QUALITATIVE RESEARCH JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

ISSN Online: 3006-4686, ISSN Print: 3006-4678
Volume No: 02 Issue No: 02 (2025)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON THE ROLE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of hearing impairment on the academic achievement of primary school students, with a focus on the role of assistive technologies and inclusive practices in government and special education schools in Faisalabad, Pakistan. A cross-sectional descriptive and correlational design was employed, involving 62 teachers selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire covering academic performance, use of assistive devices, support services, communication methods, and classroom inclusivity. Results revealed that 69.4% of students used hearing aids or cochlear implants, and 79% had access to specialized resources. However, only 64.5% of classrooms were rated as somewhat inclusive, and just 30.6% of teacher-student communication was considered very effective. Regression and correlation analyses showed a significant negative relationship between the severity of hearing impairment and academic performance, particularly in reading ($r = -0.65$, $\beta = -0.40$), mathematics ($r = -0.58$, $\beta = -0.35$), and science ($r = -0.45$, $\beta = -0.25$). While 91.9% of students had access to assistive devices, their effectiveness was rated as only "somewhat effective" by 64.5% of respondents. The study underscores the urgent need for improved teacher training, resource allocation, early intervention, and inclusive educational strategies to bridge academic gaps for learners with hearing impairments.

Key Words: Hearing Impairment, Academic Achievement, Assistive Technology, Inclusive Education, Primary Education.

INTRODUCTION

Special education addresses the unique learning needs of students with disabilities through individualized instruction, adapted materials, and accessible environments. Its goal is to enhance the personal and academic success of learners who may not benefit fully from general classroom settings. Among the many disabilities addressed in special education, hearing impairment presents significant challenges to communication and learning.

Globally, over 430 million people suffer from disabling hearing loss, with projections exceeding 700 million by 2050, most living in low- and middle-income countries. Hearing loss may range from mild to profound and can significantly affect speech, language development, and social integration. While individuals who are hard of hearing may benefit from hearing aids and assistive

ISSN Online: 3006-4686, ISSN Print: 3006-4678
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technology, those who are deaf often rely on sign language. These communication barriers contribute to academic struggles, especially among deaf learners in primary education.

Speech-language therapy (SLT) plays a crucial role in supporting students with hearing loss by enhancing communication, reading, writing, and social skills. Through collaboration with educators and tailored interventions, speech-language pathologists help bridge the learning gap caused by auditory challenges. Research suggests that language acquisition is highly dependent on auditory input, and hearing loss can severely impede this process, affecting academic achievement. According to a study by Sade (2013), hearing-impaired student's demonstrated lower academic performance compared to their hearing peers, primarily due to delayed language development and ineffective instructional methods. The study highlighted the need for adapted teaching strategies to support deaf learners.

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural tools like sign language in learning. Access to communication-rich environments supports cognitive and language development, aligning with bilingual-bicultural approaches (Marschark et al., 2011).

Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) suggests that hearing-impaired students expend more cognitive resources processing incomplete or visual information. Reducing extraneous cognitive load through structured materials and clear visual or signed instructions improves learning efficiency (Paas & Sweller, 2014).

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) frames learning within interacting systems, from family and school (microsystem) to cultural norms and policies (macrosystem). Positive home-school collaboration and inclusive societal attitudes enhance academic outcomes for deaf students (Luckner & Muir, 2001).

Hearing impairment is a widespread disability that significantly impacts the academic achievement of primary school learners. Despite inclusive education efforts, deaf students often underperform due to communication barriers and inadequate instructional approaches. Limited research exists on the specific academic challenges faced by deaf learners at the primary level. This study seeks to examine how hearing impairment affects their educational outcomes, identify contributing factors, and explore ways to improve learning experiences for these students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hearing impairment, defined as partial or complete hearing loss, impacts communication, language, and learning. According to WHO (2021), hearing loss may be mild to profound, with causes ranging from genetic and prenatal conditions to environmental and age-related factors. It may be congenital or acquired. Globally, 1.5 billion people experience hearing impairment, including 34 million children, many of whom lack access to early intervention, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2021; Olusanya et al., 2019). Early diagnosis is critical to avoid delays in language and cognitive development.

