

Original Article

The consequence Deafness has on the psychological and academic development of deaf students. The case of Alpha special school for the deaf in Addis Ababa, Hermata and Mendera Junior School at Jimma Town.

*Moges Abay**

Abstract

This study attempts to investigate the consequence deafness has on the social psychological and academic development of deaf students with particular reference to Alpha Special School for the Deaf in Addis Ababa ,Hermata and Mendera junior grade levels at Jimma town.. An earnest attempt was also made to look in to the self concept differences between the prilingually and postlingually deaf students using a t –test at a 0.05 level of significance .Qualitative and quantitative study designs were used to investigate and explore the psychosocial and academic problems faced by the deaf students with their social interactions with their family members, hearing peers, and teachers and hearing people in their respective communities and its implication on the academic profile. The empirical data was based mainly on questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Using purposive sampling technique, 107 respondents out of which 65 were deaf students, 18 parents and the rest 24 were teachers. Questionnaires were administered for the students, interviews and focus group discussion for parents and teachers to fetch adequate information for the study. Some case records of the sampled deaf students and classroom observation were also used as a supplement and complement to the other methods. The finding of the study shows that deaf students have encountered social and psychological problems at different social contexts which in turn bring about major academic problems. Among the major social problems deaf students in this study faced are peoples’ negative attitude towards them, societies’ unawareness of the potentials of the deaf students, little or no participation in social gatherings and mistreatment by the hearing people. Deaf students of this study also faced such psychological problems as feeling of inadequacy, inferiority, shame, and rejection. Language problems, problem of mathematics and problems related to abstract thinking were also identified to be notable academic problems of the deaf in this study.

*Psychology Dept. Educ. Faculty, JU. Jimma, Ethiopia

Introduction

Our abilities to hear and respond to various sounds have an impact on every aspect of our lives. If hearing is severely impaired, there can be far-reaching effects on individuals' capability to interact with the environment. This is especially very critical in the child's formative years (Gearhert, 1988).

When a child is unable to hear sounds clearly, significant language and psychosocial problems may develop. For example, if a child has a problem of hearing certain speech sounds, he/she will not be able to produce those speech sounds later in life. This can have a direct and adverse effect on communication interaction, which eventually leads to psychosocial problems. A student who is deaf may have difficulty in communicating with peers, developing relationships and friends and accessing the social intercourse so critical to psychosocial development (Gearhrt, 1988).

From the above facts, it can be said that deaf individuals lose not only their ability to use spoken language, which is a basic means of communication, but also their ability to hear sounds. This

makes the situation for deaf individuals very difficult to have effective interaction with the hearing, which in turn may bring about a feeling of inadequacy and confusion.

This implies that deaf individuals are at a great disadvantage in acquiring the basic elements of spoken language for effective communication. This brings about serious difficulties in laying the foundations for positive psychosocial developments. The deaf often feel rejected, less able and different from their hearing peers (Meadow, 1980).

The development of a deaf child can be seen in terms of the individual areas in which growth and development take place, that is, in the areas of language, cognition, social behavior, and psychological functioning. However, if development is to be understood, it must be seen in the context of the child's environment. The environment includes the significant others in the child's world, beginning with his/her immediate family, extending to peers, teachers and members of the various communities that impinges on his or her life and finally to his or her socials, with its

norms, and values, its institutions and laws (Meadow,1980).

For those people who have never encountered a young deaf child, it is hard to understand how much difference it can make (Gregary, 1976). That is why Meadow (1980) defined deafness as an “invisible” disability and that it makes it more difficult to detect than some other disabilities that are accompanied by obvious, visible stigma. Loss of the sense of hearing negatively affects not only the person who suffers from it but also parents who have a deaf child. It is imperative that professionals study impact of deafness on the family as well as the child (Meeres, 1995) cited in Felekech (2000). Much more than just a loss of hearing is involved. The families’ whole world changes, and feeling of quilt, confusion, and helplessness and both common and natural. The reciprocal nature of parent-child and child-child interactions cannot be overemphasized.

The deaf child is a member of the group. In turn, as a participating member, the deaf child influenced by the group as a

whole and by its individual members. We cannot ignore the complex interactions operative in the overall family. The deaf child, hence, presents the family with specific problems that may result in shame, parental recriminations, denial, and restricted communication if adequate counseling is not received (Martin, 1991).

