

Management of Social-Emotional Adjustment Issues in Students with Hearing Impairment at Higher Education Level

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the management of the social-emotional adjustment issues of students with hearing impairments. The study used sequential explanatory mixed-method research design. A sample of 104 teachers of students with hearing impairment were selected for quantitative phase and 8 teachers were selected for in-depth interviews by using the purposive sampling technique. In quantitative phase, the data was collected using a standardized scale, the Social-Emotional Issues adapted scale (47 items) and for qualitative phase, interview protocol was used to collect data. The collected quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used. The results indicated significant gender-based differences in the temper regulation factor, male teachers demonstrating higher scores than their female teachers. However, no substantial differences were observed in social assertiveness, mood stability, and the level of anxiety. Additionally, the study examined the impact of the education sector on social and emotional issues, revealing a marginally significant difference in social assertiveness, where teachers from private institutions reported higher scores. Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA explored the influence of job experience on social and emotional aspects, showing no statistically significant mean differences among different experience groups. In conclusion, this research sheds light on gender-related variations in social and emotional issues among students with hearing impairments. The findings provide valuable insights for educators and institutions to tailor support strategies. Further research is recommended to explore additional factors influencing social and emotional adjustment issues in this teacher's demographic.

Keywords: Social-emotional adjustment issues, management hearing impairment, higher education

Introduction

In recent years, higher education has demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity and diversity, particularly for students with hearing impairment, aligning with societal recognition of equal educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities (UNESCO, 2019). This is in harmony with international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2006), emphasizing principles of equity and non-

discrimination. Studies suggest that individuals with hearing impairment may face challenges in establishing social connections due to communication difficulties (Most et al., 2019), and these challenges become especially pronounced in the socially dynamic context of higher education. Recent research continues to support this concern. For example, Alsamih (2024) found that deaf and hard-of-hearing university students experienced difficulties in social participation and peer interaction, despite being enrolled in inclusive higher education settings. Similarly, Percival et al. (2025) reported that instructional, psychosocial, and environmental factors, such as interpreter accessibility, classroom acoustics, rapid speech, and attitudinal barriers, significantly affected how deaf and hard-of-hearing students adjusted to university learning environments.

The emotional well-being of students with hearing impairment is intricately tied to their ability to adapt to new environments and manage academic and social demands. Communication, a cornerstone of social interaction and academic engagement, poses challenges for these students, hindering their full participation in the vibrant exchange of ideas characteristic of higher education (Marschark & Spencer, 2011). Such challenges may translate into difficulties forming connections with peers, engaging in collaborative projects, or seeking assistance from professors. Effective communication strategies, including assistive technologies and sign language interpreters, are crucial (Most et al., 2019). Communication barriers, potentially leading to social isolation, can significantly impact the emotional well-being of students with hearing impairment. Feelings of exclusion, loneliness, and the struggle to establish a sense of belonging may not only affect academic performance but also overall life satisfaction (Fellinger et al., 2012). Recent evidence strengthens this argument. Du et al. (2026), in a study of 470 university students with hearing impairment, found that social support was positively associated with mental health, and that adaptation played an important mediating role in this relationship. In addition, Al-Bakheet (2026) reported that although deaf and hard-of-hearing students in postsecondary education showed overall satisfaction with their academic, social, and personal experiences, their satisfaction was closely linked to accessible learning environments, diverse teaching methods, and appropriate support services.

Additionally, research underscores the influential role of faculty and peers in shaping the social and emotional experiences of students with hearing impairment (Gormley & Howley, 2017). In academic discourse, social-emotional issues are frequently explored in terms of their impact on students' mental health and academic success. Eisenberg et al. (2003) emphasizes the importance of emotional well-being in the academic context, highlighting its correlation with cognitive functioning and learning outcomes. Students grappling with social challenges, such as feelings of isolation or difficulty in forming meaningful connections, may experience heightened stress levels that can hinder their overall academic performance (Misra & McKean, 2000). More recently, a systematic review by Alsayed (2025) further confirmed that belonging, peer relationships, confidence, and self-awareness among deaf and hard-of-hearing learners are strongly influenced by language access, inclusive educational settings, and culturally affirming support systems.

