

"Psychosocial Effects of Hearing Impairment in Children"

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Abstract:

Childhood is considered the most important stage in a child's life, as it lays the foundational roots of their personality. Experiences during this period leave clear and lasting effects on the child's future personality and behavior. Hearing-impaired children represent a significant segment of society, and their hearing impairment leaves a noticeable imprint on their emotional life and inner repression. Hearing impairment constitutes a critical condition that imposes limitations on the child's overall functioning, restricting their ability to communicate, form social relationships, and perform communicative functions effectively. This motivated our research to explore how children cope with hearing impairment and its impact on their behavior and personality.

Keywords: Child ,Communication, Deafness, Hearing Impairment, Behavior, Withdrawal

1.Introduction:

"The senses are a blessing from God Almighty to His servants, serving as the means through which an individual interacts with their environment. Hearing, sight, smell, and taste are all tools that guide a person toward knowledge and learning, with hearing taking a leading role among these senses. As Ibn Khaldun stated, **'Hearing is the father of all faculties,**¹ due to its significant importance in the life of every individual."

Hearing, linguistically, refers to the sense of the ear. It is a faculty of the ear through which sound is perceived, and it can also denote the ear itself, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an." **Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).**²Furthermore, it can also refer to understanding, as indicated in the Holy Qur'an : **Indeed they have been removed far from even (a chance of) hearing it.**³Once again, it may refer to understanding, as indicated in the Qur'anic verse:." **Indeed they have been removed far from even (a chance of) hearing it**⁴

This means : we understood the matter and comprehended it, yet we did not act upon it. Hearing is the first sense that a human being uses immediately after birth and serves as the primary means through which the fetus perceives the external world. **The Prophet Muhammad** (peace be upon him) emphasized stimulating the sense of hearing from the very first moment a child enters this world. Following his guidance in our noble religion, the adhan (call to prayer) is recited in the newborn's right ear and the iqamah in the left. This practical procedure underscores the functional role of the auditory system at birth, highlighting the ear as an instrument that operates continuously, both during sleep and wakefulness.

Hearing, linguistically, refers to the sense of the ear. It is a faculty of the ear through which sound is perceived, and it can also denote the ear itself, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Furthermore, it may refer to understanding, as indicated in the Qur'anic text, highlighting its dual role in both sensory perception and cognitive comprehension.

2. Structural and Functional Elements of the Human Auditory System:

The human auditory system is considered one of the most precise systems created by God Almighty, and it has been mentioned in His Holy Book. This underscores the importance of this sense and system in receiving sounds, understanding and interpreting speech, and acquiring language. Moreover, its significant role in facilitating communication among individuals should not be overlooked:

1-The External Ear :

The external ear captures sound waves from the environment and directs them toward the tympanic membrane (eardrum). It includes the auricle (pinna) and the external auditory canal, which serve to amplify and funnel the sound efficiently into the middle ear ;Farouq Al-Rousan states: "**The external ear represents the outer part of the ear and consists of the auricle (pinna), ending at the tympanic membrane. The function of the external ear is to collect external sounds and transmit them to the inner ear through the tympanic membrane.**"⁵ This illustrates that the external ear represents the outer part of the ear, beginning with the auricle, which resembles a concave dish. Its function is to capture and collect external sounds efficiently."

2-The middle ear :

represents the central part of the ear and consists of three main ossicles: the malleus, incus, and stapes. This means that it is located at the center of the ear, and its primary function is to transmit sound stimuli from the external ear to the inner ear."⁶

3- The Inner Ear :

The inner ear represents the innermost part of the ear and consists of two main components: the vestibule and the cochlea. The vestibule, which forms the upper part of the inner ear, is responsible for maintaining the individual's balance. The cochlea, on the other hand, converts sound vibrations received from the middle ear into electrical signals, which are then transmitted to the brain via the auditory nerve."⁷ From this definition, it becomes clear that the human auditory system is an integrated structure with interconnected components. Its function is to receive sound and collect it through the external ear, then transmit these auditory signals to the middle ear, where they are processed and conveyed via the auditory nerve to the inner ear. There, the signals are transformed into meaningful information and interpreted by the brain. Thus, hearing becomes a 'sensory-cognitive process,' where the auditory system collects sound signals and the nervous system decodes them. It is a sense that is closely interconnected with cognitive and neurological functions, because the sense of hearing in humans is closely linked to speech acquisition.,« **It is a crucial sense for the development and maturation of cognitive and intellectual capacities.** »⁸ This underscores the importance of the integrity of the auditory system, as any impairment, even minor, can affect an individual's ability to acquire and develop knowledge, which inevitably impacts the person's overall character and cognitive development.

