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Behind the Silence: Assessing the Challenges of Care and Instruction Among Parents and Teachers of Deaf and Mute Students at Wesleyan University- Philippines

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Abstract

This study examined the emotional, physical, and academic challenges encountered by parents and teachers of deaf and mute students enrolled in the SHARE (Support for Hearing-impaired and Rehabilitation through Education) Program at Wesleyan University-Philippines. Recognizing the important roles of parents and teachers in supporting learners with hearing and speech impairments, the study sought to identify the specific difficulties they experience in providing care and instruction. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed involving 26 parents and all teachers directly engaged in the education and support of deaf and mute students. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected using a validated researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of emotional, physical, and academic challenge indicators. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze the data.

Findings revealed that parents generally experienced low levels of emotional, physical, and academic challenges.

However, they reported feelings of sadness and guilt regarding their children's welfare and expressed a need for emotional support, educational resources, and greater guidance from teachers. In contrast, teachers experienced moderate emotional and physical challenges and considerable academic challenges. Communication barriers, diverse learner needs, instructional adaptation, limited resources, and the need for continuous professional development emerged as significant concerns. The study concludes that while parents have generally adapted to their caregiving roles, teachers require additional support to effectively address the demands of inclusive education. It is recommended that the university strengthen parent support programs, provide counseling services, enhance school-family collaboration, offer continuous professional development for teachers, and increase access to instructional resources and academic support services. These initiatives may contribute to improving the quality of care, instruction, and overall educational experiences of deaf and mute students.

Keywords: Academic Challenges, Deaf and Mute Students, Emotional Challenges, Inclusive Education, Physical Challenges

Introduction

Wesleyan University-Philippines (WUP), through its SHARE Program (Support for Hearing-impaired and Rehabilitation through Education), has continuously demonstrated its commitment to inclusive education by providing specialized support for students with hearing and speech impairments. The program seeks to create a learning environment that nurtures not only the academic development of deaf and mute students but also their emotional, social, and physical well-being. As inclusive education continues to gain importance, understanding the experiences of the individuals who provide direct support to these learners becomes increasingly essential. Parents and teachers serve as the primary pillars of guidance and instruction for deaf and mute students; therefore, examining the challenges they encounter is necessary to strengthen educational practices and support systems within the institution.

Parents and teachers play vital roles in facilitating the development and success of deaf and mute students. However, these responsibilities often involve unique emotional, physical, and academic demands that may affect their effectiveness and well-being (Bashir *et al.*, 2023) [3]. Communication barriers, individualized learning needs, and the necessity for specialized

instructional approaches may contribute to stress, frustration, and increased workloads among caregivers and educators. Moreover, limited access to resources, professional training, and support services may further complicate their efforts to provide quality care and instruction (Zeevi *et al.*, 2018) ^[16].

Given these realities, this study examines the emotional, physical, and academic challenges encountered by parents and teachers of deaf and mute students enrolled in the SHARE Program of Wesleyan University-Philippines. Specifically, it investigates the emotional struggles experienced by parents and teachers, the physical demands associated with caregiving and inclusive instruction, and the academic challenges related to supporting the educational needs of deaf and mute learners. By identifying these challenges, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that may guide the development of targeted interventions, enhanced support services, and professional development initiatives that promote the holistic growth and academic success of deaf and mute students.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to assess the emotional, physical, and academic challenges encountered by parents and teachers of deaf and mute students enrolled in the SHARE Program of Wesleyan University-Philippines. A descriptive approach was deemed appropriate because it allows researchers to systematically describe existing conditions, perceptions, and experiences of a target population without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) ^[5]. The respondents consisted of 26 parents of deaf and mute students and all teachers directly involved in their instruction and support. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected for their direct involvement with learners and their ability to provide relevant information on the challenges associated with caregiving and inclusive education. Data were collected through a researcher-developed survey questionnaire composed of three dimensions: emotional, physical, and academic challenges.