Literature Review:

The primary objective of this study was to explore the connection between two variables: management and social-emotional adjustment issues in students with hearing impairment at higher educational levels. Stevenson et al. (2015) shed light on the correlation between language development and behavioral challenges observed in children experiencing hearing loss. Similarly, Sardar and Kadir (2012) delve into the effects of hearing impairment on the social and emotional conduct of adolescents, underscoring the necessity for tailored interventions to mitigate these concerns. More recent work continues to support this concern in educational contexts. For example, Alsamih (2024) found that deaf and hard-of-hearing university students experienced persistent social interaction challenges, especially in peer communication and participation in inclusive academic settings. Likewise, Du et al. (2024)

reported that deaf college students showed difficulties in implicit emotion regulation, and these difficulties were linked with higher depression risk.

In literature, emotions are often classified as positive or negative, strong or weak, fearful or angry, joyful or sad, among other categories (Denham, 1998; Gross, 1999). The way these emotions are expressed and managed holds significant importance. Individuals require a diverse set of skills to adeptly handle and convey their emotions, whether positive or negative, in appropriate contexts. Emotional support and companionship play a pivotal role in assisting students in adapting to unforeseen situations. Recent evidence strengthens this view, as Du et al. (2025) found that social support had a positive relationship with mental health among university students with hearing impairment, and that adaptation significantly mediated this relationship.

Rawson, Bloomer, and Kendall (1994) contend that students with hearing disabilities who receive robust social support are likely to experience reduced anxiety levels and exhibit better academic performance, as coping strategies and social networks help alleviate the adverse effects of stress. Moreover, emotional expressions play a crucial role in determining social competence. Positive emotional expressions are generally correlated with elevated levels of social competence (Hayden et al., 2006; Lengua, 2003; Pesonen et al., 2008; Wiefferink et al., 2012). More recent synthesis by Alsayed (2025) also indicates that peer relationships, emotional regulation, confidence, and self-awareness among deaf and hard-of-hearing learners are strongly influenced by language access, communication mode, and environmental support.

However, an excess of positive emotional expressions may be associated with externalizing behaviors such as hyperactivity and impulsivity (Rothbart et al., 2001). The expression and management of these emotions are pivotal, demanding individuals to possess a diverse set of abilities for navigating both positive and negative emotions appropriately. An individual's understanding of their own and others' emotions significantly enhances interpersonal and social skills, impacting personal and professional relationships while minimizing conflicts (Carstensen et al., 1997; Schieman, 1999; Carstensen et al., 1999). In addition, Pizzie et al. (2026) note that academic anxiety and related emotional pressures can undermine learning and adjustment among deaf and hard-of-hearing students, further emphasizing the importance of social-emotional support systems in educational settings.

Various factors, including the student's background, previous experiences, and characteristics related to parents, teachers, and schools, are identified as crucial elements affecting hearing-impaired students (Frostad & Ahlberg, 2000). Research indicates that students with hearing impairments at higher education levels tend to experience more severe social and emotional adjustment problems compared to their peers without hearing impairments. Recent studies continue to show that communication access, institutional support, and social belonging remain central to the adjustment and well-being of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in contemporary educational environments (Alsamih, 2024; Alsayed, 2025; Du et al., 2025)

Material and Methods

Research Design:

The current study used the Explanatory mixed-method research design. This design involves collecting and analyzing both numerical data (quantitative) and textual data (qualitative) to address research questions and explore relationships between variables (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). The study was comprised of II phases:

Phase I: In the quantitative phase (Phase I) of the study, a sample of N=104 university teachers were included. The sample consisted of 33 male teachers and 71 female teachers. Data collection was conducted among teachers from both government and private higher institutions across the province of Punjab.

Table 1: Sample of teacher of students with hearing impairment

Sr #	Teachers with HI	Higher Institutes
1	40	Hamza Foundation, Lahore
2	10	University of Management and Technology, Lahore
3	8	Punjab University, Lahore
4	34	Govt. Degree College of Special Education, Lahore
5	12	Gung Mahal, Lahore

Instrument

The social-emotional issues scale (47 items) was used as a research instrument to collect quantitative data. The adapted 47-item social-emotional issues scale was used by the researcher to assess the social and emotional issues of higher education students with hearing impairments. Social - emotional Scale gauges in four areas: temper regulation, social assertiveness, mood stability, and level of anxiety. Social emotional scale has 47 items and it's a 5 points Likert scale from 1 (Never) 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), 5 (Always).

