PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTS ON SOCIO-EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES FACED IN EDUCATING LEARNERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Every child has a right to free and compulsory education at Primary and Secondary levels. The same rights are accorded children with hearing impairments. Further, parents have a right to choose the kind of education to be given to their children. The purpose of this study was to establish the perspectives of parents on socio-emotional challenges faced in educating learners with hearing impairments in Kenya. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and a case study research design and was informed by the Social Model of Disability as propagated by Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). The target population was 177 comprising 150 parents of learners with hearing impairments, 26 teachers and 1 Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. The study employed purposive and saturated sampling techniques to select a sample size of 30 parents, 13 teachers and 1 Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Data was collected by use of interview schedules, focus group discussion guides and document analysis guide. Trustworthiness was established by use of detailed report of the process within the study, member checks and overlapping methods. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis technique as proposed by Braun and Clarke. The study established that: most parents of learners with hearing impairments held the view that both they and their children suffered discrimination and misunderstanding on account of hearing impairment, parents and children often had conflict related to poor communication and parents could not effectively discipline their children with hearing impairments because of lack of language of communication. Recommendations of this study were that parents and the society be sensitized on the rights of learners with hearing impairment and parents be encouraged and facilitated to learn sign language. The findings of this study may be useful to educators in understanding the perspectives parents have on socio-emotional challenges of educating learners with hearing impairments and therefore put in place relevant support systems.

Key words: Hearing, Impairment, Parents, Learners, Stress, Emotion, Socio-emotional, education
Introduction

Many parents may find educating learners with HI emotionally challenging. For example, Quittner, Barker, Cruz, Snell, Grimley, Botteri and the CDaCL Investigative Team (2010), carried out a study in USA focusing on parenting stress among parents of children with HI and hearing children in relation to language delays and behaviour problems. The study used a population of one hundred and eighty one (181) children with HI and ninety two (92) hearing children. The study established the following as predictors of parenting stress; income, age at diagnosis, extent of hearing loss, language abilities, communication mode and perceived social support.

One of the reasons parents would experience stress in dealing with the education of children with HI is when they have high expectations but learners have low achievement. In one study conducted in Australia, Wu and Brown (2003) hypothesized that teachers and parents would have high expectations of children using auditory verbal therapy. Working with parents and teachers as study population, the study used questionnaires as tools for data collection. One father and all mothers indicated that they were involved in their children’s education. Results of this study showed that the hypothesis that parents and teachers would have high expectations was supported. This may imply that should the achievement of the learners be low, parents may feel disappointed and discouraged.

A study conducted in the U.S.A to develop a curriculum for the Deaf Parent-to-Parent Project by Hulsebosch and Myers (2001), pointed out that educators consider parents as the child’s first teacher and that in order for education to be effective, families must be involved. The project used Focus Group Discussion, Parent workshops and review of existing literature to come up with data. The project was conducted with ten (10) parents with HI and five hearing parents of children with HI. The families involved in the project had children with HI (Deaf or hard-of-hearing) from birth to age six. The study found out that, hearing parents tended not to see themselves as needing support until they were overwhelmed and parents with HI acted as catalysts for reawakening the intuitive knowledge of hearing parents raising children with HI and provided a reality check about what the future holds for children with HI. The reviewed study focused on mentorship for hearing parents of children with HI by parents with HI but did not delve into what perspectives parents have on socio-emotional challenges in educating learners with HI. The current study sought to establish the perspectives of parents on socio-emotional challenges faced in educating learners with HI.

In a longitudinal study in America, Lederberg and Golgbach (2002) focused on Parenting stress and social support in hearing mothers of children with HI and hearing children. The study had a sample of twenty three (23) (non-randomly sampled) hearing mothers of children with severe to profound HI hearing mothers of hearing children. Mothers of the children with HI were found through five (5) parent intervention programs from a major metropolitan area. There were four hypotheses tested in this study one of which stated that mothers of children with HI will have smaller social support networks and rely heavily on professional and educational support than mothers of hearing children. The study concluded that apart from increased audiological care and educational challenges, communication difficulties was one of the unique challenges faced by parents of children with HI. Whereas the reviewed study was conducted in America and involved only mothers of children with HI and those who are hearing, the current
study was conducted in Kenya and involved both mothers and fathers of learners with HI. The gender and cultural contexts of the two studies vary and may yield varied needs.