There is a belief within the society that a child was born deaf because of God’s disappointment. Some assert also that it is because of their parents’ sins but not due to meningitis, measles, or trauma. This attitude can be changed only through intensive orientation and training towards deafness.

The way teachers approach and communicate with deaf students, interaction between or among deaf students themselves and hearing peers of similar ages in one way or another affects the psychosocial development of deaf children either negatively or positively. There are indications that the social interaction between the deaf and the hearing is much less than among hearing students (Schlensiger, 1985).

Research findings also suggest that the age at which hearing loss occurs affects the deaf children's social as well as psychological developments. A congenital hearing loss is one that is present at birth; an adventitious hearing loss is acquired sometime after birth, through accident or disease.

Objectives of the study

The study is aimed at investigating the consequences deafness has on psychosocial and academic development. More specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. To look into parental reactions (perceptions) about the hearing loss and how it affects the psychosocial development of deaf students.
2. To examine deaf students perception about themselves (their self-concepts).
3. To identify the kind of interpersonal relationship between deaf children and hearing peers of their own ages.

4. To explore the interaction between teachers and deaf students in the school compound.
6. To investigate the social psychological and academic problems deaf students encounter.
7. To suggest ways of alleviating the psychosocial problems faced by deaf students.

Methodology

Interviews, questionnaires, observation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used to gather information for the study.

The study design was made in such a way that respondents were selected based on a purposive sampling method.

Ethical considerations were taken care of by getting the consent of the selected schools through official communications of our University.

Interviews

The interview questions consisted of questions on some demographic characteristics of parents of deaf students, age of onset of deafness, their own feelings and perceptions about the

academic (educational) and psychological profiles of deaf students. The questions prepared were both structured and semis - structured and were prepared from related literature.

Questionnaires.

Two different types of questionnaires were also prepared for the deaf students themselves. The questionnaire prepared for the deaf student participants in the study were composed of both open ended and close ended questions having three parts. The first part of the questionnaire was designed in such a way that deaf students were asked to give background information about themselves. In the second part of the questionnaire, these students responded to questions related to the age at which they lose their ability to hear, their parents' reaction to it and their own feelings about the impairment.

The last part (part three) of the questionnaire was prepared and deaf students were asked to respond to questions asking for information about their social relationships with the hearing peers in particular and the community in general. Questions related to the challenges in the areas of

education, psychological and social profiles were also included here.

Classroom Observation

Observation was used to gather information for the study. During classroom observation, observation guides were developed on key concepts focusing on exploring the communication interaction between teachers and their deaf students from which the academic, psychological implications could be inferred.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

In an attempt to procure adequate information for the study, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used. Three sessions were set for the discussions. Each session having five participants from teachers of deaf students, and parents of deaf students from the selected schools for the study, Hermata, Mendera Junior and senior high schools and Alpha special School for the deaf .While designing the focus group discussion, an attempt was made to prepare questions related to the social as well as the psychological developmental profiles of the deaf students which directly influences their academic lives.

Basic issues related to the quality of interaction between deaf students and their parents, deaf students and their teachers, the perception teachers have about the deaf students, ability of learning and their problems along with their possible solutions were discussed.

Other informal methods of gathering information such as reading some case records of students at the school, informal conversations with teachers about the educational, psychological as well as the social aspects of deaf students were used. Moreover, the way deaf students' interaction among themselves in the classrooms and outside the classrooms were also observed informally.

Note: - In administering questionnaires to the deaf students, four proficient sign language users were employed. These individuals were oriented as to how they would be administering the questionnaire to the deaf students.

Respondents

The sources of data for this study as mentioned above were parents of deaf students, teachers and deaf students themselves.

Population and sample

According to the information gained from Hermata and Mendera Schools' principals at Jimma town, 12 parents of deaf students have frequent contacts with teachers at the School. And all of them were taken to participate in the study. Moreover, six parents of deaf students were taken from Alpha special school for the deaf in Addis Ababa for the same reason.

