factors that influenced the use or non-use of hearing aids. Implications are drawn relating to the need for children to receive on-going counselling regarding their hearing loss, particularly as they begin attending secondary school. Furthermore, this study recommends that mainstream teachers and the child's hearing peers receive more training to improve their knowledge and understanding of hearing-impairment. In exploring the experiences of older, hearing-impaired children, this study highlights the complexity in the issue of hearing aid non-use amongst this age-group.