The survey instrument used a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, to measure the extent of challenges experienced by respondents. Before data collection, the questionnaire underwent expert validation to ensure content validity and appropriateness of the items. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity, were strictly observed throughout the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, specifically frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, to determine the level and variability of challenges experienced by parents and teachers. These statistical measures provided a comprehensive description of respondents' perceptions and facilitated the identification of areas that may require enhanced support and intervention within the SHARE Program (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2019) ^[7].

Results and Discussion

1. Emotional Challenges of Parents

Table 1: Emotional Challenges

S. No	Part I. Emotional Challenges (Parents)	Wm	Sd	Verbal Description
1	I feel emotionally stressed when communicating with my deaf and mute child.	1.88	1.03	Disagree
2	I feel frustrated when I cannot fully understand my child's needs.	2.46	1.14	Disagree
3	I experience emotional exhaustion due to my caregiving responsibilities.	1.69	0.74	Strongly Disagree
4	I feel anxious about my child's future because of his/her condition.	2.23	0.95	Disagree
5	I feel overwhelmed by the emotional demands of supporting my child.	2.35	0.94	Disagree
6	I experience sadness when my child faces difficulties in school or social situations.	2.96	0.77	Agree
7	I feel guilty when I think I am not doing enough for my child.	3.08	0.80	Agree
8	I feel emotionally drained after assisting my child with daily activities.	1.92	0.80	Disagree
9	I find it emotionally challenging to stay patient at all times.	2.38	0.80	Disagree
10	I feel the need for more emotional support as a parent of a deaf or mute child.	2.58	0.90	Agree
	Overall Weighted Mean	2.35	0.89	Disagree

Table 1 shows that parents generally did not experience high levels of emotional challenges in caring for their deaf and mute children, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 2.35 (SD = 0.89), which corresponds to Disagree. Most parents disagreed that they felt emotionally stressed, frustrated, exhausted, anxious, or emotionally drained because of their caregiving responsibilities. However, they agreed that they felt sad when their children experienced difficulties in school or social situations (WM = 2.96), felt guilty when they thought they were not doing enough for their children (WM = 3.08), and needed additional emotional support (WM = 2.58). These findings suggest that while parents have generally adapted to their caregiving role, they still experience emotional concerns related to their children's welfare and success.

The results are similar to the findings of Dikeç *et al.* (2023) ^[6], who reported that parents of children with hearing loss often experience feelings of sadness and worry about their children's future and social experiences. Likewise, Sealy *et al.* (2023) ^[10] found that parents may experience emotional concerns and a need for support while raising children with hearing impairments. However, unlike these studies, the present research found that parents reported low overall emotional challenges. This may indicate that parents in the SHARE Program have developed effective coping strategies or are receiving adequate support. Nevertheless, the need for emotional support identified by the respondents suggests that programs promoting parent counseling and support

groups may still be beneficial.

2. Physical Challenges of Parents

Table 2: Physical Challenges

S. No	Part II. Physical Challenges (Parents)	Wm	Sd	Verbal Description
1	Caring for my deaf and mute child requires significant physical effort.	2.92	0.84	Agree
2	I feel physically tired after attending to my child's daily needs.	1.88	0.65	Disagree
3	My physical health is affected by my caregiving responsibilities.	2.00	0.85	Disagree
4	I experience fatigue due to attending therapy sessions or school-related activities.	1.58	0.58	Strongly Disagree
5	I find it physically exhausting to assist my child with learning tasks constantly.	1.81	0.63	Disagree
6	My caregiving responsibilities limit my time for rest and relaxation.	2.00	0.80	Disagree
7	I experience physical strain from balancing caregiving with other household duties.	2.04	0.66	Disagree
8	I feel physically worn out due to the long-term demands of caring for my child.	1.96	0.72	Disagree
9	I find it difficult to maintain my personal well-being due to caregiving duties.	1.88	0.65	Disagree
10	I believe the physical demands of caregiving increase my risk of burnout.	2.00	0.69	Disagree
	Overall Weighted Mean	2.01	0.71	Disagree

Table 2 shows that parents generally did not experience significant physical challenges in caring for their deaf and mute children, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 2.01 (SD = 0.71), which corresponds to Disagree. Most respondents disagreed that caregiving caused physical tiredness, affected their health, limited their rest time, or made it difficult to maintain their personal well-being. They also strongly disagreed that attending therapy sessions or school-related activities resulted in fatigue. However, parents agreed that caring for their deaf and mute child requires significant physical effort (WM = 2.92). This finding suggests that while caregiving involves additional physical responsibilities, these demands are generally manageable and do not greatly affect the parents' overall physical condition.

