

## A BSTRACT

**Background:** Deaf people have problems with hearing which implies very little or no hearing. Incidence of deafness is about 70 million people worldwide. According to WHO (2014) 360 million people worldwide have moderate to profound hearing loss. Most of them live in low and middle income countries like Uganda inclusive. Currently hearing aids meets only 10% of the global need. In Uganda hearing impairment is one of the forms of disability and accounts for 15%. The aim of the study is to determine the factors affecting utilization of health services by Deaf people in Ndegeya Masaka School of children with special needs.

**Methodology:** A descriptive cross sectional study design was employed and involved qualitative and quantitative method of data collection. Frequency distribution was obtained at univariate analysis and the level of association between utilization of health services and independent variables was determined using chi-square test. A non-probability sampling method was used (purposive sampling). Data was analyzed and presented.

**Results:** According to the study findings, the prevalence of utilization of health services by the deaf people in Ndegeya Masaka School of children with special needs was 53(63.1%) respondents utilized health services while 31(36.9%) respondents did not utilize health services in the past six months (figure 2). Social demographic factors had an influence to utilization of health services where by regarding to age ( $\chi^2 = 7.399, p = 0.025$ ), those in the age range of 10- 18years 16(51.6%) respondents did not utilize health services while 19-26years 36(67.9%) respondents used health services and those between 27-35years were the least to use health services table 2. Sex, ( $\chi^2 = 4.32, p = 0.038$ ) Male utilized health services more than females and the same time there were few females who did not use health services compared to male. Marital status ( $\chi^2 = 6.021, p = 0.049$ ), singles utilized health services more than married. All respondents (100%) were knowledgeable, utilization of health services was not seen associated to client related factors. Health facility related factor had an association to utilization of health services table 6 ( $\chi^2 = 5.387, p = 0.02$ ) being influenced by HIV counseling and Free ARVS. The key weakness that were revealed, in the study were challenges with communication between the health providers and the deaf though it was not associated statistically.

**Conclusion:** Prevalence of utilization of health services among deaf people In Ndegeya Masaka School of children with special needs was 53(63.1%) respondents who used health services and 31(36.9%) respondents who never used health services. Social demographic factor had an association with utilization of health services age ( $\chi^2 = 7.399, p = 0.025$ ), sex ( $\chi^2 = 4.32, p = 0.38$ ) and marital status ( $\chi^2 = 6.021, p = 0.049$ ). Client related factor had no association to utilization of health services. While Health facility related factor had an association to utilization of health services influenced by HIV counseling and Free ARVs ( $\chi^2 = 5.387, p = 0.02$ ).

**Recommendation:** A proper follow up system should be implemented to follow deaf in the community. Health education teachings should be strengthened in all health care settings and special groups should be targeted. Integration of health services should be considered so that deaf people can utilize all the available services. Training of health workers in sign language and culture competence of the deaf should be considered and this can be included in the medical professional curriculum.