Alongside their children, parents of children with special needs and disabilities are also perceived to have particular needs; need for information, advice, support and practical help and the need to be involved at every stage in the identification and assessment of their children’s special educational needs (Russell, 2003). According to Wolfendale (2006), parents of children with special needs and disabilities are socially considered different from the main population of parents through the identification of their children’s disabilities, and are perceived to require help to fulfill their roles as parents.

Parents also have challenges accessing adequate and relevant social support. Poon and Zaidman-Zait (2014) carried out a study in Jordan on social support for parents of children with HI. The study conducted a literature search of published articles to identify research studies related to support and hearing parents of children with hearing loss. The search resulted in one hundred and eight (108) items from PsycINFO and one hundred and fifty four (154) items from Web of Science out of which only twenty six (26) studies met the inclusion criteria. The study found out that it is the multidimensionality of social support and its specific functions, individually and in combination, that are particularly relevant in informing family-centred service provision. The findings of this study contributed to a descriptive framework that can be used to explore the multidimensionality of support; facilitate use of methods that assess specific support functions; and also inform the development of interventions that are responsive and match the needs of parents. The reviewed study used existing literature as basic source of information while the current study used parents and teachers as informants providing the researcher the opportunity to interact with and probe the informants first hand for greater details.

On the regional scene, African parents face many challenges in educating their children with HI. In a qualitative study to find out barriers to social participation for the deaf and hard of hearing carried out in Ghana, Nortey (2009), explored participation issues within the family, among peers, colleagues and other social settings. The study looked at issues of education, employment, health care and government sponsorships that impact on the participation of the HI. The study used twelve (12) purposively sampled participants. The main objective of the study was to identify the barriers to participation of the HI in Ghana and how these barriers affect the ability to participate. Results of the study indicated that there was lack of participation in activities, lack of belongingness, challenges in transition from the family to school through social life and work, lack of language of communication both at home and school, less provisions for education, being left out of family and social life, employment, healthcare and support for persons with disabilities. Further, results of this study indicated that most parents concentrated their efforts on supporting their hearing children through school and neglected the HI, some of whom finally dropped out of school before completion due to negative cultural beliefs which dictate what forms the basis of our beliefs concerning education, puberty, certain groups of people, religion, family and community. The study dealt with barriers for the HI in general in and out of school in Ghanaian society and not perspectives of parents but the current study focused on the perspectives of parents on the challenges faced in educating children with HI.
On the Kenyan scene, a study was conducted by Omoke (2011) on the quality of education offered to children with special educational needs (SEN) in the era of free primary education (FPE). Using a population of forty two (42) informants comprising of parents, regular teachers, Special education teachers, head teachers, special education coordinators and QUASOs, the study obtained data through interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis. One of the findings of the study was that parents of children with special educational needs perceived their children as “useless” because they could not contribute meaningfully to the families as compared to their siblings. As a result some parents kept their children away from school. The reviewed study focused on the quality of education offered to learners with SEN while the current study sought to establish the perspectives of parents on socio-emotional challenges faced in educating learners with HI.

**Purpose/Objective**

The purpose of this study was to establish the perspectives of parents on socio-emotional challenges faced in educating learners with Hearing impairments in Kenya.

**Methodology**

The study used qualitative research approach and a case study design. According to Creswell (2009; Yin, 2011), qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Qualitative approach was used in this study to seek in depth information on opinions and find out perspectives of parents on challenges of educating learners with HI in areas such as; financial, communication, academic progress monitoring, socio-emotional and strategies for coping with challenges faced in educating their children with hearing impairments.

