ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Early Intervention Programs and Its Influence for Family Cohesion among Parents of Children With Hearing Impairment In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

By: Meklit Bahiru
ID: SGS/0558/2015A

MAY,2024

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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ENDORSEMENT

This Thesis has been submitted to St. Mary's University, School of Graduate Studies for examination with my approval as a University advisor.

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the MA thesis written by Meklit Bahiru Tamiru titled by Early Intervention Programs and Its Influence for Family Cohesion among Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters in Social Work complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standard with respect to originality and quality.

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Meklit Bahiru

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AKNOWLEGMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS /ACRONYMS

EI Early Intervention

HI Hearing Impairment

FC   Family Cohesion

ENAD   Ethiopia National Association of The Deaf

WHO World Health Organization

HIC   Hearing Impaired Children

CSS   Community Support Systems

SL   Sign Language

AD   Assistive Devices

QRM   Qualitative Research Methods

SLI   Sign Language Interpreters

Abstract

This study investigates parental approaches to supporting children with hearing impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, utilizing an interpretive paradigm within an exploratory research design. Qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and field observations, were employed to assess the effectiveness of early intervention programs provided by institutions such as Mekanisa Deaf School, Alpha Deaf School, Community School, and the National Association for the Deaf. Informal supports like social media platforms and community networks were also examined. Key findings underscore the pivotal role of sign language support, communication skills development, and psychological well-being in enhancing outcomes for children with hearing impairment. The study reveals a positive relationship between parental engagement in intervention activities and family cohesion, highlighting the transformative impact of active parental involvement. Challenges identified include limited access to sign language education and barriers to accessing support services, prompting recommendations for comprehensive interventions and policy enhancements. These include advocating for family-centered social work practices, enhancing social work education, and implementing inclusive policies conducive to nurturing environments for children's development.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction

In the intricate landscape of child development, the pivotal role of Early Intervention (EI) programs become evident, particularly when addressing the distinctive challenges encountered by families with children facing hearing impairment (HI). This research embarks on a journey to unravel the complexities surrounding EI, with a primary focus on its effect on Family cohesion (FC) among parents of HI children. The underlying motivation for this study is rooted in the recognition of a critical need to understand, enhance, and address the unique dynamics within these families.

1.2. Background of the study

Growing up in a household where both parents with Hearing Impaired (HI) has provided a unique and intimate perspective on the challenges faced by individuals with HI and their families. As I navigate unique challenges arising from societal attitudes and stigmas surrounding deafness, these may impact my interactions with others, which can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration. Nonetheless, this personal experience has not only shaped my understanding but has also fuelled a deep-seated passion to improve support systems, particularly for families where parents can hear, and their children are HI.

Research indicates Approximately 90–95% of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Moores 2001).Frequently, there are significant difficulties with parent–child interaction as parents adjust to the knowledge of their child's deafness and find the most effective way to communicate with their child (Hintermair, 2006).This lack of awareness often leads to challenges in accessing appropriate support services and navigating the complexities of raising a child with HI.

In Ethiopia, data on the prevalence and situation of persons with disabilities such as deafness are fragmented and incomplete. While the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates a prevalence of 1.33 per 1,000 live births of HI globally, specific data for Ethiopia remains scarce (WHO, 2020). However, according to a recent report by the Ethiopia National Association of the Deaf (ENAD) in 2023, it is estimated that there are more than five million HI individuals in Ethiopia.

For hearing parents with hearing impaired children, the challenges extend beyond communication barriers within the household. These parents often find themselves navigating unfamiliar territory as they strive to understand and support their deaf children in a predominantly hearing world (Ching, 2016). The complexity of this familial dynamic highlights the importance of Early Intervention (EI) programs tailored to the unique needs of such families.

The impact of HI on Family Cohesion (FC) is multifaceted and can be influenced by various trigger factors. These trigger factors may include societal stigma and discrimination, lack of accessible educational and healthcare resources, financial strain due to the cost of specialized services and equipment, and communication barriers within the family and community (Punch & Hyde, 2011).

EI programs have been recognized as crucial in addressing the needs of children with HI and supporting their families. However, limited research has been conducted on their influence on FC, particularly in the context of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The driving force behind this research lies in the genuine commitment to shedding light on the obstacles faced by hearing parents in fostering effective communication and **FC** with their Hearing-Impaired children. This commitment stems from an acknowledgment of the pressing need for comprehensive insights into the intricacies of **EI** and its role in supporting families through this intricate terrain.