Teachers were also sources of information for the study. From a total of 22 teachers at Alpha school for the deaf, 6 teachers were teaching in grades 7 and 8. And 8 teachers at Mendera and 10 teachers at Hermata who were teaching in the mentioned grade levels participated in the focus group discussion. These teachers were selected based on the fact that all of them had got experience of teaching the deaf. So the sampling technique employed was purposive.

As explained earlier, deaf students were also participants in this study. There are sixty two deaf students in grades 7 and 8 at Alpha School for the Deaf in Addis Ababa and 42 students at Mendera and Hermata schools. And 36 deaf students

from Alpha, 29 deaf students from Mendera and Hermata schools were selected and participated in the study. Since there were both partially hearing impaired and deaf students, the selection procedure were based on the case records of these students. Using their case records, all of the deaf students were taken for the study.

Results

This study was conducted at Alpha Special School for the Deaf and Mendera and Hermata Schools at Jimma town of grades 7 and 8. The findings of the study were presented and analyzed in this chapter.

As indicated in the table above, the total number of participants in the study was 107. The majority of participants were deaf students i.e. 65(36 male and 29 female) deaf students participated in the study. The rest 42 were parents and

teachers, out of these, 18 (8 females and 10 males) were parents and 24(20 females and 14 males) were teachers.

As indicated in table 2, the age of onset of the hearing loss for the majority of the deaf students 45(69.2%) was at the critical age of language development and 13(20%) of the deaf students faced problem of hearing loss before age 6. The others 7 (10.8%) of the students become deaf age y i. e after they Developed language skills necessary for communication.

Information about teachers of the deaf student's Information about the teaching staff of deaf students is important to look in to the level of support that can be given to the deaf students.

Table1 number of participant in the study

Grade level	S c h o o l s																					Grand Total						
Grade	Alpha									Mendera						Hermata												
7	Students			Parents			Teachers			Students			Parents			Teachers			Students			Parents			Teachers			63
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
	12	10	22	2	2	4	1	2	3	4	4	8	2	1	3	2	2	4	5	4	9	2	2	4	3	3	6	63
Grade 8	8	6	14	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	6	1	1	2	2	2	4	4	2	6	2	1	3	2	2	4	44
Total	20	16	36	3	3	6	3	3	6	7	7	14	3	2	5	4	4	8	9	6	15	4	3	7	5	5	10	107

Key: F =Female M=Male, T= Total

Table 2 age of onset of hearing loss of deaf students

Age of onset	Grade 7			Grade 8			Grand Total	Percent
	M	F	T	M	F	T		
Age 1-2	18	8	26	10	9	19	45	69.2
Age 3-6	5	3	8	3	2	5	13	20.0
Age 7-9	3	1	4	2	1	3	7	10.8
No response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Information about teachers of the deaf student’s

the level of support that can be given to the deaf students.

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Table 3 Teacher participants by sex, service years and Qualification

qualification	Sex	Frequency	Service Years
One year training in teaching	F	5	4 Years
Diploma in teaching	F	6	4 Years
Diploma in teaching	M	4	4 Years
Diploma in teaching and six months training in special needs education	M	7	6 Years
Diploma in teaching and one year training in special needs education	M	2	3 Years

As it can be observed from table 4, there were eleven female teachers with four years of teaching experience one of whom is a diploma holder and the other is with one year training in teaching.

One could also observe from the same table that there are thirteen teachers with diplomas and different years of teaching experience. From these teachers nine teachers had taken training in special needs education.

Table 4 deaf student's preference to form friendship

Friendship preference	deaf students			%
	M	F	T	
Hearing peers	5	6	11	17
None hearing peers	15	14	29	44.6
Hearing and none hearing	14	8	22	33.8

As it can be observed from the table above, of the majority of deaf students (44.6%) preferred to form friendship with the non-hearing peers. This could be explained by the fact that communication between and among deaf students themselves and other deaf people is similar and easily understandable with playing discussing and sharing experiences.

Only a small proportion of deaf students (17%) indicated that they had preferences of being with the hearing peers. This might be due to the fact that the ways of communication between the

hearing and the non-hearing is different and hence, forming friendship with the hearing is really a challenge for the deaf. The rest (33.8%) of the deaf student's preferred to have both the hearing and the non-hearing peers.