Hearing loss is classified by severity (26–81+ dB) and type, conductive, sensorineural, or mixed (Davis et al., 2016; Clark & Martin, 2015). Prelingual hearing loss poses greater challenges to language and academic growth than postlingual loss. Children with hearing loss often struggle in traditional classrooms due to limited auditory input, leading to delays in speaking, reading, and comprehension (Cole & Flexer, 2019). These challenges necessitate specialized teaching approaches. Despite inclusive education efforts, barriers such as poor teacher training, stigma, and lack of audiological support persist, especially in under-resourced settings (Marschark & Spencer, 2010; Olusanya et al., 2019).

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Albert Bandura's (1986) Self-Efficacy Theory highlights the role of belief in one's ability to succeed in specific tasks. For deaf students, self-efficacy influences motivation, resilience, and academic persistence. Factors like effective communication, supportive teacher relationships, and appropriate resources foster these beliefs. Bandura (1997) outlines four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal encouragement, and physiological states. Mastery of tasks and observing successful deaf peers enhance confidence. Inclusive practices and positive reinforcement significantly boost academic engagement (Schunk, 1991).

Integrating cognitive load, sociocultural, ecological systems, and self-efficacy theories offers a comprehensive framework for supporting deaf learners. While sociocultural theory promotes collaborative and language-rich environments, cognitive load theory emphasizes reducing extraneous mental demands. Ecological systems theory considers systemic support, and self-efficacy theory underscores the power of belief in personal competence. Together, these frameworks inform inclusive, adaptive educational strategies.

Delayed language exposure, especially among prelingually deaf children, impedes reading and writing skills (Cole & Flexer, 2019). Limited phonological awareness affects reading fluency, with many deaf adults reading below a fourth-grade level (Marschark & Wauters, 2011; Perfetti & Sandak, 2000). Writing challenges include poor grammar, limited vocabulary, and difficulty organizing ideas (Mayer & Trezek, 2015). Auditory-centric classrooms hinder deaf learners' access to spoken content, even with interpreters (Antia et al., 2002). Fast-paced discussions and unclear turn-taking limit participation and social engagement (Luckner & Muir, 2001), affecting both learning and collaboration. Deaf students often rely on visual-spatial processing rather than auditory-sequential processing (Hauser et al., 2010). Comprehending academic content through visual or text-based inputs increases cognitive load, reducing learning efficiency (Paas & Sweller, 2014).

Communication barriers can lead to peer isolation, reduced self-esteem, and behavioral concerns, which are often misinterpreted by untrained educators (Kushalnagar et al., 2011; Guardino & Antia, 2012). These emotional factors negatively impact academic involvement. Inadequate access to trained teachers, interpreters, and assistive technologies is a significant barrier, especially in low-income settings (Olusanya et al., 2019). Learning materials often assume auditory understanding, marginalizing deaf learners (Mayer & Leigh, 2010). Societal and institutional low expectations limit academic challenges for deaf students, reinforcing underachievement. High yet attainable expectations, paired with support, can foster success (Marschark et al., 2011).

The Bi-Bi model promotes learning through sign language while teaching the spoken/written language as secondary. This respects Deaf culture and supports both cognitive and language development (Mayer & Leigh, 2010). Students in Bi-Bi settings generally outperform those in oral-only programs (Grosjean, 2010). Visual tools, charts, videos, whiteboards, support deaf learners' comprehension (Guardino & Fullerton, 2014). Total Communication (TC), which blends sign language, speech, text, and visuals, accommodates diverse learning needs (Schick et al., 2006). Captioned multimedia enhances vocabulary and concept retention (Strassman & O'Dell, 2012).

