

Awareness of noise-induced hearing loss and usage of hearing protective devices among 18 to 35 years old residents in Puttalam, Sri Lanka

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Background: Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is the most common and preventable type of hearing loss. Exposure to NIHL contributes to causing hypertension, sleep disturbance, fatigue, and annoyance in addition to hearing loss. Preventive measures are available to mitigate such adverse effects. Implementing such preventive measures is desirable but often not achieved in our community.

Objectives: This study aimed to evaluate the awareness of noise-induced hearing loss and usage of hearing protective devices among 18 to 35-year-old residents in Puttalam Sri Lanka.

Methods: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. A self-administered web-based questionnaire, consisting of 4 sections focusing on demographic details of participants; awareness of Noise-induced Hearing Loss; noise, exposure, and usage of hearing protective devices were used to collect data from the target population. A purposive sampling method was used to recruit voluntary participants for this study. The gathered data were analyzed quantitatively.

Results: 100 participants (46 males, 54 female) aged between 18 – 35 years from Puttalam participated in this study. Hearing loss was regarded as a significant issue by 48% of participants of whom 63% were females and 37% were males. The study group included 42% of graduates and 61% of the total were employed. Regarding noise-induced hearing loss, 95% of participants believed that exposure to loud noise could cause hearing loss. 52% of participants felt that all age groups were at risk of NIHL. Around 53% of participants reported that they had used hearing protective devices.

Conclusion: The results of this study show the need for action by the relevant authorities to enhance individuals' knowledge of noise-induced hearing loss and recommend the usage of hearing protective devices. There is insufficient awareness regarding using hearing protective devices in a noisy environment. This study indicates the potential need for education within the population of Puttalam.

Keywords: *Noise exposure, Noise-induced hearing loss, Hearing protective devices, Hearing conservation*