Based on the foregoing, we can conclude that the human auditory system is a highly integrated structure with interconnected components that enable hearing and sound processing. It consists of three main parts : the external ear, the middle ear, and the inner ear. The external ear, including the auricle and auditory canal, collects sound waves from the environment and directs them to the tympanic membrane. The middle ear, containing the ossicles—the malleus, incus, and stapes—transmits these sound vibrations to the inner ear. The inner ear, composed of the vestibule and cochlea, is responsible for balance and for converting sound vibrations into electrical signals, which are then transmitted to the brain via the auditory nerve, where they are interpreted as meaningful sounds. This integrated system highlights the essential role of the auditory system in hearing, communication, and the perception of the surrounding world.

3. Hearing Impairment :

Disability (le handicap), in general, is defined as 'a condition of noticeable deviation or delay in development'⁹. It may affect the body, the mind, or the psychological aspects of an individual, resulting in psychological effects that hinder the progress of education and training. Consequently, we encounter individuals classified as 'people with special needs,' requiring adapted teaching approaches, provision of special opportunities, and the use of appropriate tools and methods. Hearing impairment has received significant attention from researchers across various fields, including medicine, psychology, linguistics, education, and social sciences. According to the medical lexicon, it is defined as " **a partial or total loss of hearing**¹⁰, which is caused by damage to one of the components of the auditory system. Saeed Hosni Al-Izza reinforces this concept by stating: '**It is a variation in hearing levels, ranging from mild to very severe, and this impairment can affect an individual during different stages of development.**'"¹¹

4. Types of Hearing Impairment :

"According to Magdy Aziz Ibrahim, hearing impairment includes two main types: deafness and hearing loss." ¹²

1. Deafness:

Deafness refers to a complete or profound loss of hearing, where the individual is unable to perceive most or all sounds. This condition significantly affects speech acquisition, language development, and overall communication, requiring specialized educational approaches and support.

2. Hearing Loss:

Hearing loss refers to a partial reduction in hearing ability, ranging from mild to moderate or severe. Individuals with hearing loss may still perceive some sounds, but the impairment can hinder speech comprehension, learning, and social interaction, necessitating adapted teaching methods and assistive technologies.

5. Factors Causing Hearing Impairment in Children :

"Hearing impairment can result from both genetic and acquired causes. Genetic or hereditary causes are those transmitted from the parents to the fetus through inheritance. This often results in 'bilateral hereditary deafness,' affecting both ears, and in most cases, it is irreversible and not amenable to treatment." ¹³

Genetic factors play a significant role in hearing impairment among children. Hereditary causes occur when defective genes are transmitted from parents to the child, leading to congenital hearing loss. This type of hearing impairment can manifest as bilateral hereditary deafness, affecting both ears, and is often irreversible. Genetic hearing loss may be syndromic, where hearing loss is associated with other medical conditions or anomalies, or non-syndromic, where hearing loss occurs in isolation without other physical or cognitive abnormalities. Advances in molecular genetics have identified numerous genes responsible for hereditary deafness, which affect the structure and function of the cochlea, hair cells, or auditory nerve. Understanding these genetic mechanisms is crucial for early diagnosis, family counseling, and exploring potential interventions, including gene therapy and cochlear implants, to mitigate the impact on the child's development and communication skills

6.Acquired factors¹⁴ :

Acquired factors leading to hearing impairment in children refer to conditions or events that occur during pregnancy, birth, or early childhood, rather than being inherited genetically. These causes may include prenatal infections (such as rubella, cytomegalovirus, or toxoplasmosis), complications during labor and delivery (like prematurity, birth asphyxia, or low birth weight), exposure to ototoxic medications, chronic ear infections, severe fevers, head injuries, or prolonged exposure to excessive noise. Acquired hearing loss can affect one or both ears and may be temporary or permanent depending on the severity and timing of the causative factor. Early identification and intervention are crucial to minimize the negative impact on speech, language, cognitive development, and social integration