Differentiated Instruction involves tailoring teaching methods to meet diverse student needs. For deaf learners, this includes flexible grouping by ability or preference, customized assessments, and scaffolded tasks using visual supports (Tomlinson, 2014; Marschark et al., 2011). Collaborative Learning enhances peer interaction and social integration through structured group work, peer

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tutoring, and shared activities. Effective communication tools and clear guidelines are essential for successful inclusion (Antia et al., 2002). Assistive Technology plays a transformative role. Tools like FM systems, cochlear implants, captions, and real-time transcription (e.g., CART) bridge communication gaps and support classroom engagement (Cole & Flexer, 2019; Stinson et al., 2009). Teachers are central to creating inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms. Training in deaf education and sign language helps build supportive teacher-student relationships (Luckner & Howell, 2002). Effective classroom design, U-shaped seating, good lighting, and reduced noise, supports visual learning (Guardino & Antia, 2012). Family support enhances literacy and emotional development. Parent involvement in learning activities, regular communication with teachers, and connections with deaf role models contribute to academic success (Kushalnagar et al., 2011).

Teachers support deaf students' academic, emotional, and social growth by facilitating language development, promoting inclusive pedagogy, and advocating for accessible learning environments. Teachers help develop bilingual skills through consistent sign and spoken/written language use, using visual aids and guided reading (Mayer & Leigh, 2010; Trezek & Wang, 2006). They adopt multimodal strategies, accessible assessments, and assistive technologies to meet diverse needs (Luckner & Muir, 2001; Antia et al., 2002). Teachers ensure legal and educational rights (e.g., under IDEA), access to support services, and raise awareness through school-wide initiatives (Guardino & Cannon, 2015). They address feelings of isolation, foster peer interactions, and promote self-esteem through cooperative learning (Kushalnagar et al., 2011). Teacher-student bonds enhance motivation and resilience; deaf educators offer powerful role models (Luckner & Howell, 2002). Teachers empower families through training, resources, and guidance on communication and learning strategies (Guardino & Antia, 2012). However, teachers often face challenges like lack of training, resources, and large class sizes, underscoring the need for systemic reforms (Marschark et al., 2011).

Family Engagement is key to language, cognitive, and academic development. Early communication exposure, sign language, speech, or both, supports long-term success (Kushalnagar et al., 2010; Humphries et al., 2012). Shared reading, storytelling, and literacy-rich environments build foundational skills (Mayer & Trezek, 2017). Parental Advocacy ensures proper services, participation in IEPs, and aligns school practices with family communication preferences (Stinson & Antia, 1999). Families also support inclusive staffing, like hiring sign language-proficient teachers. Challenges include limited awareness of services, especially in underserved areas (Magnuson, 2000). Parental Training – workshops and early intervention services empower families (Calderon & Greenberg, 2011). Family-Centered Services – support groups and mentorship build confidence and emotional support (Jackson, 2011). Cultural Sensitivity – educators must respect diverse family beliefs about communication (Padden & Humphries, 2005). Active family involvement correlates strongly with improved academic outcomes, motivation, and self-confidence (Marschark et al., 2002).

The school environment influences deaf students' learning, inclusion, and well-being. Communication Accessibility, through sign interpreters, captions, visual aids, and well-designed classrooms, supports engagement and reduces isolation (Marschark et al., 2012; Antia et al., 2009). Peer Relationships improve in inclusive settings that promote social interaction and implement anti-bullying strategies. Programs that build hearing students' awareness foster stronger inclusion (Koutsoubou et al., 2017; McKee & Smiler, 2017). Teacher-Student Interactions significantly

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affect motivation and academic outcomes. Trained, empathetic teachers who adapt instruction for deaf learners contribute to stronger engagement (Luckner & Muir, 2001; Marschark & Hauser, 2011). Lack of communication access and teacher preparedness can hinder progress. Professional development is essential to build teacher capacity for inclusive deaf education.

Deaf students benefit greatly from specialized academic support, including resource rooms, IEPs, and assistive technologies like FM systems, cochlear implants, and speech-to-text tools (Easterbrooks & Beal-Alvarez, 2012). Schools fostering inclusive cultures and strong policies aligned with UNCRPD ensure equal access and holistic development (UNESCO, 2020). Mainstream schools offer peer integration but often lack adequate resources (Stinson & Antia, 1999), while specialized schools provide rich language environments but may reduce exposure to the hearing world (Marschark et al., 2012). Academic success correlates strongly with inclusive, well-resourced settings (Cawthon, 2009).