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the instruments was measured by using SPSS and the value of Cronbach alpha (.940) was determined by the sample of 104 teachers of students with hearing impairment from Lahore, Pakistan.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from teachers of students with hearing impairment in both public and private universities in Lahore. Prior to data collection, written permission was obtained from the relevant chairpersons of the departments within the universities. Most of the data was collected through in-person visits to the universities, while for some teachers where physical visits were not feasible, an online data collection method using Google Forms was employed. The questionnaire administered to participants required approximately 20-25minutes to complete.

Phase II

Phase II based on the Qualitative procedure of research:

Sample and Sampling Technique

After collecting the data with the help of the social-emotional issues scale (47 items), the researcher calculated the total scores and selected 8 teachers with high scores to conduct interviews. These teachers were chosen as they demonstrated stronger competence in managing social-emotional issues, providing insights into effective practices for inclusive education. The sample for qualitative interviews (N = 8) included males (n = 4) and females (n = 4). This sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique.

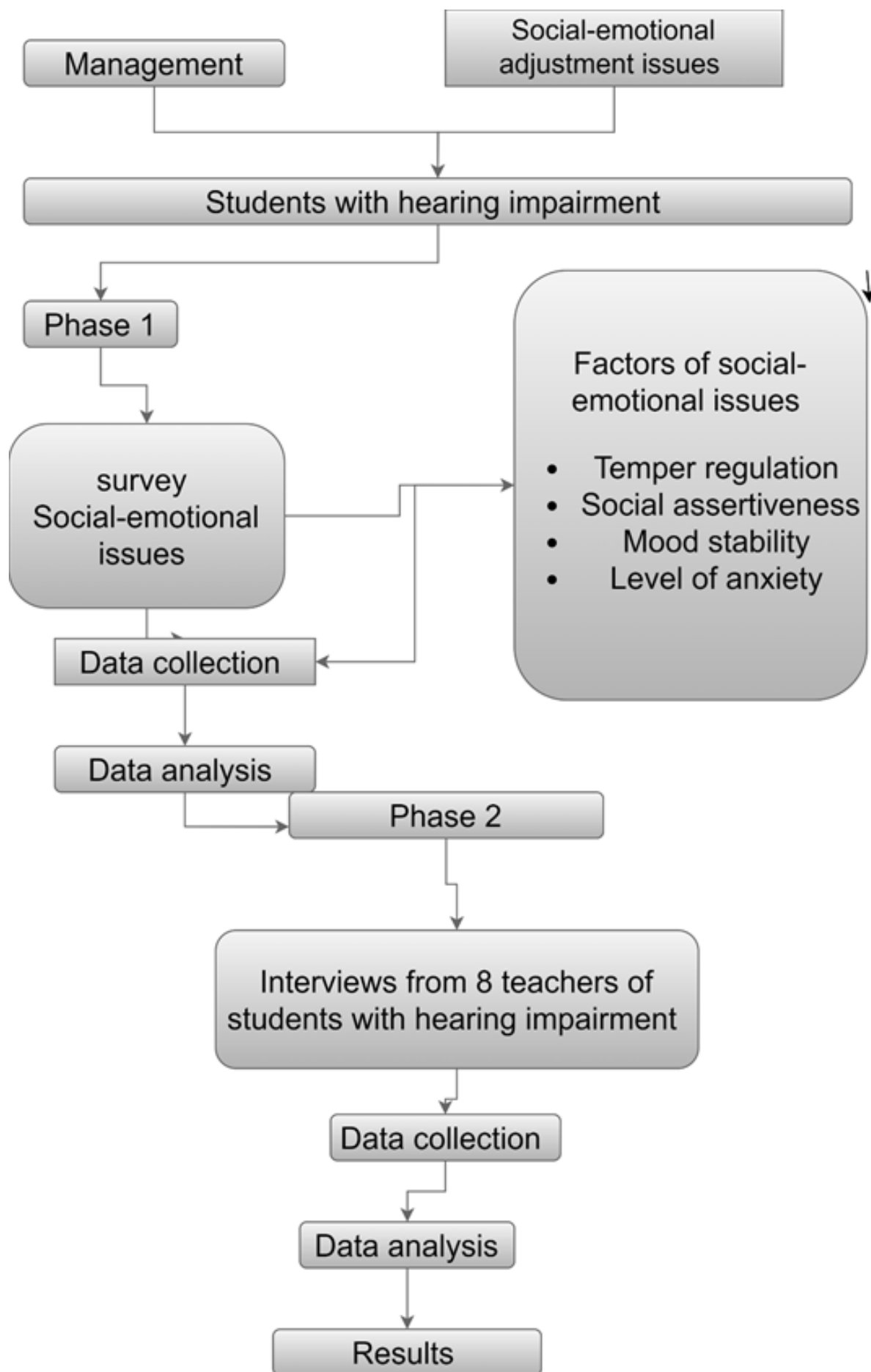
Research Instrument: Semi-structured Questionnaire

