

Abstract

The ability to handle a hearing aid may impact on satisfaction with and acceptance of hearing aids by individuals with hearing loss. Previous research has noted the correlation between hearing aid handling skills and effective hearing aid use. Although many studies have focused on the individuals' satisfaction with their hearing aids there is a lack of information regarding the relationship between satisfaction with hearing aids and hearing aid handling skills. This is especially true for the South African context, where no studies have been conducted to explore this relationship. The main aim of the study was thus to determine the relationship between the ability to manipulate hearing aids and self-perceived satisfaction with hearing aids in individuals fitted with hearing aids in a public health care hospital.

A non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational research design was employed for the purpose of this study. The sample included 85 adults fitted with hearing aids in a public health care hospital. There was an equal distribution of gender and the mean age of participants was 66.27 years. Participants completed the Practical Hearing Aid Skills Test – Revised (PHAST-R) version and the Satisfaction with Amplification in Daily Life (SADL) questionnaire.

The findings of the study indicate that the majority of participants were able to successfully manipulate their hearing aids (Mean score: 75.43%; Range: 10.71 - 100; *SD*: 21.58). The mean global score for satisfaction with amplification was 5.2 (Range: 3.1 - 6.8; *SD*: 0.84) indicating high levels of satisfaction with their hearing aids. Overall there was a significant correlation between hearing aid handling skills and satisfaction with amplification ($r_s = 0.22871$; $n = 85$). Indicating participants who were better able to handle their hearing aids were more satisfied with them.

The findings suggest that the majority of participants were satisfied with the hearing aids provided in a public health care hospital and that they were able to successfully handle their hearing aids. The use of the PHAST-R as part of the hearing aid orientation session is encouraged especially in light of the poor return rate for follow-up hearing aid orientation sessions at this public health care settings. The development of standard operating procedures for hearing aid fitting and orientation in the public health care sector is recommended to ensure that the best possible outcomes are ensured for all patients.

Keywords: *hearing aids, hearing aid handling skills, satisfaction. PHAST-R, SADL, hearing aid use, public health care audiology*