From table 7 above, one could observe that the majority of deaf students' respondents (56.9%) indicated that they had excellent interaction with their teachers.

5 Degree of class room interaction and academic activity as indicated by deaf students

Degree of interaction and academic activity	Deaf student respondents			%
	M	F	T	
Excellent	20	17	37	56.9
Very good	8	5	13	20
Good	5	4	9	13.8
Fair	3	3	6	9.2

This could be attributed mainly to the fact that teachers teaching these deaf students are fluent in sign language and hence, communication with their deaf students is positive and so is their academic activity.

A good proportion of these deaf students (20%) also reported that interaction in the classroom with their teachers is very good. Only (13.8%) and (9.2%) of them revealed that the classroom interaction as good and fair respectively.

The deaf student’s respondents were asked whether they had encountered psychological problems. According to this finding, the deaf students indicated that they had faced psychological problems of different kinds. The majority of the deaf student respondents (33.8%) revealed that they tended to consider themselves inferior to the hearing people. This could be attributed to the hearing individual’s unfavorable attitude towards the deaf students. Hearing people think that the deaf are less able than the hearing.

Table 6 Major Academic Problems encountered by deaf students as indicated by students themselves and their teachers.

Problems	Deaf students				Teachers			
	M	F	T	%	M	F	T	%
Language problem	25	15	40	61.5	5	6	11	45
Problem of understanding abstract concepts	10	5	15	23.1	3	2	5	20.8
Problem of Mathematics	5	2	7	10.8	1	2	3	12.5
Problems related to health and physical education	2	1	3	4.6	3	2	5	20.8

Asked about the academic problems the deaf students were facing the majority of both deaf students and their teachers i. e 61.5% and 45% respectively indicated that language is the major problem they were facing. This might be attributed to the fact that most teachers especially at Mendera and Hermata had no any sort of

training in sign language. Problems of understanding abstract concepts and problems related to health and physical education were also reported by teachers and students as the second major problem deaf students were facing. This is particularly true for students who are prelingually deaf.

**Self- Concept in Relation to Students’
Pre-lingual and Post- lingual deafness.**

In order to map out the differences or similarities of self- concepts among those students who are prelingually and postlingually deaf students, a questionnaire having 20 self- concept items was administered to deaf students.

See annex-1. To this end, scores were given as follows:

1= positive self-concept

0= Negative self-concept

From the scores of sampled students for the 20 items, the means and standard deviations were obtained for the two groups (Prelingually and postlingually deaf students). The results are shown in the following table.

Table 7 Scores, means and standard deviations on items measuring self-concepts of prelingually and postlingually deaf students

Prelingually deaf students		Postlingually deaf students	
Subject	Scores	Subjects	Scores
1	11	2	18
2	13	2	15
3	9	3	16
4	15	4	15
5	17	5	16
6	19	6	19
7	10	7	14
8	6	8	20
9	12	9	18
10	15	10	15
11	15	11	13
12	12	12	18
13	5	13	18
14	8	14	18
15	9	15	10
16	16	16	12
17	12	17	15
18	10	18	19
19	11	19	20
20	12	20	14
21	14	21	10
22	12	22	18
23	14	23	18
24	13	24	17
25	13	25	15
26	8		
27	16		
28	15		
29	11		
30	17		
31	10		
32	6		
33	8		
34	14		
35	12		
36	10		
37	9		
38	7		
39	8		
40	15		
T	469		370
X	11.725		14.8
SD	3.7		2.11

Key: T=Total X= Mean SD= Standard Deviation

Based on the available data presented in table 10 above, statistical analysis (t-test) was carried out to find out whether there exists a significant self-concept Difference between the prelingually deaf students. And the results of the statistical analysis at alpha 0.05 level of significance with 63 degrees of freedom ($t=0.05,63$) indicated at a t critical value of -2.167 and at a t-calculated value of -4.7148. This revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the self-concepts of prelingually and postlingually deaf students. According to this finding, prelingually deaf students have less self-concept than postlingually deaf students.