7.Educational Programs for Hearing-Impaired Individuals:

By this, we mean the methods of organizing, teaching, and educating individuals with mild to moderate hearing impairment to use verbal communication or manual communication strategies in order to interact with others. Among the most important approaches are:

1.Oral/Aural Approach :

This approach focuses on teaching individuals with hearing impairment to use spoken language, emphasizing lip-reading, auditory training, and speech production. The goal is to enable the child to communicate verbally with others in everyday situations, facilitating integration into mainstream educational and social environments. ¹⁵ ;Its objectives are to:

- Stimulate the hearing-impaired child's awareness of sounds.
- Develop the child's ability to discriminate between different sounds, particularly general and less distinct sounds.

2.Manual/Sign Language Approach:

This strategy utilizes manual signs and gestures to communicate¹⁶. Sign language provides an alternative mode of communication for children with moderate to severe hearing loss, allowing them to express thoughts, needs, and emotions effectively, and to participate in social and educational activities.It aims to:

- Develop the skill of producing and receiving sign language or finger spelling in hearing-impaired individuals, enabling them to understand others and express themselves effectively."

3.Total Communication Approach :

This method combines both verbal and manual communication strategies, including spoken language, lip-reading, gestures, and sign language. It aims to maximize the child's ability to understand and express information by using all available communication modes.

4.Auditory-Verbal Therapy :

This therapy focuses on developing listening skills and spoken language by training the child to make maximum use of residual hearing with or without hearing aids. Early intervention is crucial to enhance speech perception, language development, and academic progress.

5.Use of Assistive Devices and Technologies :

These include hearing aids, cochlear implants, and classroom amplification systems. Such technologies enhance the child's ability to perceive sounds, participate in educational activities, and interact socially, thereby supporting overall language and cognitive development.

8.The Impact of Hearing Impairment on a Child's Personality :

1-Effects of Hearing Impairment on Language Development in Children:

Hearing impairment has a direct impact on a child's language development, as language acquisition relies on the ability to hear and interact with surrounding sounds. A child with hearing loss or deafness may struggle to distinguish sounds and words, leading to delays in vocabulary acquisition and verbal expression. This delayed language development, in turn, affects the child's ability to communicate with others and increases the need for specialized educational methods and continuous support to compensate for auditory deficits and stimulate language skills.

One of the most significant and profound negative effects of hearing impairment is observed in the linguistic domain of the child. A deaf child's inability to use spoken language places them in a state of isolation, as they lose the ability to communicate with others and cannot clearly express their thoughts and emotions. This perspective is supported by Paule Aimard, who states: "**Hearing impairment affects all aspects of language development in children. A hearing-impaired child may become mute if effective training opportunities are not provided. This is due to the lack of auditory feedback and insufficient linguistic reinforcement from others, which are essential for acquiring and developing spoken language skills.**"¹⁷, This underscores the importance of diagnosing deafness as an initial step in addressing the child's needs, as there is a strong relationship between hearing and language development. Hearing reflects the acquired component in the process of speech, as noted by Sadiq Abdullah Abu Suleiman, who states: "**The child's speech apparatus is guided by what the auditory system has become accustomed to hearing, mimicking it to form the language that they use to communicate with others. Speech can only be acquired through listening to others, and the child's exposure to a particular language serves as a measure of their ability to produce it correctly and effectively.**"¹⁸

¹⁸This means that the proper acquisition of speech is closely linked to attentive listening. Language learning involves imitating the speech of others and gradually becoming accustomed to its correct production through practice, and the **educators focus on the impact of hearing impairment on speech acquisition.**¹⁹; Our heritage also emphasizes the importance of hearing in language acquisition. For instance, Ibn Faris (d. 395 AH) states:

"Language is acquired through habitual exposure, as in the case of an Arab child who listens to his parents and others; he learns the language from them over time."²⁰

This further illustrates that speech acquisition depends on hearing, which serves as the primary means for humans to master language. Historically, Arabs would place their children with wet nurses in Bedouin environments, rich in eloquence and perceptiveness, so that the child would grow up articulate and eloquent. The sense of hearing is the main channel through which speech is received and proper auditory input is acquired.