The findings are consistent with recent studies showing that parents of children with disabilities often experience additional caregiving responsibilities but may not necessarily report severe physical strain, especially when adequate family and community support systems are available. For instance, Al-Kandari and Alsalem (2023) [1] found that although parents recognized the physical demands of caring for children with special needs, many developed effective coping strategies that reduced the impact on their physical well-being. Similarly, Kyzar *et al.* (2022) [8] reported that family support and adaptation can lessen caregiver burden and improve quality of life. Unlike some studies that reported high levels of caregiver fatigue and burnout, the present study found low levels of physical challenges among parents. This may indicate that parents in the SHARE Program have adjusted well to their caregiving

responsibilities or receive sufficient support from their families and the school. Nevertheless, the finding that caregiving requires considerable physical effort highlights the importance of continuing support services for parents.

3. Academic Challenges of Parents

Table 3: Academic Challenges

S. No	Part III. Academic Challenges (Parents)	Wm	Sd	Verbal Description
1	I find it challenging to support my child's academic learning at home.	2.42	0.81	Disagree
2	I struggle to understand the instructional methods used for my child.	2.12	0.77	Disagree
3	I find it difficult to assist my child with schoolwork or assignments.	2.23	0.71	Disagree
4	I feel inadequately informed about my child's academic progress.	2.27	0.83	Disagree
5	Communication barriers make it hard for me to help with school tasks.	2.31	0.68	Disagree
6	I find individualized education plans (IEPs) difficult to understand.	2.35	0.75	Disagree
7	I struggle to access learning materials appropriate for my child's needs.	2.31	0.79	Disagree
8	I feel unprepared to use assistive learning technologies at home.	2.35	0.75	Disagree
9	I believe limited resources affect my child's academic development.	2.50	0.76	Agree
10	I feel the need for more guidance from teachers regarding my child's education.	2.73	0.83	Agree
	Overall Weighted Mean	2.36	0.77	Disagree

Table 3 shows that parents generally did not experience significant academic challenges in supporting their deaf and mute children, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 2.36 (SD = 0.77), which corresponds to Disagree. Most parents disagreed that they had difficulty assisting with schoolwork, understanding instructional methods, interpreting individualized education plans (IEPs), accessing learning materials, or using assistive technologies at home. They also disagreed that communication barriers prevented them from helping their children with school-related tasks. However, parents agreed that limited resources affect their child's academic development (WM = 2.50) and that they need more guidance from teachers regarding their child's education (WM = 2.73). These findings suggest that while parents are generally capable of supporting their children's learning, they still require additional resources and collaboration with teachers to enhance their children's academic success.

The findings are consistent with recent studies showing that parental involvement plays an important role in the academic development of children with hearing impairments. For example, Antia and Kreimeyer (2022) [2] reported that parents who receive adequate support from schools are better able to assist their children academically and participate in educational activities. Similarly, Wang *et al.* (2023) [13] found that access to educational resources and effective communication between parents and teachers positively influences the learning outcomes of students with special educational needs. While previous studies have identified difficulties in understanding specialized instructional approaches and learning technologies, the present study found relatively low levels of academic

challenges among parents. This may indicate that parents involved in the SHARE Program have become familiar with their children's educational needs. Nevertheless, the need for greater teacher guidance and additional learning resources suggests that continuous school–family collaboration remains essential for supporting the academic growth of deaf and mute students.

