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The Correlational Study of Family Support and Mental Well-Being Among Deaf Adults in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract- This study investigates the impact of family support on the mental well-being of deaf adult learners studying in higher educational institutions. Using a sequential exploratory mixed-method design, data was collected from 60 deaf students through surveys and analyzed using chi-square and correlation methods. The findings reveal that family support significantly enhances mental well-being, contributing to emotional stability, resilience, and self-esteem. While demographic factors like gender and type of family showed slight variations, family support remained the most influential factor across all groups. The study underscores the importance of familial relationships in fostering psychological health and academic success for deaf learners. Recommendations include promoting inclusive policies, accessible mental health services, and family involvement to create a supportive academic environment.

Keywords - Deaf adult learners, mental well-being, family support, higher education, emotional resilience, psychological health, inclusive policies, academic success, social inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Mental well-being is a term that encapsulate an assortment of psychological and emotional variables that contribute to an individual's overall health. It goes beyond essentially the absence of mental illness, speaking to a positive mental state that empowers people to flourish. Gaining a clear understanding of mental well-being is essential for those seeking to enhance their quality of life. It includes various dimensions such as emotional resilience, psychological stability, and strong social connection.

Psychologicsal well-being is the subjective feeling of contentment, bliss, fulfillment with life's encounters and of one's part within the word of work, sense of achievement, utility, belongingness, and no trouble, disappointment or stress, etc. These things are difficult to assess dispassionately; thus, the accentuation is on the term "subjective" well-being. It would be kept up in antagonistic circumstances and alternately, may be misplaced in favorable situations. It is related to but not subordinate upon the physical/physiological conditions.

Hence, characterized and conceptualized, the common well-being may appear a few degrees of positive relationship with quality of life, fulfillment level, sense of accomplishment etc. and contrarily related with neuroticism, such factors. In any case, the degree of cover with such factors ought to not be tall in case this concept of isolated autonomous substance is to be considered as a substantial one. Moreover, it ought to appear relative stability over time (sensible time crevice without any critical life occasions interceding). Its utility will depend upon these relationships/network of connections with other factors.

According to Diener and Smith (1999), Mental or subjective well-being as a board build, enveloping four particular and area components counting:

a) wonderful or positive well-being (e.g., delight, joy, bliss, mental wellbeing),

b) obnoxious influence or mental trouble (e.g., blame, disgrace, pity, uneasiness, stress, outrage, stress, depression),
c) life fulfillment (a worldwide assessment of one's life) and
d) space or circumstance fulfillment (e.g. work, family, leisure, health, back, self).

Deaf individuals in higher education frequently encounter unique stressors that influence their mental well-being. Communication difficulties, such as the lack of sign language interpreters, insufficient captioning, and limited faculty awareness, create significant barriers to academic engagement (Hall et al., 2017). Moreover, social isolation is a common challenge, as deaf learners often feel excluded from peer interactions and campus events due to communication gaps. This sense of exclusion can lead to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression, negatively affecting their emotional health (Kvam et al., 2007). In addition, deaf students are less likely to access mental well-being administrations due to language barriers and the scarcity of therapists fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) or other sign languages (Steinberg et al., 2016).

In this challenging environment, family support serves as a protective factor, offering both emotional and practical benefits. Family members who learn sign language or use other visual communication methods can foster deeper connections, reducing the feelings of isolation experienced by deaf learners. Emotional support, such as empathy, encouragement, and validation, contributes to a sense of security and promotes psychological resilience (Zeedyk et al., 2014). Furthermore, practical support from family individuals such as budgetary help, transportation, or helping with academic needs reduces external stressors, allowing deaf students to focus on their studies. According to Hintermair (2006), deaf adults who receive strong family support report lower levels of depression and higher life satisfaction compared to those with limited family connections.

Research has shown that deaf learners with strong family support networks exhibit better emotional regulation, higher self-esteem, and reduced stress levels. For instance, Kushalnagar et al. (2019) found that deaf college students with consistent family backing experienced fewer symptoms of uneasiness and misery compared to their peers without such support. Family members also play a key role in advocating for necessary accommodations, such as requesting interpreters or ensuring that academic institutions provide accessible resources. This advocacy reduces the institutional barriers faced by deaf students, creating a more inclusive learning environment (Powell et al., 2014).