A selff-developed interview protocol was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the management of social-emotional adjustment issues. Teachers of students with hearing impairments in higher education were interviewed in semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data. Interviews of teachers were collected by physically visiting the universities, but some interviews of teachers were conducted via audio calls. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Participants (N =104)

<i>Demographic Variables</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	
Male	31 %
Female	68 %
Area of Study	
General Education	16 %
Special Education	83 %
Education Sector	
Private	57 %
Public	42 %
Qualification	
Graduation	18 %
Masters	38 %
M.Phil.	30%
PhD	12%
Area of Specialization	
HI	36 %
VI	6%
MCC	5%
Other	47%
Job Experience	
0-10 year	70 %
11-20 year	8.7 %
21-30 year	6.7%
31-40 year	5.8%
Class student's strength	
1-10 students	13 %
11-20 students	27.9 %
21-30 students	24%
31-40 students	17%
Above 40 students	17%
Class time duration	
30 minutes	31.7%
60 minutes	15%
90 minutes	21%
120 minutes	14%
Above 120 minutes	17%



Discussion

The study is conducted to find out how management of social-emotional adjustment issues in students with hearing impairment at higher education. The study also tried to investigate demographic differences in the study variables. Firstly, the findings from the analysis indicate that gender plays a significant role in influencing the "Temper Regulation" of students with hearing impairments, with male students exhibiting higher scores than female students. However, other social-emotional aspects, including "Social Assertiveness," "Mood Stability," and "Level of Anxiety," showed no significant gender differences.

Secondly, the study highlighted a significant gender disproportion among educators, with 31.7% being male and 68.3% female, indicating a call for better gender equilibrium in this educational sector. Thirdly, a considerable majority (83.7%) specialized in Special Education, emphasizing the prevalence of this discipline in addressing the unique requirements of students with hearing impairments. The research noted a varied academic background among participants, with diverse levels of degrees predominantly at the master's level.

Fourthly, the analysis of independent sample t-test showed that there is a significant difference in the management of male and female teachers. It is shown that male teachers managed the temper issues of students better than female. The influence of the education sector on teachers working with students with hearing impairments is marginally significant in terms of "Social Assertiveness," with teachers from Private institutions reporting higher scores. Nevertheless, there were no significant differences in the other social emotional aspects among teachers from different educational sectors. Fifthly The job experience of teachers does not appear to have a significant impact on students' social-emotional aspects. Teachers with varying years of experience reported similar findings in terms of "Temper Regulation," "Social Assertiveness," "Mood Stability," and the "Level of Anxiety." Sixthly, respondents specialized in various domains, with a notable portion focusing on Hearing Impairment, stressing the necessity for a multidisciplinary approach to cater to these students' intricate needs. Concerning professional experience, most participants (76%) had relatively brief tenures ranging from 0-10 years, implying a relatively youthful workforce engaged in this realm.