4. Emotional Challenges of Teachers

Table 4: Emotional Challenges

S. No	Part I. Emotional Challenges (Teachers)	Wm	Sd	Verbal Description
1	I feel emotionally stressed when teaching deaf and mute students.	2.49	1.22	Disagree
2	I experience frustration due to communication barriers in the classroom.	2.83	0.98	Agree
3	I feel emotionally exhausted after teaching students with hearing and speech impairments.	2.48	0.84	Disagree
4	I feel anxious about meeting the diverse needs of deaf and mute students.	2.83	0.98	Agree
5	I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of ensuring inclusive learning.	2.83	0.98	Agree
6	I experience emotional strain when students struggle academically or socially.	3.00	0.63	Agree
7	I feel pressure to continuously improve my teaching strategies.	3.17	0.41	Agree
8	I feel emotionally drained when progress among students is slow.	3.17	0.41	Agree
9	I find it challenging to balance emotional involvement and professional boundaries.	2.67	1.03	Agree
10	I feel the need for additional emotional support in my teaching role.	3.17	0.75	Agree
	Overall Weighted Mean	2.86	0.82	Agree

Table 4 shows that teachers experienced emotional challenges in teaching deaf and mute students, as reflected by the overall weighted mean of 2.86 (SD = 0.82), interpreted as Agree. The highest-rated items were the need for additional emotional support in their teaching role (WM = 3.17), the pressure to continuously improve teaching strategies (WM = 3.17), and feeling emotionally drained when student progress is slow (WM = 3.17). Teachers also agreed that communication barriers, anxiety in meeting diverse student needs, and emotional strain when students struggle academically or socially contribute to their emotional challenges. However, they generally disagreed that they felt emotionally stressed (WM = 2.49) or emotionally exhausted (WM = 2.48). These findings suggest that while teachers remain committed to supporting deaf and mute learners, they face emotional demands related to inclusive education and the responsibility of ensuring student success.

The findings are consistent with recent studies showing that teachers in inclusive classrooms often experience emotional pressures due to the diverse needs of learners with disabilities. For example, Sharma and Sokal (2023) [12] found that teachers frequently experience stress and emotional strain when addressing communication barriers and adapting instruction for students with special

educational needs. Similarly, Özokçu and Yıldırım (2022) [9] reported that inclusive education requires continuous emotional investment and professional adjustment, which can contribute to feelings of pressure and emotional fatigue among teachers. The present study supports these findings, particularly regarding the need for emotional support and ongoing improvement of teaching practices. These results highlight the importance of providing teachers with professional development opportunities, counseling services, and institutional support to promote their emotional well-being and effectiveness in inclusive classrooms.

5. Physical Challenges of Teachers

Table 5: Physical Challenges

S. No	Part II. Physical Challenges (Teachers)	Wm	Sd	Verbal Description
1	Teaching deaf or mute students requires additional physical effort.	3.67	0.52	Strongly Agree
2	I feel physically tired after long hours of teaching and preparation.	3.33	0.52	Strongly Agree
3	My physical health is affected by the demands of inclusive teaching.	3.00	0.63	Agree
4	I experience fatigue from preparing specialized instructional materials.	3.00	0.63	Agree
5	I find it physically exhausting to continuously adjust teaching methods.	2.83	0.98	Agree
6	I experience physical strain from managing classroom activities.	2.50	1.05	Agree
7	My workload limits my time for rest and self-care.	2.33	0.82	Disagree
8	I feel physically worn out due to prolonged teaching responsibilities.	2.33	0.82	Disagree
9	I find it difficult to maintain physical well-being during the academic term.	2.50	1.05	Agree
10	I believe the physical demands of my teaching role increase my risk of burnout.	2.67	1.03	Agree
	Overall Weighted Mean	2.82	0.80	Agree

Table 5 shows that teachers experienced physical challenges in teaching deaf and mute students, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 2.82 (SD = 0.80), interpreted as Agree. The highest-rated statements were that teaching deaf or mute students requires additional physical effort (WM = 3.67) and that teachers feel physically tired after long hours of teaching and preparation (WM = 3.33), both interpreted as Strongly Agree. Teachers also agreed that preparing specialized instructional materials, adjusting teaching methods, managing classroom activities, and maintaining their physical well-being during the academic term contribute to physical strain. However, they disagreed that their workload significantly limits their time for rest and self-care (WM = 2.33) or that they feel physically worn out due to prolonged teaching responsibilities (WM = 2.33). These findings suggest that inclusive teaching requires additional physical effort, but teachers are generally able to manage these demands without experiencing severe physical exhaustion.