Discussion

As indicated in the earlier chapter, the purpose of this research was to identify the social, psychological and academic problems of deaf students in grades 7 and 8. The study identified predominant psychosocial and academic problems deaf students are facing as a consequence of loss of their sense of hearing. The study assessed the age of onset of deafness and its implication on deaf students' social interaction, which

in one way or another may result in psychological and academic problems.

Attempts were also made to look into the different social contexts like the micro system, ecosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem where how the deaf students are influenced and how they influence others.

Three of the parents from Mendera School identified the hearing loss of their children when the deaf children fail to respond to sound stimuli. Even afterwards, two of the parents explained, that they were not financially capable of taking their children to hospitals for medical diagnosis. Moreover, these parents were not given any professional support to cope positively with such problems as emotional disturbances, people's negative attitudes towards not only the deaf children but also parents of deaf children themselves.

Had these parents been provided with appropriate professional guidance and counseling services as to how they could possibly react positively with their deaf children's situation, this could have been

an advantage to parents and their deaf children to develop proper communication and positive acceptance of their deaf children in their respective families.

Every parent participated in the interview for this study explained that learning their children were deaf was really a tragedy and difficult to cope with it. The situation as they reported brought about profound negative effects on the special love and attention they should have to their deaf children.

This difficult situation is even worse and markedly observed if a family has more than one child with a hearing problem. This situation happens because an unwholesome attitude is directed to those families from the community, the parents in this study indicated that they tended to develop a negative attitude in themselves in reaction to the social situation, otherwise stated, they consider such children as embarrassments to the family because of the societies strong belief that such incidents are ascribed to the wrong they committed, be it knowingly or unknowingly to whatever they worship.

This, as two of the parents stated, let them to become centers of public criticism. They also thought that to have a deaf child is a misfortune peculiar to their family. All this misconception led them to social and psychological crises. And to make matters worse, they even declined to give the appropriate parental love and care (treatment) to the children with the problem of hearing.

PROBLEMS IN THE FAMILY

Parents of deaf students in this study revealed that they have serious problems with their deaf children to develop mutual understanding for life affairs in the home environment. All of the parents who participated in this study indicated that they had no training in sign language for communication with their deaf children. This created a big communication gap between deaf children and hearing members of the family. As two of the mothers in the study explained, they sometimes got confused the deaf children's real demands with what they actually did not ask for. In this case, the deaf child became upset, frustrated and feel they couldn't at all be understood due to his loss of hearing.

In this study, parents of deaf students also indicated that the most difficult problem they faced was communication barrier. As they stated, they had no previous exposure to social contacts with deaf people in life. This lack of exposure to such real life situations brought about problems to socially interact smoothly with their deaf children. Furthermore, these parents explained that all the members of their family were hearing and their deaf children's pattern of communication was different from that of the hearing members of their family. If deaf children failed to be understood by their mothers or fathers or any member of the family, stated one mother of the deaf student, they tended to feel they were neglected, unloved, unwanted, hopeless and even deprived of everything given to their brother and sisters.

Almost all of the parents of deaf students in this study reported that their deaf children faced difficulties understanding long and complex sentences. They understood only short, and simple sentences, talks and meaningful contexts limited to home situations. in most

instances as the parents explanation deaf students appeared passive to participate in the interplays of social interaction with the family members.

It was also indicated by parent respondents that the chances for deaf students to tell and/or listen to jokes, exchange information, discuss about matters at homes, play together, singsongs together with their hearing brothers and sisters was really difficult for them.

In stating the problems he was facing with his deaf son, a father said the following:

"I cannot understand sign language. For that reason. I am not in a Position to help him with his lessons the way I want. This compels I to confine that effort (help) frequently to my hearing daughter.

He mistakes this for discrimination against him in favor of his Sisters. He tends to become aggressive and gets easily touched

Believing that we have a disregard for him. And this is a headache to his mother and me."

Friendship and social interaction with hearing peers

In this study, 17% of deaf student's respondents stated that, they found it more difficult to adjust themselves with hearing peers of their own ages than to do so with deaf children. From the reports of deaf student participants in the study, it was also found out that many of the pre-lingual deaf students faced social problems with their hearing peers. As they explained, there was a big communication gap between the hearing peers. They also indicated that hearing peers tended to take the first position and wanted to be dominant over the deaf ones. they assumed that deaf children were inferior in many respects to the hearing ones and hence, explained deaf students; their hearing peers looked them down.