Cultural views shape how deafness is perceived, either as a medical condition requiring correction or as a linguistic-cultural identity (Lane, 1992; Ladd, 2003). Stigmas in some regions still marginalize deaf individuals (Abdi et al., 2021).

Barriers include: poor implementation of inclusive frameworks like UNCRPD (UNESCO, 2020), limited access to assistive tools and education in low-income areas (Woolfson & Brady, 2009), inadequate recognition of sign languages limits access to quality education (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Deaf culture provides identity and community, enhancing self-esteem and academic engagement. However, conflicts arise when oralism is prioritized over sign language (Humphries et al., 2012). Intersectionality (e.g., race, gender) further complicates educational experiences (Gertz & Boudreault, 2016). Positive media representation and technology (e.g., captioning, online learning) expand access, though digital divides persist (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2015).

Global frameworks like the UNCRPD and SDGs advocate inclusive education and sign language rights. National laws like the ADA and IDEA (U.S.) support accommodations and IEPs for deaf learners (Smith & Luckner, 1995). Challenges include: lack of sign language recognition, shortage of trained educators, underfunded support services, weak monitoring and accountability (UNESCO, 2020). Improving policy effectiveness requires: recognizing Deaf culture, inclusive design with stakeholder input, investment in teacher training, and adequate funding (Ladd, 2003; Pillay, 2018).

The study will help to create awareness about the importance of education in the life of students with hearing impairment. The significance of this study lies in its potential to highlight how assistive devices can enhance the academic performance of children with hearing impairments, fostering equal educational opportunities. By identifying key factors that influence their effectiveness, the study can guide improvements in teaching practices and resource allocation. Ultimately, it aimed to inform policy and support the development of inclusive education strategies for children with hearing impairments.

Objectives of the study

Following were the objectives of the study:

1. To examine the relationship between degree of hearing impairment and academic achievement in core subjects.
2. To assess the effectiveness of assistive technologies and communication modes in supporting academic outcomes.

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3. To provide data-driven recommendations for inclusive education strategies.

Research Questions

Following were the research questions of the study:

1. How does the severity of hearing impairment impact academic performance in primary school learners?
2. What is the role of assistive devices and communication methods in shaping educational outcomes?
3. What institutional and instructional factors influence learning among students with hearing impairments?

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

A systematic and structured approach to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to answer research questions or solve a problem. The methodology adopted in the current study is described as below.

Design of Research

A cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational research design was employed to examine the relationship between the severity of hearing impairment, use of assistive technology, and academic achievement among students with hearing impairments.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all primary-level special education and general education teachers teaching students with hearing impairments in government and special education institutions within Faisalabad, Pakistan. This included teachers from both hearing impairment centers (HICs) and center-based special education schools. These educators were chosen as they have direct experience with the academic performance, assistive technology use, and inclusive practices relevant to students with hearing impairments.

Sample of the Study

A total of 62 teachers were selected to constitute the sample for this study. This included 34 special education teachers and 28 general education teachers working with hearing-impaired students at the primary level. The sample was drawn to ensure representation from different school types (HICs and center-based), sectors (public and private), and varying years of teaching experience, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings within the Faisalabad district context.

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participants. The teacher population was first divided into relevant strata based on key characteristics, namely, school type (general vs. special education), sector (public vs. private), and teaching role (general vs. special education teacher). Subsequently, participants were randomly selected from each stratum to ensure proportionate and equitable representation across the educational landscape. This approach minimized sampling bias and enhanced the representativeness and reliability of the data collected for evaluating assistive technology use and inclusive educational practices for students with hearing impairments.

