

Ecological Support for Deaf People in Viet Nam: Analysis of Inclusion and Barriers

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Introduction: This presentation utilizes qualitative data to illustrate strategic efforts toward ensuring educational and social inclusion for deaf persons in Vietnam, spanning from the home to the wider community. We examine critical challenges involving policy enforcement, social awareness, early intervention, Sign Language training, and employment support. This research is situated within a significant demographic context: globally, over 1.5 billion people live with hearing loss, while in Vietnam, persons with disabilities comprise 7% of the population. Specifically, the city of Vinh Long records over 1,400 individuals with hearing and speech impairments. Framed by the legal protections of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this study highlights the urgent need for integrated support systems to address these growing populations.

Methodology: This qualitative study utilized interviews conducted by two multilingual university lecturers across two ethnically distinct Vietnamese regions: Vinh Long City in the Mekong Delta and Da Lat in the Central Highlands. The sample comprised 40 participants, including students, parents, teachers, and community members. Structured around three ecological dimensions—Family, School, and Community—the inquiry explored emotional reactions to deafness, communication strategies, social relationships, safety concerns, and the availability of support resources.

Results: Interviewees provided invaluable insights into their experiences overcoming the challenges of deafness through their developmental years, perceived opportunities for gainful employment as adults; and difficulties facing learning, teaching, and social inclusion. In summary, the challenges at every level, from the early development years to early adulthood, the struggles for deaf person and their families were immense. Progressing through education has its promises in the elementary school years, but deaf-support services are reduced or become non-existent beginning with high schools and onward.

Conclusion: We will briefly discuss the major legislations available in Viet Nam and a strategy to integrate the social work professions in deaf and hard-of-hearing services in schools, communities, and workplaces as people aged. Although major policies are implemented to ensure some degree of educational and social services, the barriers and challenges remain difficult for deaf people, their families, and school systems.

Practical Value: This study is the first step to understand the experience of a deaf family member, its burden and resiliency among those living and caring for the person. The authors expect to pursue more in-depth research of the descriptive problems, necessary policies and interventions to assure inclusion in services and education.

Direction for Future Research: Deafness is a disability in a country where comprehensive assessment and services are at best fragmented. An entire research program is necessary to understand the ecological system to ensure proper and adequate care and services to deaf people and other types of disabilities (visible and non-visible) that impact people throughout their life span.

Keywords: deafness, education, inclusion, access, family support

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