Case studies are in-depth investigations of a single person, group, event or community. Case study data was gathered from different sources using different research methods such as interviews, group discussions and document analysis (Yin, 2009). Case study design was used in this study to accord the opportunity to establish the perspectives of parents on challenges faced in educating learners with HI in detail.

**Results**

Data was collected from parents and teachers by use of interview schedules, focus group discussion guides and document analysis guide. Results are presented in order of the emerging themes. In order to keep confidentiality certain codes were generated and used in reporting the results. The key is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Key to codes used in the report.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP08</td>
<td>Interview with parent number 08</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT07</td>
<td>Interview with teacher number 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUASO</td>
<td>Quality Assurance and Standards Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFG</td>
<td>Parents focus group</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFG</td>
<td>Teachers focus group</td>
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Misunderstanding and discrimination

Most of the parents interviewed indicated that their relationship with family members was cordial though there were a few instances when they felt misunderstood. In addition, there were also a few family members who treated them with a degree of contempt. Some of the parents said that their families had suffered discrimination from the extended family because they have a child with HI. Some parents (mothers) were blamed for having brought bad seeds into the families. Parents felt they were treated as strangers by the family on the account of having a child with HI.

*Before I had a child with HI, relationship with my in-laws was normal but, since the day this child was confirmed HI, things suddenly changed for our family. There were blames, questions and sometimes threats...* (IP018).

Parents complained that some of the family members held the view that educating a child with HI was a waste of time and money. As a result, these parents and their children with HI were isolated and denied both social and emotional support they needed.

*We don’t get any support from anybody. No one wants to listen to us discuss about the education of our child with HI. No one wants to know what we go through or experience...* (IP 022).

Relationships with some relatives and neighbors got strained because of labeling and name calling. Some referred to mothers as ‘Mama kisiwi’ (mother of deaf) and men got nicknamed ‘the father of the deaf’ even though they knew their names and the names of her children. A representative statement expressing parents’ sentiments:

*It feels bad. People treat us as if we made the choice to have a child with HI. They look at our daughter as if she is some spectacular object who should not even walk. They ask ridiculous questions and make rude comments. Some even wonder why a girl with HI should be so beautiful because they feel it is a waste. It feels really bad...* (IP01).

Results from teachers’ interview revealed that some parents felt despised and considered failures by family members and friends because they had children with HI. This affected the way they related with such relatives and friends in a negative way. Many relationships were strained as some family members, friends and neighbors isolated them for insisting on taking children with HI to school. One parent who experienced such isolation had this to say;

*Parents have reported to us that many relatives and neighbors say that they are taking the children with HI to school only because they have a lot of money to waste or because they want to hide her far away in boarding school. Some go to the extent of offering their own children without any disabilities to be paid for fees instead...* (IT08).

Teachers also learnt that parents did not get any social or emotional support from their relatives and friends. Parents observed that most relatives did not support because they didn’t think it was
worth educating children with HI. Many parents admitted having had some hurtful experiences whenever they met with new people in the company of the learner. After introductions someone would ask;

“Your daughter does not talk, she only smiles?” (IT09).

When the parent informed them that the daughter was HI, some suddenly started treating the parent like a stranger who did not belong to that group. Some sympathized yet others asked questions and made unkind remarks. Most parents felt that the society was unkind to persons with HI and that having a child with HI had impacted negatively on the parents’ relationships with others.

Many neighbors kept off and treated parents of learners with HI with a sense of awe. They didn’t seem to understand how these parents could dare take their daughters with HI to a faraway boarding school. The parent said they thought their neighbors kept off because they had a child with HI and they felt hurt.

Parents wish their neighbors would relate to them closely, even ask questions. They would get to learn that apart from inability to communicate with voice, a child with HI was an ordinary child in every way” (IT05).

Results from parents’ focus discussion groups revealed that parents had to deal with the negative attitudes of the members of the extended family who sometimes would ask annoying question like:

‘Where do you think she will take all the education you are giving her? How will she ever marry?’ (PFG01)

Some of the parents said they and their children felt devalued by the society.