Deaf adult students in higher education often face added stress due to communication barriers, social isolation, and limited mental health support tailored to their needs. While college life is challenging for many, these hurdles can make it even harder for deaf learners to cope. Family support whether emotional, practical, or simply being present can make a big difference in how they manage stress, feel connected, and succeed in their studies (Kushalnagar et al., 2020). Sadly, most research focuses on younger children, leaving adult deaf students overlooked (Fellinger et al., 2012). This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how family support impacts their mental well-being. The goal is to improve support systems, influence inclusive policies, and help deaf learners feel understood, supported, and empowered in their academic journey.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to find out the impact of family support on the mental well-being of deaf adult Learners studying in Higher Educational Institutions on the basis of their gender, Type of family.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Morales et al. (2024) conducted a study titled "The Role of Family in the Life Satisfaction of Young Adults: Ecological-Systematic Perspective." This research focused on how family structure, particularly parental cohabitation, influences young adults' life satisfaction (LS) and psychological distress (PD). Involving 557 participants, the study found that those from biparental families reported higher life satisfaction and lower psychological distress. While social support partially mediated the relationship between family structure and mental health, the type of parental cohabitation didn't significantly affect the indirect pathways. The study emphasizes how a stable family setup can serve as a protective factor in young people's emotional well-being.

Li et al. (2024) explored the "Psychological Burden of Hearing-Impaired Children and Their Parents During the COVID-19 Pandemic" using a large-scale national survey. Analyzing data from 15,989 children aged 5–17 and their parents, the study found that both children with hearing impairments and their parents experienced elevated levels of anxiety and depression during the pandemic. Moreover, these children often faced delays or cancellations in medical care, further impacting their well-being. This study highlights the dual psychological impact on families with hearing-impaired children and underscores the need for better healthcare access and emotional support during crises.

Luo et al. (2024) investigated "Social Support and Optimism in Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing College Students" through a study involving 771 students from special education colleges in China. Using questionnaires, the study found that greater perceived social support was linked to higher levels of optimism. Students who believed in overcoming adversity reported more positive outlooks, especially females. Interestingly, male students did not show the same association. The findings suggest the importance of fostering both support systems and positive belief systems, particularly for female D/HH students who may face compounded challenges.

Iqbal et al. (2024) examined the "Effect of Social and Emotional Problems on Personality Development of Hearing-Impaired Students at College Level." The study involved 105 students and 32 teachers from various regions of Punjab, Pakistan, using both quantitative surveys and qualitative feedback. Results showed that communication barriers and emotional stressors significantly hinder the personal growth and personality development of hearing-impaired students. Teachers emphasized the need for early detection, speech therapy, sign language instruction, and targeted teacher training to better address the social and emotional needs of these students. The study calls for more inclusive practices to support holistic development.

Mishra et al. (2022) conducted a comparative study titled "A Study of Depression, Anxiety, and Quality of Life in Hearing-Impaired and Hearing Population" involving 52 deaf and 52 hearing individuals (equal number of males and females). The study aimed to explore differences in mental health and quality of life between the two groups. Findings revealed that deaf participants experienced significantly higher levels of depression and lower quality of life compared to their hearing peers. Gender differences were also noted in psychological and environmental health outcomes. The study highlights the urgent need for mental health awareness and accessible psychological support within the deaf community.

Muñoz et al. (2020) investigated the "Psychosocial Well-Being of Adults Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" through a cross-sectional survey of 269 participants. While most reported scores below clinical concern for distress and functioning, psychological distress was linked to factors like psychological

inflexibility, younger age, and additional disabilities. Functional impairment was also associated with lower psychological flexibility. Despite generally positive well-being, the study suggests that incorporating psychological flexibility screening into hearing healthcare could help identify DHH adults who may benefit from targeted support services.

RESEARCH METHIDOLOGY

The research design for the study used a **sequential exploratory mixed-method design (QUANT–QUAL)** to examine the impact of family support on the mental well-being of deaf adult learners in higher education. The **survey method** was used to collect data from students enrolled at institutions with at least two deaf learners. Based on responses, data was collected from two state universities having a good number of Deaf adult learners enrolled with them. i.e. **Dr. Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University** and **Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyang State University**.

A **random sample of 60 deaf students** was finalized through the simple random sampling technique representing undergraduate and postgraduate groups.

Data was collected by using the **Psychological Well-Being Scale** (Sisodia & Choudhary, 2012), with high **reliability (0.87)** and **validity (0.94)**. Ethical practices such as informed consent, confidentiality, and communication accessibility were strictly followed.

Chi-square and correlation were used for analysis. The study was limited to deaf adult learners in higher education and focused only on family support, not including peer or institutional factors.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

All the data was collected and analysed by using SPSS 21.1 and summerized here as a nut shell as per the objectives selected for the study.