Twenty nine (17%) of the deaf students in this study indicated that they felt uneasy, have got less freedom to play and express their feelings, as a result they tended to avoid their hearing peers. The parents of deaf students in the study also reported that communication between deaf children and hearing

children in the neighborhood and elsewhere in the natural setting was less than among deaf students themselves. This was mainly because; explained one of the parents of the deaf students in the study, there was no any hearing students who was as fluent and skillful as deaf students in sign language.

A mother of a deaf girl in this study from Alpha Special School, however, explained that both boys and girls in the neighborhood had a positive, accepting, encouraging and motivating type of relationships with her deaf daughter, this mother stated that on Sundays and Saturdays, and other ceremonial occasion, parties or festivals, these hearing friends of her own ages came as far to their home and invited her to join them and spent the occasion together. Her daughter, as the mother's explanation, never felt different from her hearing age mates. She was always happy at home, in the playground and elsewhere in the social environment where she lived. Furthermore, the mother stated that many of the friends of her daughter even bigban to use sign

language while communicating with her. Hearing parents of these hearing children, continued the mother reporting, treated her deaf daughter the same way they did to their own hearing children. They often made a lot of fun with her. These parents, said the mother, were so considerate and concerned that they used to give post cards during anniversaries wishing her happy occasions.

In explaining the social interaction and friendship among deaf students further, one teacher respondent from Alpha School stated the following:

“Many deaf children do not often like to go home soon after school. They

Rather spend their free time playing with one another in the school

Compound. They cannot communicate with people at home easily as they do with friends at school. At home they rarely find people who can understand sign language. For that matter, they prefer being with people of their own kind in their sense of hearing. Because they feel detested and

neglected by the people at their respective homes. Alternatively, they sometimes leave the school for a place of their own preference. To do so, they take a bus in groups in reach that place. There, they spend their leisure time playing and enjoying being with one another until it gets dark that is their leisure activity.”

Interaction between deaf students and their teachers

. As presented in table 4, almost all of the teachers who participated in this study took no training in sign language although many of them attended some training in special needs education. Teachers as they stated, learned sign language in the school after they were assigned to teach there through communicating with their deaf students. However, these teachers faced serious communication problems when they first began to communicate with their deaf students as they explained; it took them long time to fluently communicate with their students using sign language. For a few of the teachers, it had been really a challenge to develop smooth

communication between them and their deaf students. Such a communication breakdown resulted, in misinterpretation of what a deaf student wants to transmit to his/her teacher. Consequently, such misunderstanding even led to conflicts between teachers and deaf students. The difficulty worsens especially when teachers are trying to communicate with students who are prelingually deaf. One can imagine the difficulty a deaf student faces when trying to communicate with a teacher who is not trained in sign language.

Relating to this, one teacher interviewee reported the following:

“This is what happened to one of our deaf students. Our school once employed a teacher who had not been trained in sign language. That resulted in lots of breakdown in communication with his students. One morning, This teacher was teaching in a certain class. Meanwhile, the student mentioned above came late for that class. In an attempt to apologize to the teacher for being late, the student as patting his left palm with the fingers of his right hand. That in sign language means ‘excuses me.’ Failing to make out what the student was trying to say, the teacher went straight to him and started

to look for something written on his (student’s) palm. To his great disappointment, the teacher happened to read a very offensive remark written on that student’s palm, just by chance. Hence, being very much offended with what he saw, he punished the student very severely.”

From the statements of the teacher in the above paragraph, one could understand that sign language is highly important to communicate with the deaf.

As two of the teachers reported, however, even if teachers in the school are not well trained in the areas of special needs education particularly in issues surrounding deafness and the consequence it can have on student’s (deaf) social and psychological profiles, they have positive attitudes toward their deaf students: this positive approach is what many teachers developed through communication interaction with their deaf students. This made it easy for the deaf students in the school to communicate easily and confidently with their teachers without any difficulty using sign

language. One of the teachers who once was the director of the school indicated that teachers in the school are really committed to help their deaf students in such areas as social, academic and communication. They also have been trying to foster students' social and psychological developments through discussions orientation as to how deaf students interact with hearing peers whenever these students are exposed to different social contexts. And deaf students have smooth and positive interaction with their hearing teachers.