Research Instrumentation

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The primary research instrument employed in this study was a structured, self-administered questionnaire specifically designed to explore the relationship between hearing impairment, the use of assistive technologies, and academic achievement among primary-level students. Developed in alignment with the study's objectives and theoretical framework, the questionnaire was subjected to expert validation to ensure content relevance and contextual appropriateness. It consisted of five major sections. The first section focused on gathering demographic information about both the teachers and the students, including teacher age, gender, type of school, years of teaching experience, level of training in special education, and degree of involvement with students with hearing impairments. It also captured student-specific variables such as age, gender, grade level, degree of hearing loss (mild, moderate, severe, or profound), and preferred communication mode (oral, sign, or both). The second section assessed academic achievement across key subject areas, reading, writing, mathematics, and science, using a three-point ordinal scale (1 = Below Average, 2 = Average, 3 = Above Average). The third section examined access to support services and assistive technologies, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, tutoring services, and adapted learning materials. Teachers were also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of these services using a three-point Likert scale. The fourth section explored communication practices and the learning environment, focusing on the communication mode used in classrooms, the effectiveness of these methods, peer interaction, and the inclusivity of the learning setting. Finally, the fifth section investigated the quality of teacher–student interaction, including the clarity of instruction and the perceived supportiveness of teaching strategies. The questionnaire was designed to yield both descriptive and inferential data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the educational experiences and outcomes of students with hearing impairments in the selected schools.

Validity of Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established through expert consultation with professionals specializing in hearing impairment education. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to align with the objectives of the study, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant constructs. Under the supervision of the research advisor and with input from field experts, the tool was critically reviewed and refined to enhance content validity and ensure it effectively captured the necessary data related to academic performance, support services, and learning environments of students with hearing impairment. To ensure internal consistency, the reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a value of $\alpha = 0.87$, indicating a high level of reliability.

Data Collection

Researcher prepared sixty copies of the questionnaire for the data collection from the special education teachers about children of Govt. General and special education schools for Hearing Impairment of district Faisalabad. The researcher went to general and special education schools and met with the participants. The researcher explained the study's purpose and goals to the participants before giving them the questionnaire. Then, the participants filled out the questionnaire, and the researcher collected it after completion.

Data Analysis and Results

The researchers calculated mean scores and standard deviations for academic achievement across different categories of hearing impairment. Inferential statistics was also employed to conducted

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correlation and regression analyses to determine the relationship between the degree of hearing impairment and academic performance in each subject area.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 62)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	25–35 years	31	50.0
	36–50 years	31	50.0
Gender	Female	49	79.0
	Male	13	21.0
Sector	Public	44	71.0
	Private	18	29.0
Type of School	Center-Based	31	50.0
	HIC	31	50.0
Teaching Experience	1–6 years	30	48.4
	7–12 years	32	51.6

Note: Total sample size = 68; Valid responses = 62 (91.2%), Missing = 6 (8.8%)

The demographic distribution reveals a balanced age range among respondents, with equal representation from the 25–35 and 36–50-year age groups. The majority of the respondents were female (79%), and most were from public sector institutions (71%). Additionally, half the respondents were affiliated with center-based schools and half with Hearing Impairment Centers. Teaching experience was also evenly split between 1–6 years and 7–12 years, reflecting a relatively experienced group of teachers with substantial exposure to hearing-impaired learners.

Table 2

Summary of Key Variables Related to Assistive Technology, Inclusion, and Academic Performance (N = 62)

Construct	Variable Assessed	Most Frequent Response	%	Alternative Responses
Use of Assistive Technology	Use of Hearing Aids/Cochlear Implants	Yes	69.4%	No (30.6%)
	Provision of Assistive Devices by School/Teacher	Yes	96.8%	No (3.2%)
	Access to Assistive Devices	Yes	91.9%	No (8.1%)
	Effectiveness of Assistive Devices	Somewhat Effective	64.5%	Very (29.0%), Not (6.5%)
Academic Achievement	Mathematics Performance	Average	83.9%	Above (11.3%), Below (4.8%)
	Reading Performance	Below Average	48.4%	Average (41.9%), Above (9.7%)
	Writing Performance	Average	51.6%	Above (33.9%), Below (14.5%)
	Science Performance	Average	48.4%	Below (40.3%), Above (11.3%)