The findings are consistent with recent studies that highlight the physical demands associated with inclusive education. For example, Wilson *et al.* (2023) [14] reported that teachers working with students with special educational needs often experience fatigue due to lesson preparation, instructional modifications, and classroom management responsibilities.

Similarly, Collie (2024) ^[4] found that increased workload and the need to adapt teaching practices can contribute to physical strain and burnout among teachers. The present study supports these findings, particularly regarding the additional effort required to meet the needs of deaf and mute students. However, unlike some studies that reported high levels of physical exhaustion, teachers in the present study generally did not feel physically worn out or deprived of rest. This may indicate that they have developed effective coping strategies or receive adequate institutional support. Nevertheless, the reported physical demands highlight the need for continued support, manageable workloads, and resources that can help teachers sustain their well-being and effectiveness in inclusive classrooms.

6. Academic Challenges of Teachers

Table 6: Academic Challenges

S. No	Part III. Academic Challenges (Teachers)	Wm	Sd	Verbal Description
1	I find it challenging to design lessons suitable for deaf and mute students.	3.17	0.41	Agree
2	I struggle to implement individualized education plans (IEPs) effectively.	3.00	0.63	Agree
3	I feel inadequately trained to teach deaf and mute students.	3.00	0.63	Agree
4	Communication barriers affect the delivery of lesson content.	3.00	0.63	Agree
5	I find it difficult to assess students' academic performance accurately.	3.00	0.63	Agree
6	I struggle to integrate assistive technologies into my teaching.	3.00	0.63	Agree
7	Limited resources affect the quality of instruction I provide.	3.17	0.75	Agree
8	I find it challenging to manage diverse learning needs in one classroom.	2.83	0.75	Agree
9	I feel the need for continuous professional development in inclusive education.	3.67	0.52	Strongly Agree
10	I believe additional academic support services are necessary for effective instruction.	3.50	0.55	Strongly Agree
	Overall Weighted Mean	3.13	0.61	Agree

Table 6 shows that teachers experienced academic challenges in teaching deaf and mute students, as reflected by the overall weighted mean of 3.13 (SD = 0.61), interpreted as Agree. The highest-rated statements were the need for continuous professional development in inclusive education (WM = 3.67) and the need for additional academic support services for effective instruction (WM = 3.50), both interpreted as Strongly Agree. Teachers also agreed that they face challenges in designing appropriate lessons, implementing individualized education plans (IEPs), assessing students' academic performance, integrating assistive technologies, and managing diverse learning needs in the classroom. In addition, communication barriers and limited instructional resources were identified as factors that affect the quality of instruction. These findings suggest that teachers require additional training, resources, and support to effectively address the educational needs of deaf and mute students. The findings are consistent with recent studies indicating that teachers in inclusive settings often encounter difficulties in adapting instruction for learners with disabilities. For example, Sharma *et al.* (2024) ^[11] found that teachers

frequently report challenges in implementing inclusive practices due to limited training, insufficient resources, and the diverse learning needs of students. Similarly, Yada *et al.* (2022) ^[15] reported that teachers feel more confident and effective when provided with continuous professional development and institutional support in inclusive education. The present study supports these findings, particularly regarding the strong need for professional development and additional academic support services. These results highlight the importance of providing specialized training, assistive technologies, and adequate educational resources to enhance teachers' competence and improve learning outcomes for deaf and mute students.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are derived based on the findings of this study:

1. Parents generally experienced low levels of emotional challenges in caring for deaf and mute children, although they still expressed feelings of sadness, guilt, and a need for emotional support.
2. Parents did not experience significant physical challenges overall, despite recognizing that caring for their deaf and mute children requires additional physical effort.
3. Parents generally managed their children's academic needs effectively but expressed the need for more educational resources and guidance from teachers.
4. Teachers experienced moderate emotional challenges, particularly related to communication barriers, student progress, and the demands of inclusive education.
5. Teachers encountered physical challenges associated with inclusive teaching, especially in lesson preparation and instructional adaptation, although these demands were generally manageable.
6. Teachers experienced considerable academic challenges and strongly emphasized the need for continuous professional development, instructional resources, and academic support services to effectively teach deaf and mute students.

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