‘I often feel devalued when someone greets me and asks me how my ‘deaf’ child is doing or when I am introduced as the father of a deaf child. Suddenly, everyone begins to look at me as though there were something wrong with me. I have other children too and to me they are all equal.’(PFG01).

Similarly, parents said their children with HI suffer devaluation and abuse as a result of their disability.

There are those parents of hearing children who do not allow their children to mix with my child with HI although they may be at the same level educationally. Some tend to treat children with HI as though the curriculum they follow in school is inferior to that of the hearing... (PFG01).
Parents in group two believed that learners with HI are despised in society and many people did not take their welfare into consideration. Parents and families of the HI rarely got any support whether social or emotional. The attitude of people in the society was cited as a challenge because it was negative. Parents said some members of the society discouraged them from investing in the education of learners with HI saying the HI could not achieve and that it was a waste of time educating the HI. Parents felt isolated by the society. As a result, parents and learners with HI often missed the support they needed from the society in which they lived.

_During the holiday when students come home from schools, all the hearing children in our neighborhood can gather together and study. They assist one another through discussion and peer tutoring. However, learners with HI are isolated and mine usually studies alone. Parents of the hearing children feel that my child adds no value to their children’s learning. It’s bad… (PFG02)._}

As a result, the learners ended up staying isolated which was not healthy for both cognitive emotional development.

Some parents realized people would treat them as if something was wrong with them.

‘People think that because my child is HI, something is wrong with me, maybe I am mentally challenged or worse still, I am cursed. How do I explain to them that I am normal and that this could happen to anyone?’ (PFG02)

Further, parents in group two noted that not all teachers working with learners with HI were positive about their education. Some of the teachers, they said, were negative and often uttered negative comments about their children with HI. Parents expressed their worry about having such teachers in the school because they feared these teachers would not encourage the learners with HI to achieve high academically. One parent said;

_I expected to find assistance from all the teachers at the school. I was really shocked to realize that some of the teachers are not supportive and may not encourage the learners… (PFG 02). _

Parents in group three raised two socio-emotional challenges; discrimination and insecurity during travels. The parents said that both they and their children with HI suffered discrimination. There are those parents who said they were treated with suspicion whenever they attended functions with their child with HI or were in a group of people who knew them. Their children also experienced discrimination since some neighbors and relatives would not let them play with their children or hold their young ones.

_This has interfered greatly with the children’s social and emotional development. The learners prefer being in school than at home since they are able to mix and play freely in school but at home they are always lonely… (PFG03)._
Parents in group three also expressed concern about their children travelling alone. They viewed public transport as insecure for the learners unless they were accompanied by a hearing adult. Parents cited cases of touts taking unfair advantage of female students with HI and luring them into illicit relationships. There were also fears that the learners could lose luggage and money while they travelled unaccompanied. Having to always accompany the learner to and from school was a source of stress for many parents.

Parents in group four raised concerns about the attitude of the officers they expected to get assistance from whenever they visited government offices. Very few parents indicated that they usually got assisted fast whenever they visited the Constituency Development Funds offices or any other government offices. Most of the parents complained that they rarely got any assistance at all. Instead, some officers would tell them that the school was too small and had full assistance from the government and other sponsors. Others said some officers asked them what kind of jobs they expected the HI to do after school.

I usually get intimidated when I try to discuss the education of my child with HI with other parents… (PFG04).

Parents in group four also viewed learners with HI as vulnerable, naïve, indecisive and easy to influence. School holidays were particularly challenging for these parents as they had to stay at home to keep off adult friends whom they thought would mislead or misuse the girls. Parents said that they could not go out for a long time or overnight unless they had a trusted adult at home.

These children (learners with HI) are very naïve. They believe anyone and have no suspicion at all. When you say something all they ask is if you are saying the truth. If you insist you are saying the truth, they believe you. I have lost many things that their friends come and say I sent them to take. I thought it is just my child but I have heard complaints from other parents too… (PFG04).