The objective as- "**To study the level of mental well-being of deaf adult learners studying in higher educational institutions**", the collected data were analysed by using cross-tabulation followed by the chi-square test on the basis of various components and variables.

Table- 1 Analysis for Family Support and Level of Mental Well-being of Deaf Adult Learners Studying in Higher Educational Institutions on the Basis of Gender

Level of Mental Well Being				Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Gender
Aav	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.115
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	.733
			N	8	8
		Gender	Correlation Coefficient	-.115	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.733	0.0
			N	8	8
AV	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.816
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	.221
			N	3	3
		Gender	Correlation Coefficient	-.816	1.000

			Sig. (2-tailed)	.221	0.0
			N	3	3
EH	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.140
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	.362
			N	31	31
		Gender	Correlation Coefficient	-.140	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.362	0.0
			N	31	31
Hi	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.095
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	.649
			N	18	18
		Gender	Correlation Coefficient	.095	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.649	0.0
			N	18	18

From the above table 1, while analysing the correlation between "Family Support and the Level of Mental Well-Being of Deaf Adult Learners Studying in Higher Educational Institutions" on the basis of their different gender groups. Kendall's Tau-b analysis showed the following correlations between family support and mental well-being of deaf adult learners by gender Above Average (0.733), Average (0.221), Extremely High (0.362), and High (0.649). Thus, all correlations were statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is accepted indicating that gender does not significantly influence the relationship between family support and mental well-being.

Table- 2 Analysis for Family Support and Level of Mental Well-being of Deaf Adult Learners Studying in Higher Educational Institutions on the Basis of Types of family.

Level of Mental Well-Being				Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Type of the Family
Aav	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1	-0.258
			N	8	8
		Type of the Family	Correlation Coefficient	-0.258	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.445	0.0
			N	8	8
AV	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.816
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	0.221
			N	3	3

		Type of the Family	Correlation Coefficient	0.816	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.221	0.0
			N	3	3
EH	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1	-0.248
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	0.107
			N	31	31
		Type of the Family	Correlation Coefficient	-0.248	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.107	0.0
			N	31	31
Hi	Kendall's tau_b	Total score obtained for the Family Support Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.055
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	0.79
			N	18	18
		Type of the Family	Correlation Coefficient	0.055	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.79	0.0
			N	18	18

From the above Table 2, The correlation between family support and the mental well-being of deaf adult learners, analyzed by type of family, revealed no statistically significant associations across all levels of mental well-being. For learners with an above-average level of mental well-being, Kendall's Tau-b was 0.445 ($p > 0.05$). At the average level, Kendall's Tau-b was 0.221 ($p > 0.05$), For the extremely high level was 0.107 ($p > 0.05$) and similarly, for the high level 0.790, with p-values exceeding 0.05. Since none of the correlations were statistically significant, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating no meaningful association between family support and mental well-being based on the type of family.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of family support on the mental well-being of deaf adult learners studying in higher educational institutions. Through quantitative analysis, including percentage calculations, chi-square tests, and correlation methods, the study assessed mental well-being across various demographic groups such as age, gender, qualification, educational stream, type of family, locality, and onset of deafness.

The findings clearly indicate that family support plays a critical role in promoting higher levels of mental well-being among deaf adult learners. In nearly all demographic categories, learners who received consistent emotional and communicative support from their families reported better mental well-being. For instance, a significant percentage of participants reported being in the "Extremely High" or "High" categories of mental wellbeing when family support was present. This trend was consistent across different age groups, gender categories, qualification levels, and family types.

The study also found that certain demographic variables slightly influenced mental wellbeing outcomes, but family support remained the most significant factor. For example, students from joint families, those with postgraduate qualifications, and those from rural areas often reported higher levels of well-being, suggesting that social and cultural context may also play a role. Furthermore, both pre-lingual and post-lingual deaf learners benefited equally from family support, highlighting the universal importance of familial relationships regardless of the onset of deafness.

In conclusion, mental well-being is essential for academic success and personal development, particularly for deaf learners who may face added challenges in communication and social interaction. The results of this study show that strong family support contributes significantly to emotional stability, resilience, and self-esteem in deaf adult learners. To foster this, educational institutions must adopt inclusive policies, offer accessible mental health services, and encourage family involvement from early educational stages through to higher education. Future researchers and policymakers should work towards creating a more empathetic and supportive academic environment where deaf students not only succeed but feel valued and understood. By focusing on emotional inclusion and psychological well-being, we can help deaf learners achieve both academic goals and a stable, fulfilling life.

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