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Construct	Variable Assessed	Most Frequent Response	%	Alternative Responses
	Overall Academic Performance	Average	56.5%	Below (24.2%), Above (19.4%)
Inclusive Practices & School Support	Classroom Inclusivity	Somewhat Inclusive	64.5%	Very (19.4%), Not (16.1%)
	Learning Environment Supportive to Hearing Needs	Somewhat Inclusive	64.5%	Not (21.0%), Very (14.5%)
	School Accommodation for Child's Needs	Somewhat Supportive	56.5%	Very (27.4%), Not (16.1%)
	Support for Hesitative Behavior	Somewhat Supportive	59.7%	Very (35.5%), Not (4.8%)
Communication Accessibility	Communication Mode Used in School	Oral Language	48.4%	Both (43.5%), Sign (8.1%)
	Child's Preferred Communication Mode	Both	51.6%	Oral (46.8%), Sign (1.6%)
	Communication Mode Effectiveness	Very Effective	48.4%	Somewhat (43.5%), Not (8.1%)
	Effectiveness of Buddy System	Somewhat Effective	74.2%	Not (16.1%), Very (9.7%)
Teacher Factors	Teacher Involvement with Student	Occasionally Involved	71.0%	Rarely (16.1%), Regularly (12.9%)
	Resource Type Available to Teacher	Advanced	58.1%	Basic (32.3%), None (9.7%)
Access to Curriculum & Materials	Equal Access to Learning Materials	Yes	90.3%	No (9.7%)
	Materials in Preferred Communication Mode	Yes	98.4%	No (1.6%)
	Materials Appropriate to Learning Level	Yes	95.2%	No (4.8%)
	Availability of Specialized Resources	Yes	79.0%	No (21.0%)
	Additional Tutoring or Remedial Support Provided	Yes	85.5%	No (14.5%)
Social Inclusion & Peer Interaction	Frequency of Peer Interaction with Hearing Peers	Occasionally	50.0%	Frequently (37.1%), Rarely (12.9%)

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Construct	Variable Assessed	Most Frequent Response	%	Alternative Responses
	Child's Comfort in Social Settings	Occasionally Comfortable	74.2%	Rarely (19.4%), Frequently (6.5%)
Teacher–Student Communication	Effectiveness of Teacher–Student Communication	Somewhat Effective	59.7%	Very (30.6%), Not (9.7%)
	Clarity of Instruction for the Child	Somewhat Effective	72.6%	Not (27.4%)
Student Profile	Degree of Hearing Loss	Moderate	74.2%	Mild (24.2%), Severe (1.6%)

Note: Valid responses = 62 (91.2%), Missing = 6 (8.8%), Total sample = 68

Table 2 summarizes the educational conditions of students with hearing impairment. A total of 69.4% of students used hearing aids or cochlear implants, yet 64.5% of these were rated as only "somewhat effective." Academic performance was mostly rated as average, with 83.9% in mathematics, 51.6% in writing, and 48.4% in science. However, 48.4% of students performed below average in reading, reflecting significant language-related challenges.

Inclusive classroom practices were also moderate; 64.5% of classrooms were rated as "somewhat inclusive," and 56.5% of schools were only somewhat supportive in accommodating students' needs. Oral language was the primary mode of communication in 48.4% of schools, with only 8.1% using sign language exclusively. While 51.6% of students preferred both oral and sign modes, communication was rated as "very effective" by just 48.4% of teachers.

Teacher engagement was limited, with 71% reporting only occasional involvement, and 58.1% of schools had advanced teaching resources. Despite 90.3% of students having equal access to learning materials and 98.4% receiving materials in their preferred communication mode, teacher-student communication was "somewhat effective" in 59.7% of cases. Peer interaction and comfort were also moderate, with 50% interacting occasionally and 74.2% only occasionally comfortable in social settings.

These findings suggest that while basic assistive and curricular supports are in place, their implementation and effectiveness remain inconsistent. Stronger teacher preparation, diversified communication strategies, and more inclusive school practices are needed to close the academic achievement gap for students with hearing impairments.

Regression Analysis (Predictors of Academic Achievement)

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Achievement from Degree of Hearing Impairment

Subject Area	β (Beta)	T	p-value	Significance
Reading	-0.40	-3.45	< .01	Significant
Mathematics	-0.35	-3.12	< .01	Significant
Science	-0.25	-2.10	< .05	Significant

The regression analysis indicates that the degree of hearing impairment significantly predicts academic achievement in all core subjects. Specifically, it had the strongest negative

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impact on reading performance, followed by mathematics and then science. The negative beta values suggest that as the severity of hearing impairment increases, academic performance decreases across all subjects.