Almost all of the teacher respondents explained that the problem of teacher-student interaction is apparent whenever new teachers who are not trained in sign language are assigned in the school. In addition, such a problem is evident when a student who is prelingually deaf joins the school for the first time. It becomes really difficult for a prelingually deaf student to adjust himself/herself to the existing social environment in the school for the student is not a fluent sign language user, which is a basic means of communication.

Gradually, however, through teacher-student and student-student interaction the students became better in using sign language and the communication barrier breaks and hence, social interaction between teachers and their deaf students becomes smooth and positive. The majority of deaf student informants in the study indicated that they have excellent social interaction with their teachers.

All of the teachers who participated in the interview for this study also explained that people in their community do not really know what deafness means and are not aware of the intact potentialities the deaf people can have. As stated by one of the teachers, even those people graduated from colleges or universities do not seem to properly address and perceive the deaf. Most people have wrong connotations about the deaf and tend to address them with such wrong and jargon expressions as "duda", "donkoro" and "dadab". There is also prevalence of wrong beliefs about deafness. People believe that deafness is a sign of curse and punishment for parents of deaf children sent from whatever they believe in response to the

wrong deeds they many of the parents in this study revealed that they wanted to help children in **Self-Concept of Deaf Students as indicated by the**

Deaf Students Themselves

In this study also five deaf students (12.3%) stated that they have a feeling of inadequacy. In the course of the interview, one of the mother of the deaf students reported that deaf children have a different way of communication styles and immature speech development, which is markedly observed particularly on pre-lingually deaf children. This, according to this mother, results in a feeling of inadequacy on the part of the deaf students.

Many of the deaf student respondents (33.8%) participated in the study revealed that they considered themselves inferior to the hearing people. In explaining such feelings experienced by deaf students, two of the teacher respondents stated that many hearing individuals have negative and low regards to the deaf. And hence, the deaf seem to be affected by what is ascribed to them by the hearing. Such a negative ascription influences them to feel inferior.

Teacher participants in the study indicated that their deaf students though to some degree it was, experienced a feeling of dissatisfaction with their school work. Some deaf students, 4.6%) in the study also revealed that they were not fully satisfied with their schoolwork. In explaining the reasons for their dissatisfaction further, these deaf students reported that they were not courageous enough to ask questions in class for clarification and in some instances they got confused with what their teachers taught them. Consequently, they said that they scored relatively lower grades. Eventually, they felt that they were less able and less competent than their classmates.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The main focus of this research paper was to investigate the social, psychological and academic problems encountered by the deaf students and to suggest ways of alleviating the problems. Accordingly, among others, the following conclusions were drawn.

As per the findings of the study, parents of the deaf students faced social and

psychological problems following the awareness of their children's hearing loss. Such problems encountered by parents affected the psychological and academic profiles of the deaf students' too. People's negative attitudes towards parents of children with hearing losses, as two parents of two deaf daughters indicated, affected in one way or another attitude parents have to their children.

Parents in the study reported that they were facing problems in developing communication skills, which are common to the deaf children and the parents. The findings of the study disclosed that deaf students experienced Social and emotional problems in different social contexts

In the family context, for instance, it was reported by the parents that had serious problems to develop mutual understanding for life affairs in their home environments. This was attributed to a big communication gap between the deaf students and their parents for the parents were not trained in sign language. According to the parents report, their deaf children's ways of

communication were different from that of the hearing members of the family.

As a result, the deaf students failed to be understood by their family members; consequently, they felt neglected, unloved, unwanted and hopeless.

The finding on the deaf student's friendship and social interaction with hearing peers disclosed that 17% of the deaf students found it more difficult to adjust themselves with the hearing than to do so with the deaf. Such a problem was even more severe for pre-lingually deaf students. According to the finding, communication gap was the basic barrier between the hearing and the deaf students.

The same numbers of deaf student participants i.e. (17%), on the other hand, indicated that they had developed good friendship with other deaf children in the school and even outside parent also reported that their deaf children tended to be happy with the social interaction they had with other children of their own social status. In explaining this, one teacher stated that deaf students preferred being with people of their own kind in their sense of hearing.