The language of hearing-impaired children is characterized by extreme poverty compared to that of typically hearing peers. Their vocabulary is limited and largely concrete, often relating to tangible objects. Their sentences tend to be short and structurally complex, speech is slow, and the intonation is unusual. Moreover, linguistic difficulties increase as the severity of hearing impairment rises²¹.

2-Manifestations of Delayed Language Development in Hearing-Impaired Children :

The manifestations of delayed language development in hearing-impaired children appear in several aspects, including.²² :

1. **Slowed vocabulary acquisition:** Hearing-impaired children have a limited vocabulary and struggle to learn new words.

2. **Weak sentence construction:** Their sentences tend to be short, simple, and sometimes grammatically incomplete.
3. **Difficulty expressing thoughts and emotions:** The child faces challenges in communicating needs, ideas, and feelings through spoken language.
4. **Poor articulation and fluency:** Speech is slow, marked by unusual intonation, with difficulties in pronouncing certain sounds and words.
5. **Worsening linguistic difficulties with severity:** Language problems increase as the severity of hearing impairment rises.

9. The Impact of Hearing Impairment on a Child's Social and Psychological Development :

Hearing impairment significantly affects a child's social and psychological development, as it limits their ability to communicate with others, potentially leading to feelings of isolation or withdrawal. It can also impact the formation of social relationships and the development of emotional skills. Children with hearing impairment often face difficulties in expressing their emotions and understanding the feelings of others, which may affect their self-confidence and social behavior.

A hearing-impaired child often grows up in a family environment filled with pity and overprotection. However, this sense of care quickly diminishes when the child encounters the outside world (street, school), facing situations where the affection and security they were accustomed to are not available. This often leads to a tendency toward withdrawal and isolation, feelings of non-participation and lack of belonging, and a strong desire to form social relationships with peers who share the same impairment. One of the most significant psychological consequences of deafness is the child's deprivation of natural communication with their surroundings. As a result, the child may become self-centered, anxious, and insecure, often exhibiting aggressive and impulsive behaviors as attempts to adapt and cope with society. This perspective is supported by Dominique Colin : "**Most hearing-impaired children exhibit high levels of fear and anxiety due to their reduced ability to respond to and perceive stimuli from the external environment. Consequently, they often rely on specialized strategies to adapt to various external situations.**"²³ ,the hearing-impaired child's lack of linguistic tools and limited social communication can lead to psychological problems and social difficulties. Expressing feelings and ideas, as well as communicating with others, forms the foundation for social interaction and personality development, which are essential for a balanced social and psychological life.

Some researchers, regarding the study of the personality of hearing-impaired individuals, argue that the most appropriate method to uncover their motivations, conflicts, and psychological issues in general is to observe them as they engage in their daily lives spontaneously, under the supervision of specialists trained in this type of work.²⁴

Hearing impairment significantly affects a child's social and psychological development. Children with hearing loss often grow up in families characterized by pity and overprotection; however, this support may quickly diminish when they encounter the outside world, such as school or public settings, where they face situations lacking the care and security they are accustomed to. This frequently leads to withdrawal, isolation, and a strong desire to form social relationships primarily with peers who share the same impairment. One of the most notable psychological consequences of deafness is the deprivation of natural communication, which often results in self-centeredness, anxiety, and insecurity. Aggressive or impulsive behaviors may also appear as attempts to adapt to societal demands (Dominique Colin).

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Some researchers emphasize that the most effective method to study the personality, motivations, and psychological conflicts of hearing-impaired children is through careful observation of their spontaneous daily activities by specialists trained in this field. These insights highlight the critical need for early intervention, social integration strategies, and supportive environments to foster healthy social and emotional development.

10. Conclusion :

It is evident that hearing impairment has a profound impact on a child's personality development. It creates a barrier to communication, leading to feelings of loneliness, withdrawal, and increased risk of negative emotions and aggressive behaviors. It also hinders language development and affects the child's social and psychological adaptation. Therefore, it is essential to provide support for this group of children by offering suitable educational and social environments, adapting institutions and services to their needs, and assisting them in developing linguistic, social, and emotional skills to ensure their successful integration into society.

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