Seventhly, a greater representation of instructors hailed from Private institutions, suggesting potential disparities in teaching methodologies and resources between public and private sectors. An examination of social-emotional issues by gender unveiled significant disparities in Temper Regulation, with male students exhibiting higher scores compared to their female counterparts. Nevertheless, no substantial gender-based distinctions surfaced in Social Assertiveness, Mood Stability, or Level of Anxiety among students. Interestingly, educators from Private institutions reported elevated scores in Social Assertiveness, albeit marginally significant, hinting at possible instructional variances between educational settings.

Eighthly, the research pinpointed notable mean disparities in social assertiveness and mood stability across diverse job experience groups, accentuating the role of experience in addressing social-emotional challenges among students with hearing impairment. However, no significant variations surfaced in temper regulation and anxiety levels based on job experience.

Finally, the reliability analysis affirmed the study's robustness, revealing highly dependable data with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.940 for the 47 items. Overall, these findings furnish valuable insights into the social-emotional landscape within the educational sphere for students with hearing impairment, underscoring the imperative for tailored interventions and support mechanisms to facilitate their comprehensive adjustment in higher education.

Communication Barriers and Social Exclusion illuminate the profound challenges encountered by students with hearing impairment in engaging in spontaneous conversations and social events. These obstacles not only impede their communication but also contribute to feelings of isolation and exclusion from their peers. The need for Patience and Understanding emphasizes the importance of

cultivating an environment where patience and empathy prevail. Both students with hearing impairments and their hearing peers must acknowledge and respect each other's differences, fostering effective communication and mutual understanding within the classroom.

Confidence and Self-Esteem emerge as crucial themes, with participants highlighting the impact of social challenges on the self-esteem and confidence of students with hearing impairments. Educators play a vital role in nurturing a supportive environment that bolsters these students' self-confidence and promotes their active participation.

Furthermore, the themes of Inclusive Environment and Awareness underscore the necessity of establishing inclusive environments that value diverse communication styles and raise awareness among peers about the challenges faced by students with hearing impairments. Additionally, Loneliness and Social Anxiety highlight the emotional toll that these students may endure due to difficulties in connecting with peers and participating in social activities. Moreover, the significance of Technology and Accommodations is evident in facilitating communication and surmounting barriers, particularly in lecture-style classes.

Lastly, Building Friendships and Social Inclusion underscores the importance of patience, understanding, and concerted efforts to bridge the communication gap and cultivate a sense of belonging among students with hearing impairments. In summary, the discussion of these themes underscores the multifaceted nature of the emotional challenges faced by students with hearing impairments and underscores the importance of comprehensive support, awareness, and inclusive practices in promoting their emotional well-being and academic success.

Conclusion

The study examines the management of social-emotional adjustment issues in students with hearing impairment at higher level education. It utilizes a mixed-methods research design with quantitative and qualitative phases. Male teachers generally report higher about social emotional issues in hearing impaired students than females. The study identifies affected social emotional issues factors, including temper regulation, social assertiveness, mood stability, and level of anxiety. Challenges faced by hearing impaired students during the entering of higher education institutions. These findings align with previous research, confirming the study's validity. Overall, the study highlights the significant impact of the social-emotional adjustment issues and their management in hearing impaired students at higher education. Teachers emphasize the need to address their social-emotional issues in educational settings. Gender-based differences in social emotional aspects exist among students with hearing impairments, primarily in the domain of "Temper Regulation." However, other factors like the education sector and job experience among teachers do not significantly influence these aspects. These findings can guide educators and institutions in tailoring support and intervention strategies for students with hearing impairments to enhance their social emotional well-being in higher education settings. Further research is recommended to delve deeper into the complex interplay of factors affecting social emotional adjustment in this student population

Recommendations

Following recommendations are made based on research findings:

1. Higher education institutions should design targeted interventions to address key social-emotional challenges among students with hearing impairment. Including temper regulation, social assertiveness, mood stability, and level of anxiety.
2. It is important to provide resources and interventions to address the unique needs and challenges faced by teachers of hearing-impaired students during education
3. Higher education institutes must recognize and address the job insecurities faced by teachers of hearing-impaired students during the education.

4. Mental health professionals should take a holistic approach to address the social emotional issues in hearing impaired students. This includes considering physical, mental, and social, emotional well-being aspects.
5. The study recommends that future research explores essential factors influencing social emotional adjustment issues in students with hearing impairment and other disabilities.

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