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**Prevalence of hearing impairment among primary school children in the Kilimanjaro region within Tanzania**

Solvang Iselin Ertzgaard , Naalsund Kristin , Tønder Sofie , Hansen Giske Sindberg , Hagan Tobias Bang , Mnyanyi Cosmas Tronstad Tron Vedul , **Nkya Aslam** , Øygarden Jon PMID: 31816514 DOI: 10.1016/j.ijporl.2019.109797

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** Hearing impairment is becoming a public health concern and a widespread problem. The World Health Organization estimates that globally there are about 466 million people with hearing impairment, of which 34 million represent children. We examined the prevalence and etiology of hearing impairment among primary school children in the Kilimanjaro region within Tanzania.

**Method:** A cross-sectional study of primary school children aged 6-17 was conducted to determine the prevalence of hearing impairment. Tanzanian primary school children were screened for hearing loss and an otoscopy was performed on those who failed the screening.

**Results:** There were 403 children screened from three schools in rural areas of Tanzania. The prevalence of hearing loss was found to be 7.1%, 10.8% and 16.7% in the different schools. Cerumen was proven to be the most common possible cause of hearing impairment. Other possible causes of hearing impairment were found to be (in descending order) otitis (all types), no abnormalities, and perforation of the tympanic membrane.

**Conclusions:** These results show a need for better identification of hearing impairment in school-going children and implementation of prevention and treatment options in Tanzania and other developing countries. This can further improve children's potential for language development, communication and academic achievement.