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FACTORS AFFECTING RESILIENCE IN DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING (D/HH) COMMUNITIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: Resilience is extremely vital to all of us, especially to people with hearing loss. This paper is concerned with the study of factors affecting resilience in deaf and hard of hearing community. It is based on comprehensive literature review drawn from international studies and reports of existing organizations in Vietnam about this field. Key findings show that promoting resilience in deaf and hard-of-hearing (D/HH) communities involves the combination of complex factors. Individual characteristics, resilient family with positive support; deaf peer networks, inclusive education environment and social policy services are essential contributors to resilience in D/HH. The paper concludes by confirming that D/HH communities can accomplish their goals and live their lives fruitfully with the right support.

Keywords: Resilience, Deaf And Hard-Of-Hearing Community, Factors

1 Introduction

Hearing is an important sense for cognitive skills, and thus resilience. Hearing impairment is not only a communication challenge but also a social participation barrier. It reduces ability to study, to work and to access to information. More than anyone else, because of their limitations, people with disabilities in general and D/HH people in particular need resilience to overcome multifaceted obstacles. Resilience in D/HH communities emphasizes not only the capability of deaf individuals to withstand adversity, but also their positive adaptation through interactions with surrounding systems and success. With resilience, D/HH can shape their better future.

With the development of medicine and technology, many methods of auditory rehabilitation have been developed. However, the D/HH's resilience level depends on several dimensions. The following part aims at answering the question "What are the factors affecting resilience in deaf and hard of hearing community?"

1.1 Factors affecting D/HH's resilience

1.1.1 Individual factors

Many research showed that there are differences between hearing and deaf people in terms of dealing with difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Bizuneh, 2021; Freitas et al., 2023). Among D/HH people, the level of resilience also varies. This depends on the following individual characteristics.

Age of diagnosis: People who are born deaf or have hearing loss from a young age often face difficulties in language and communication skills. Early diagnosis of hearing loss in a child is vital for effective intervention (Swain, 2024). When a child's deafness is identified, he/she may be prescribed suitable hearing aids or cochlear implants and speech therapy to prevent mutism and mitigate the negative impact of hearing loss. Early intervention is crucial for fostering resilience because early access to language, whether sign language or spoken language is very neccessary for cognitive and social, emotional development, and thus resilience as from developmental psychology, the way of thinking is shaped before the age of 5.

Acceptance of deaf identity: Emotional difficulties

had been seen among adolescent with hearing loss when they were badly aware of their disability (Adibsereshki et al., 2019). According to Young et al. (2008) and Zand & Pierce (2018), perception of deafness is very important for resilient level. When D/HH know who they are, explore and accept their deaf identity, they may feel empowered and individualized their resilience in the context of deafness. Lambez et al. (2020) found that adolescents with strong, affirming Deaf identities experienced lower emotional distress and higher well-being because they helped maintaining meaningful relationships with both hearing and deaf peers.

Personality traits: Many reseachers confirmed that individuals with high self-esteem (sense of self-worth and confidence), optimism (positive self-concept) and good coping mechanism (ability to manage and express emotions effectively) tended to cope better with difficulties (Radovanović et al., 2020). Determination, perseverance, and the ability to bounce back from setbacks are also important traits that can positively influence resilience among deaf individuals (Antia et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2018; Bizuneh, 2022; Radovanović et al., 2020).

1.1.2 Resilient Families

As usual, people believe that having a child with hearing loss affects family resilience, quality of life, emotional feelings (Kara et al., 2024). On the other hand, familty support is significant predictor of cognitive autonomy among adolesscents with hearing loss. Resilient families have ability to accept the child hearing status, adapt to challenges, maintain a sense of control, find meaning in difficult situations and solve problems skillfully (Ahlert & Greeff, 2012; Michael & Attias, 2016). Open communication and shared experiences about feelings and challenges are usually practiced in such families. Zand and Pierce (2018) similarly found that parental warmth, clear communication, and consistent routines fostered emotional security and adaptive coping.

Family members actively provide an effective nurturing environment to the D/HH people. They can offer emotional support by demonstrating a confident attitude toward the D/HH, focusing on their abilities and achievements and reinforce a sense of competence and self worth. Parents may build their D/HH children's self-esteem to achieve realistic goals, praise their efforts and celebrate small successes to increase self confidence (Ahlert & Greeff, 2012).