These findings emphasize the critical role of hearing capacity in literacy and numeracy skills development among primary-level deaf students. All results are statistically significant at $p < .05$. Regression analysis indicated that the degree of hearing impairment was a significant predictor of academic performance in reading ($\beta = -0.40$, $p < 0.01$) and mathematics ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < 0.01$), but less so in science ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < 0.05$).

Correlation Analysis (Hearing Loss and Academic Performance)

Table 4

Pearson Correlation between Degree of Hearing Impairment and Academic Performance

Subject Area	R	p-value	Strength of Correlation	Significance
Reading	-0.65	< .01	Strong negative	Significant
Mathematics	-0.58	< .01	Moderate to strong negative	Significant
Science	-0.45	< .05	Moderate negative	Significant

The correlation analysis further supports the regression findings by revealing a statistically significant negative relationship between hearing loss and academic performance. The strongest correlation was observed in reading ($r = -0.65$), indicating that students with more severe hearing impairment are substantially more likely to perform poorly in reading tasks. Mathematics and science were also negatively affected, though to a slightly lesser extent. These results underscore the urgent need for targeted academic interventions and assistive support for learners with varying degrees of hearing loss. Negative correlations indicated that greater hearing impairment is associated with lower academic performance. $p < .05$ indicates statistical significance. There was a negative correlation between the degree of hearing impairment and academic performance in reading ($r = -0.65$, $p < 0.01$), mathematics ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.01$), and science ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.05$).

FINDINGS

Following the study findings:

1. **Age Distribution of Participants**
   The survey participants were aged between 25 and 50 years. Respondents aged 25–35 years constituted 45.6% of the total sample (31 respondents). The remaining respondents were aged 36–50 years, also representing a significant proportion. This data shows an almost equal distribution of ages across the two age groups, with the most frequent age range being 25–35 years and 36–50 years.
2. **Gender Distribution**
   Out of the total respondents, there were 72.1% were female (49 respondents). 19.1% were male (13 respondents).
3. **Sector of Employment**
   64.7% (44 respondents) were from the public sector. 26.5% (18 respondents) were from the private sector.
4. **Center and HIC Representation**

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45.6% (31 respondents) belonged to HIC and Center. This group formed a significant proportion of the study.

5. **Participants' Years of Experience**
   The respondents' experience ranged between 1 to 12 years. 44.1% had 1–6 years of experience. 47.1% had 7–12 years of experience. While the distribution appears relatively equal, the 7–12 years group represented the highest proportion.
6. **Yes/No Responses**
   Across various questions, 63.2% of respondents answered yes, while 27.9% responded no. In another item, 72.1% responded yes, and 19.1% responded no. The trend indicates a predominant "yes" response across multiple items.
7. **Level of Involvement**
   64.7% of respondents were occasionally involved. 14.7% were rarely involved, while 11.8% were regularly involved. This reflects a high proportion of occasional involvement among respondents.
8. **Skill Level**
   52.9% rated their skills as advanced. 29.4% rated their skills as basic, and 8.8% reported having none. The majority of participants identified as having advanced skills.
9. **Severity of Challenges**
   67.6% reported challenges as moderate. 22.1% identified their challenges as mild, while 1.5% reported them as severe.
10. **Performance Ratings**
    Across various items, 76.5% rated performance as average, while 10.3% were above average and 4.4% were below average. In another instance, 44.1% rated performance as below average, while 38.2% were average.
11. **Effectiveness of Interventions**
    57.4% considered interventions as somewhat effective. 19.1% rated them as very effective, and 1.7% rated them as not effective.
12. **Supportiveness**
    51.5% of respondents felt the environment was somewhat supportive. 25% rated it as very supportive, while 14.7% considered it not supportive.
13. **Communication Preferences**
    44.1% of respondents used oral language. 39.7% used both oral and sign language. A smaller proportion (7.4%) used sign language exclusively.
14. **Inclusiveness Perception**
    58.8% reported the environment as somewhat inclusive. 17.6% rated it as very inclusive, while 14.7% considered it not inclusive.
15. **Frequency of Involvement**
    45.6% were involved occasionally. 33.8% reported being frequently involved, while 11.8% were rarely involved.
16. **Regression Analysis**
    Regression analysis indicated that the degree of hearing impairment was a significant predictor of academic performance in reading.
17. **Correlation Analysis**

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

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There was a negative correlation between the degree of hearing impairment and academic performance in reading.