The study also assessed interaction between teachers and their deaf students. And it was found out that most teachers assigned in the schools where the study was conducted, were not trained in sign language. This created a big communication problem between teachers and their students when teachers first began to communicate with their deaf students. As a result different academic problems were faced by the deaf as indicated by both students and teachers. The problem lessens as teachers gradually developed sign language through communication with their deaf students.

The study, furthermore, revealed that deaf students faced serious social problems in their respective communities. The problems were brought about as a result of the deaf students' failure to understand the basic concepts of language units such as words, phrases, and sentences either in communication or written forms. It was also found out in the study that hearing people developed a wrong belief that deaf people are entirely dull and is unable to learn and be educated like the hearing ones. Hence, these hearing people have wrong connotations about

the deaf addressed them with such wrong and jargon expressions as “duda”, “donkoro” and “dadab”. This, therefore, resulted in major social problems on the part of the deaf students.

With regard to the behavioral and psychological problems of the deaf students, the finding revealed that the deaf students some times become behaviorally difficult to manage.

They easily got hopeless, indifferent to what is going on at home, careless and even tended to inflict damage upon their hearing sisters and brothers. Parent respondents in the study revealed that deaf children often tend to feel emotionally, unstable, egocentric unwanted, unloved and rejected.

Participants of the study were asked to give their suggestions about ways of alleviating the psychosocial and academic problems encountered by the deaf students. All of the parents suggested that hearing people should be oriented and taught that the deaf people are not uniquely created. They said that hearing people should be made aware that the deaf have potentialities and capacities to learn and be educated. Like each one of the hearing people.

The teacher respondents indicated that parents and teachers of the deaf students should take sign language training.

Deaf students' respondents of the study also indicated that the deaf should be treated as equally as the hearing. They further explained that the government should provide the deaf with the necessary hearing aids and other relevant equipments, which enable them to use their potentialities. It was also indicated by teachers that wrong and distorted beliefs of the society about deafness must be changed through the professionals' organized effects.

Recommendation

On the basis of the conclusions drawn from the findings, the researcher would like to offer the following recommendations.

Understanding the different environmental factors affecting the social psychological and academic profiles of the deaf, professionals in the area should design intervention strategies so that the deaf could have better psychosocial as well as academic developments.

The way parents react to the onset of their children's loss of the sense of hearing and their approaches of coping with it in many ways affect their deaf children's psychosocial development.

Therefore, it could be of the greatest help for the deaf and their parents if the concerned bodies and professionals provide parents with the necessary assistance. This is because parents can understand their deaf children through professionals' assistance and create conducive settings for healthy psychosocial developments of their deaf children.

It was found out in this study that hearing persons have negative attitudes towards the deaf. To have a clear understanding and positive view of the deaf by the hearing, proper orientation and education should be given through different mass media available in our own context where the majority of the population is hardly knowledgeable about deafness. Moreover, centers for sign language training and special schools for the disabled in general and the deaf in particular should be opened if positive and desirable psychosocial

developments are expected from the deaf persons.

Teacher deaf student interaction is highly important for the deaf students' psychosocial development. And teachers teaching the deaf should be trained in special education particularly in sign language. Furthermore, the hearing individuals should be made sensitized about the importance of the social relationships between the deaf and the hearing so that they could facilitate peer group interaction between the hearing and the deaf.

As it was revealed in the study, books translated and written in sign language are hardly available in the country, Ethiopia. So that efforts must be made to have adequate books prepared in sign language. It is also very important that the concerned bodies like policy makers, planners and interested groups must realize and assist the deaf to overcome barriers which operate against the psychosocial development of the deaf.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success for the completion of this study is attributed to the contribution made by a number of persons.

First and foremost I would like to give my heartfelt and sincere thanks to the

RPC of Education Faculty for facilitating the Fund grant to bring the project to its successful end. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to W/r/t Tsedale Gudena. an audiologist and a teacher at Alpha Special School for the deaf in Addis Ababa. And Ato Genetie Olana, a teacher at Mendera Junior School at Jimma town for making every necessary arrangement for data collection for the study. Others who helped me in one way or another to complete this research work also deserve my great thanks.

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