Parents felt that having to be too careful was both costly and tiring.

Teachers reported that many parents of learners with HI complained of discrimination in the society for them and their children with HI. This concurred with results from parents’ interview and focus group discussion. According to their report, parents felt that many people in the society did not understand or accept disability and so treated the parents and the learners with disability with contempt or discrimination.

‘Many parents complain of being discriminated and misunderstood. Extended family and the larger society sometimes ignore them or treat them with negative attention just because they have a child with HI.’ (TFG).

**Discipline**

Some parents said found it difficult to discipline their children with HI because of their disability and nature of communication. Parents admitted that though the HI were children like all others,
they had some characteristics that were unique to being HI which parents found difficult to understand. Once in a while parents met with resistance in trying to exercise control over the amount of time spent with peers and specific places the children visited. The parents of hearing children did not worry so it would often become a source of regular disagreement among the parents in the neighborhood.

Parents of the hearing children just needed to shout a word from a distance and their children would stop playing, run indoors and start studying. However, for my child I had to go to the playground in person and get hold of her hand. It felt intimidating for both the child and I. The child always resisted. I think she developed a feeling that I don’t like her friends…I don’t know… (IP09).

Most parents stated that they feared being too strict with their children with HI because of the way some of the children responded to discipline measures.

I don’t feel comfortable with the reaction I get from my child with HI when I discipline. The child withdraws from me for days…it’s quite scary. You may call it rudeness or indiscipline… (IP014).

Peer pressure was another challenge parents faced. Teachers reported that they regularly received complaints from parents that learners with HI were difficult to control especially when it came to persuading them against activities they carried out with their friends. Parents found it challenging to correct certain negative behaviors their children had acquired from age mates and playmates. Parents reported having disagreements with their children regularly over negative characteristics they had learnt from their friends in school.

Teachers reported that parents complained that learners with HI took relationships with their friends too seriously and did not know the expected limits. As a result there were some cases of teenage pregnancy which could have been avoided. Many parents found themselves in constant conflict with their children as they tried to put restrictions on these relationships.

Many parents express their fear of school holidays. They hold that the learners with HI are safer in school where teachers can keep constant watch of them. At home they have a problem because learners meet with friends under the pretext of studying but more than reading may go on while they are away. They think the other teenagers take advantage of the learners with HI socio-emotionally… (IT012).

Lack of role models was also a challenge to many parents. According to the teachers, some of the parents had heard of Dr. Ndurumo but some had not. Parents often asked teachers to show them any successful person with HI. Unfortunately, most of the teachers did not know many. Teachers reported that most of the parents they talked to seemed to be discouraged thinking that learners with HI had no bright future.
Parents feel that it would be easier for them to insist on certain levels of performance and behavior if they had good role models to refer their children to... (IT08).

Results from interview with teachers revealed that parents also had a challenge of ignorance. Most parents lacked awareness concerning their responsibilities and services available for learners with HI. Many parents were said to assume that the government was fully responsible for the education of all persons with disabilities, the HI inclusive. Parents were said to have brought their children to school as a requirement from the government. Many parents were unaware of the support and opportunities available for learners with HI.

One parent told me when I asked why he had not paid fees or done any shopping for the child that the Chief had told him he would be arrested if he did not bring the child to school. He thought the government would cater for all the needs of the child in school... (IT6).

Parents said these challenges impacted greatly on their parenting. Some of them felt discouraged and did not make effort in participating more in the education of their children since they felt the achievements were very low. Other parents decided to persist in assisting the school and the learners by treating the children equally and never giving up.

**Coping with socio-emotional challenges**

First, parents chose to be the learners’ advocates, to speak out on their behalf and also train them to stand up for themselves against discrimination. Parents realized that if they did not speak up for their children with HI, no one would.

Secondly, many parents mentioned that they had worked on fostering good and close family relationships that would make everyone feel at home to keep off what other people thought and said about them. They also worked at creating the bond between the children with HI and the extended.