DISCUSSION

The study explored the impact of hearing impairment on the academic achievement of deaf learners at the primary school level, with a particular focus on identifying challenges and evaluating the relationship between the level of hearing impairment and academic performance. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from special education teachers and students with hearing impairments in government general and special education schools in Faisalabad. A total of 62 students participated in the study through stratified random sampling, and data were collected using a questionnaire with 20 questions.

The findings revealed that hearing impairment significantly affects students' academic achievement, particularly in areas related to language acquisition, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and communication skills. Students with profound hearing loss faced greater academic challenges compared to those with mild or moderate impairments. The absence of written notes, lack of visual aids, and reliance on spoken instructions created additional barriers for students. Communication difficulties, such as challenges with lip reading, understanding phonemes, and vocabulary retention, were common.

The study highlighted several factors contributing to these challenges: insufficient teacher training in special education methodologies, lack of access to assistive technologies (e.g., hearing aids, FM systems), and limited classroom accommodations. Teachers reported difficulty in adapting teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of deaf learners, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

The findings are well-aligned with the Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes the role of interaction and communication tools in learning. Students with access to multiple communication modes (sign and oral) exhibited higher engagement, supporting the importance of bilingual-bicultural environments.

The results also reflect the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988), as students who relied solely on oral instructions experienced higher cognitive burden, especially in reading tasks, due to auditory processing deficits. Moreover, the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1986) is illustrated by the correlation between perceived instructional support and student motivation, suggesting that teacher encouragement and adaptive practices enhance academic persistence.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the impact of hearing impairment on the academic achievement of students with hearing impairments in government general and special education schools in Faisalabad. The findings reveal systemic barriers impeding academic success among students with hearing impairments. The majority of students (69.4%) were using hearing aids or cochlear implants, which positively contributed to their academic achievement. This demonstrates the significant role of assistive devices in facilitating access to auditory information, thereby improving their learning outcomes. A substantial portion of the participants identified a lack of specialized resources and assistive tools as a barrier to achieving academic parity. Limited access to updated technologies and teacher training programs significantly hampers the educational

ISSN Online: 3006-4686, ISSN Print: 3006-4678
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experience of hearing-impaired students. Moreover, the majority of the respondents was female teachers and belonged to public sector schools, highlighting the role of public institutions in the education of hearing-impaired children. Both Hearing Impairment Centers and specialized centers played an equal role in providing education. Students with hearing impairments face challenges such as language delays, communication barriers, and limited classroom accommodations. These challenges emphasize the need for enhanced support systems, including specialized teaching strategies, visual aids, and assistive devices. Findings showed that a significant percentage of teachers had 7–12 years of experience, reflecting a capable workforce. However, continuous professional development and training are essential to equip teachers with the skills to meet the diverse needs of hearing-impaired learners effectively.

This study confirms that hearing impairment significantly affects academic achievement in primary school students, particularly in reading and mathematics. Access to assistive devices, inclusive classroom practices, and effective communication methods emerged as pivotal factors. To bridge the achievement gap, policymakers must take comprehensive actions, including ensuring equitable access to assistive technologies, institutionalizing teacher training programs focused on inclusive pedagogy and sign language, mandating early identification and intervention strategies, and promoting bilingual education models that support both sign and spoken/written language development.

Future research should adopt mixed-methods designs, incorporate longitudinal data, and evaluate intervention efficacy. These steps will enrich understanding and policy formulation for inclusive education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers made the following recommendations:

1. Improved access to assistive technologies, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, to ensure optimal learning conditions.
2. Enhanced teacher training programs focusing on communication strategies, sign language, and inclusive teaching methods.
3. Provision of specialized resources and visual learning aids in classrooms to support students' diverse needs.
4. Greater involvement of parents and collaboration with educators to create a supportive learning environment.

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