According to the Center for Research and Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CED, 2024) – an organization based in Ho Chi Minh city, in the early years, parents can act as their D/HH children's advocates, ensuring that they have the support and environmental modifications needed to thrive in educational and social settings. As children with hearing loss may experience delays in social development due to communication barriers and limited opportunities for social interaction. Parents may become a useful resource if they try to seek groups with hearing impairment in the area or online for their children. Meeting other people with hearing loss allow their children to promote a sense of belonging, to discuss challenges and to gain peer support. As their deaf children grow up and become adults, parents must be able to request them responsibility for certain age-appropriate things to boost their sense of independence. Parent can encourage them to develop solutions for communication barriers instead of complaining (Ahlert & Greeff, 2012). Parental career-related modeling and verbal encouragement are crucial to the career self-eficacy of D/HH adolescents (Rinat et al., 2013).

1.1.3 Supportive community of D/HH

Supportive community of the deaf and hard of hearing is one of the very important factors for resilience. Rea and Schick (2021) highlighted that involvement in Deaf community events and peer groups during adolescence predicted higher resilience and well-being in adulthood. Community of the D/HH is the place where strong sense of deaf identity is respected. In such a community, interactions with peers who have hearing loss are encouraged; sense of belonging and acceptance are developed in deaf-friendly spaces. All have a positive impact on D/HH's lives and help them being capable of dealing with everyday challenges. The supportive community also includes deaf role models who have overcome difficulties, integrated well into society and achieved certain success. These role models may become effective support and valuable advocate for others (Meyer, 2003) (Michael et al., 2013).

In Vietnam, there are several self-help groups such as CED, Hanoi Sign Language Club, Club of the Deaf, Vietnam Judicial Suppor Association for the Poor (VIJUSAP), Happiness Laundry that provide psychological therapy, life skill training, vocational services and legal assistance for D/HH. These peer-to-peer communities are sources of emotional support and improvement of deaf identity and confidence.

1.1.4 Educational system

Increasing numbers of D/HH students study in general education classrooms. Inclusive education (instead of special education) is encouraged to help D/HH persons developing social interactions with hearing peers; allow them to participate in extracurricular activities that do not rely too much on oral communication. However, the study by Bizuneh (2021) showed that there was a significant difference in resilience between deaf and hearing students. Deaf students' capability to cope with stressors and academic demands was less than their counterparts. Risk factors included the presence of a hearing loss, lack of social maturity due to age, school transitions, lack of resources (Antia et al., 2011). However, adequate support in school might help with this issue.

Antia et al. (2011) and Freitas et al. (2023) emphasized that principal protective factors to build resilience in school settings are opportunities to work collaboratively and become familiar with hearing peers, continuing services from teachers of the deaf and parental communication with school personnel. Teachers are supposed to use the pedagogical methods that best suit the students with hearing impairment. Qualified professionals such as audiologists, interpreters and speech-language therapists are provided to D/HH students. Assistive technology (such as hearing aids, cochlear implants or other devices) is available for easier communication.

Legal policies and services Stigma, prejudice and discrimination reduce self-esteem and access to social resources. Conversely, accepting deaf people as a normal part of society will facilitate their recovery. Nowadays, the right-based approach to disability is seen in all over the world. This approach emphasizes that people with disabilities have the såme fundamental rights as every one.

Legal laws and regulations are need to ensure the D/HH to participate on an equal basis in social activities, to be provided with healthcarre, education, vocational training, employment, legal assistance, access to public facities, information technology and other services suitable to their disability. At the same time, state policies also include anti-discrimination laws related to disablity to prevent unfair treatment and to provide reasonable accommodations for a full participation of the D/HH (Fellinger et al., 2012)

2 Conclusion

The deaf and hard-of-hearing are vulnerable groups in many aspects of life. However, they also demonstrate remarkable resilience to adversity when given the right support. The resilience of D/HH communities depends not only on hearing level but also on a combination of factors as mentioned above. To ensure that they can develop comprehensively and sustainably in an inclusive and equitable invironment, efforts from multiple systems are needed.

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