I make time to take the learner to our ancestral home to showcase the skills and the change going to school had brought in her life. I feel that this would help the family appreciate and treat these learners with the same respect they treat others... (IP018).

Thirdly, there were parents who said they always prayed to God to help them keep the children succeed in school and life in general. Many parents claimed that they always relied on prayers for encouragement. They also taught their children to pray and trust in God.

‘When I look at my child and see how far she has come in education, I thank God and I pray to Him to help me overcome all challenges so that she succeeds.’((IP016).
In the fourth place, some of the parents mentioned guidance and counseling as a strategy they have used successfully with their children with HI. Sometimes they engaged the services of professionals like teachers and counselors but at other times they did the counseling themselves.

* I guide and counsel her as much as possible. I encourage her to feel free to share with me her concerns and ambitions and we discuss them at length. In this way, I have been able to keep in touch with her life and education... (IP 011).

Fifthly, most parents expressed that they would appreciate if services were brought closer to them so they could learn sign language and receive counsel on the opportunities available for learners with HI after fourth form. Parents also suggested that the School should provide opportunity to learn sign language by organizing seminars and workshops for parents on a regular basis.

Results from teachers’ interview revealed that in order deal with discrimination and stigma, parents often advocated for the formation of support groups. In these support groups teachers suggested that programs for learning sign language and other modes of communicating with the HI could be run. Alongside support groups, the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and communities could collaborate to establish rehabilitation centers to support learners with HI and their parents. It was also noted that a change of attitude towards the HI and sign language by parents and the general society could encourage parents to treat learners with HI equally with the learners with hearing and accord them equal opportunities. One of the teachers put it:

* Most parents we talk to desire the formation of support groups and forums where they could learn sign language and share experiences. However, this has not been easy due to long distances between their homes and lack of knowledge on who to work with... (IT08).

In order to curb indiscipline among learners with HI, teachers reported that parents usually expressed that the school could reinforce the school rules and equip the department of Guidance and Counseling. The school could also invite different guest speakers to educate the learners of the expected behavior in society including school and home.

In the focus group, parents cited views on several strategies they used and those strategies they thought could be put in place by the school and other stakeholders to assist them in educating learners with HI.

Parents in focus discussion group one suggested three strategies that would help to cope with the challenges they faced in educating learners with HI. The first one was to advise parents on what to do in case of discrimination. Parents argued that advice on how to overcome discrimination and stigmatization would be helpful to parents who regularly suffered such treatment from members of the public.

Parents in group two had varied strategies that could be used to cope with the challenges; some said the only effective strategy was prayer. These parents argued from a religious point of view and believed that God was supreme and had the plan of each person’s life. It was therefore, in
order to trust in him to overcome the challenges. Some viewed having a child with HI as a test from God which they prayed to pass. One representative statement from group two read:

*I pray and have taught the child how to pray for help from God. It is only from him we get help and strength for every day. The child came from him and he has the full plan of her life in his hands. I choose to believe the best...* (PFG02).

A few parents admitted having and continuing to consult witchdoctors whenever they are confronted with a challenge related to the education of their child with HI. They claimed that the witchdoctor would help them to find out what was the root cause of their problem.

Parents in group three said that they would take their children to hospital for medical attention or to the Educational Assessment and Resource Centre especially whenever learners had complaints. Most parents had their children fitted with hearing aids and were happy that though the children had no speech, they could identify some sounds. They hoped that this would improve the learners’ ability to get information from the environment. Some of the parents however, indicated that by going for medical checkup, they were able to confirm that their children were profoundly hearing impaired and could not benefit from hearing aids.

*It was much easier for us to accept that the child had become profoundly hearing impaired after the doctor confirmed this to us...* (PFG03).

Parents in group four presented divergent views on strategies. A few parents said that in searching for solutions to the challenges they faced in educating learners with HI, they had reached a point of desperation and had contemplated keeping their children with HI at home to do manual work.

Most parents in group four cited encouraging themselves and the learners. Parents reasoned that there were too many things and people that discouraged them, they had to learn to encourage themselves. Secondly, parents used guidance and counseling services. Many parents confessed that in their moments of confusion, they would seek guidance and counseling services. In addition, parents discussed the need for parents to teach their children good moral behavior. Moral training would help to curb cases of theft of other learners’ items in school. In addition, parents felt that spiritual training both at home and at school would also assist in instilling good behavior in learners with HI as the following statement attests:

*Talking with the children and teaching them the right morals helps a lot. Sometimes it is important to involve a family friend who is close to the child or another family member. These must be people that the child trusts, admires and respects in order for them to take the discussion seriously...* (PFG04).

Teachers’ focus group discussion raised various strategies. First, the formation of parent support groups. Teachers stated that this is a suggestion they had discussed with parents that they form support groups in regions and plan to meet regularly to discuss issues that affect them and education of their children with HI. Parents had agreed that such a support group should be open to parents of learners with HI from other schools and at all levels. Parents felt that there were challenges that were unique to parents of learners with HI and having their own support group
would give them a platform to find some solutions to their problem. They also said a support group would also provide them with the emotional support they needed from time to time.

Most these parents see the need for the formation of support groups but they need assistance in order to come up with strategies for the same (TFG).

Secondly, parents were of the view that the school and the ministry of education should organize awareness seminars for parents and communities in their localities. Thirdly, on travelling difficulties, parents suggested that learners should be trained on how to use public transport and be given school identity cards which they could show in the bus to be assisted then they would not have to be accompanied all the time.

Results from documents analyzed there were a number of suggestions on strategies to help parents cope with the challenges they faced in educating learners with HI. The representative of the ministry of education encouraged parents to visit the nearest EARC for counsel on issues pertaining to education for learners with HI, assistance on sourcing funding and to get forms to register their children with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities to enhance their chances of getting funded. The analyzed document indicated that parents proposed to prioritize projects and work at them one by one. The parents also requested the BOM to assist in sourcing funds from donors and other government sources from county and National levels. The Board of management and the parents promised to work together with the teachers to support the education of learners with HI. They urged the teachers to sacrifice and give more time to the learners by teaching extra hours. Parents were encouraged by the BOM to appreciate the work teachers were doing by providing ‘a cup of tea’. In order to curb stealing of items, one member suggested that the school should organize for branding of students items and those found stealing should replace by buying two of each item they had stolen.

Some members also requested the District office to look into the issue of Kenyan Sign Language training for parents by sourcing for funds to facilitate the training. The BOM reported that they were planning for a two week workshop for KSL every holiday and urged parents to cooperate. The meeting also suggested that they could write a proposal to source for funding for KSL training from willing donors.

Discussion

Misunderstanding and Discrimination

Parents were of the view that they and their children with HI were regularly discriminated both at home and in public places. In addition to discrimination, parents stated that they experienced confusion concerning the education of learners with HI. Parents admitted that there are many things they did not understand about the education of the HI. Most of the information parents had they said they had got from the teachers but the teachers were not always with them to answer questions. This finding is supported by the findings of a study by Poon and Zaidma-Zait (2014) which found out that there were very few studies that could be used to explore multi-disciplinary support and inform the development of interventions that could meet parents’ needs. It may therefore imply that the absence of the necessary support was interpreted by parents of learners with HI as discriminative and lack of understanding. This finding also concurred with
Wolfendale (2006) who reported that parents of learners with special needs were considered as ‘different’ and needed help.

Another perspective the parents had was that learners with HI took too long to become independent even in high school. Many learners with HI depended so much on the support they got from their parents and other family members. Parents indicated that they had brought their children to secondary school with the hope that they would learn to be independent very fast but were disappointed. However, most parents still had hope that one day, their children would be independent.

Documentary evidence showed that even parents sometime failed to treat their children with HI equally in that they tended to attend to their hearing school children first before attending to those with HI. Parents were urged not to discriminate their children with HI but to regularly visit and encourage them. Therefore, it seemed discrimination did not only come from the society to parents of the HI but also from parents towards their children with HI. This finding is in agreement with that of Nortey (2009) who found out that most parents concentrated on supporting their hearing children through school while they neglected the children with HI. These findings are further supported by the findings from a study by Omoke (2011) who found out that parents considered their children with disabilities ‘useless’ as compared to their siblings. Results from document analysis confirmed those from interviews and focus group discussion. A number of attitudes such as discrimination, insecurity, dependence of learners, devaluation of learners and parents and negative utterances from some teachers were reported.

Parents concluded that the society was very cruel to persons with disabilities, the hearing impaired in this case. The findings of this study concurred with Codrington (2012) which revealed that parents suffered alienation from formal education because of cultural, historical and systemic forces and teachers’ attitudes which made parents feel left out in their children’s education. As a result, many parents avoided participation which meant whenever decisions were made they were excluded (Scottish Government Publication, 2005).

Therefore, it appears from these findings that whereas both parents and their children with HI faced discrimination from the society, learners also faced discrimination from their own parents. Discrimination of learners with HI from their parents could result into loss of motivation for learning as a result of always reporting late to school and lacking essential parental support.

**Discipline**

Results from interviews revealed that most parents perceived socio-emotional challenges as being a major hindrance to effective parenting. These results also revealed that parents were ignorant of what was required of them and opportunities available for learners with HI. Most parents felt they could not discipline their children with HI as effectively as they did the hearing children because of lack of language to communicate expectations. They were of the view that it was more difficult to instruct the child with HI because of their hearing impairments. According to Ludeshi et. al. (2011), one of the sources of indiscipline in schools was the reaction of learners
whose parents did not make effort to visit. This implied that if learners felt that their parents were not concerned about them, they were likely to feel frustrated and resort to unacceptable behavior.

Parents’ perspective concerning these challenges was that the government and sponsors ought to ensure the wellbeing of the learner with HI. Parents cited poverty, lack of time, inability to learn sign language and stigmatization as hindering their effectiveness as parents. These findings were in agreement with the findings of other studies such as Lederberg and Golgbach (2002) and Adoyo (2004) who found out that parents of learners with HI had communication problems owing to lack of sign language skills. In the minutes of the AGMs of 2013, 2014 and 2015, the Parents’ Teachers’ Association chairman and other parents provided a list of what they considered as challenges facing education of learners with HI as inclusive of parents not attending academic days and not visiting their children. As a result, many learners felt neglected and turned to indiscipline.

Coping with socio-emotional challenges

Many parents coped with socio-emotional challenges by fostering strong family ties which would make all members feel secure and not pay attention to opinions of others, parents to be advocates for their children, train learners to stand for themselves, pray, consult witchdoctors, use guidance and counseling, treat all children equally, form support groups and the government to establish rehabilitation centres for the parents and learners.

Summary

Misunderstanding and discrimination

This study found out that parents felt that they and their children were often misunderstood and discriminated both in the family and the larger society. Parents generally perceived the society as being very cruel to them and their children with HI.

Discipline

Parents had challenges in carrying out discipline on their children and expected the teachers to assist them. Parents also stated that they needed role models of successful persons with HI whom their children could look up to. Parents admitted feeling helpless whenever they were unable to communicate with and control their children.

Coping with socio-emotional challenges

This study established that many parents were willing to participate in the education of learners with HI and tried to attend most of the activities the school invited them to. However, there were some parents who felt that the teachers and the government should take care of all the educational and social needs of the learners with HI since they had neither the time nor the money to attend to the learners’ needs. However, a few parents turned to spiritual help like prayers and consulting with doctors as remedies while others sought professional help from counselors.

Conclusion

Perspectives of parents on Socio-emotional challenges
In view of the findings, the study concluded that parents held the view that they suffered isolation, discrimination and misunderstanding from both family and the larger society because their children were HI. This affected their attitudes towards the education of learners with HI directly. Parents also held that poor communication was a constant source of conflict between individual parents and their children leading to discouragement and despair.

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