By anchoring this study in the lived experiences of hearing parents with deaf children and delving into observed gaps and trigger factors, the objective is to contribute to academic discourse and enhance practical support structures for families navigating the challenges presented by HI in this specific familial context

1.3, Statement of the Problem

The lack of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairments in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia significantly impedes their development and family cohesion. Without timely support, hearing-impaired individuals, especially those born deaf, face profound challenges throughout their formative years. This deficiency often results in a lack of confidence and skills necessary to navigate various aspects of life, impacting their ability to achieve milestones and participate fully in society.

Children's development is profoundly influenced by the guidance and feedback they receive from their parents, with the family serving as the primary growth environment (Ching, 2016). However, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, parents of children with Hearing Impairments (HI) face unique challenges in maintaining Family Cohesion (FC) due to limited access to Early Intervention (EI) programs (Gopinath, 2019; Daba, 2020). Despite efforts to implement such programs, there remains a critical gap in understanding their effectiveness and influence on family dynamics (Sahu, 2018).

Parental understanding and beliefs regarding the nature and causes of deafness significantly impact their interactions and treatment of their deaf child, thereby influencing FC (Amare, 2001). Misconceptions about disabilities, including deafness, often lead to challenges in understanding and caring for these children (Amare, 2001). Collaborative efforts among parents, communities, and professionals are essential to address these misconceptions and facilitate effective communication within families.

Furthermore, parents face the challenge of accepting the irreversibility of deafness, emphasizing the need for societal understanding to promote healthy development for HI children (Moores, 2001). Existing literature underscores the paramount importance of EI for language acquisition and holistic development in children with HI (Cole & Flexer, 2011; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2014).

Despite studies exploring EI programs for children with HI in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a significant gap exists in understanding the effectiveness of these programs and their influence on FC. While studies by Sahu (2018), Gopinath (2019), and Daba (2020) have provided insights into parental challenges and societal misconceptions impacting family dynamics, there remains a lack of comprehensive research evaluating the outcomes of EI programs specifically in terms of FC.

Additionally, research by Amare (2001) underscores the importance of parental understanding and societal acceptance of deafness in shaping family dynamics. However, empirical investigations into the relationship between parental engagement in EI activities and FC within households affected by HI are limited. Moreover, studies such as those by Cole and Flexer (2011) emphasize the critical role of EI in supporting language acquisition and holistic development in children with HI. Yet, the extent to which these programs contribute to overall FC remains underexplored in the literature.

Furthermore, research by Yoshinaga-Itano (2014) highlights the need for tailored interventions to optimize outcomes for children with hearing loss. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence examining the effectiveness of such interventions in fostering FC within the Ethiopian context.

This multifaceted gap in the literature underscores the necessity for further research to comprehensively evaluate the impact of EI programs on FC and to identify strategies for enhancing family support systems for children with HI in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Before this study, research has explored various aspects of family cohesion among families with children who have Hearing Impairments (HI). However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how Early Intervention (EI) programs specifically influence family dynamics in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. While previous studies have addressed parental challenges, societal misconceptions, and emphasized the importance of EI for child development, this thesis aims to contribute by conducting a focused investigation into how EI impacts family cohesion within the Ethiopian context.

The challenges faced by parents of HI children in Addis Ababa are profound and multifaceted, exacerbated by limited access to EI programs crucial for language acquisition and overall development. Additionally, societal misconceptions about deafness often impede parental understanding and support, further complicating family dynamics.

This study seeks to explore the complexities surrounding EI for HI children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by examining parental challenges, evaluating the effectiveness of existing EI programs, and exploring the relationship between parental engagement and family cohesion. Through this research, a comprehensive understanding of these issues will be developed, aiming to inform policies and interventions that better support affected families.

1.4. Objectives.

1.4.1. General objective

To investigate parental early intervention for children with hearing impairment and its influence for family cohesion

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1, To explore the existing early intervention programs implemented by parents of children with hearing impairment

2. To Investigate the relationship between parental engagement in early intervention activities for children with hearing impairment and family cohesion within households.

3.To Identify the main challenges faced by parents in implementing early intervention strategies for their children with hearing impairment.

1.5. Research question

1. How effective are the existing early intervention programs being implemented by parents of children with hearing impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia?

 2. What is the relationship between parental engagement in early intervention activities for children with hearing impairment and family cohesion within households in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**?**

3. What are the main challenges faced by parents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, when implementing early intervention strategies for their children with hearing impairment?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study holds significant promise for both children with hearing impairment and their parents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. By delving into the challenges faced by parents in implementing early intervention strategies, it aims to identify crucial areas where support systems and resources are lacking, thereby enhancing the quality of support available to these children. Moreover, by assessing the effectiveness of existing early intervention programs implemented by parents, the study can provide valuable insights into which strategies best promote the development and well-being of children with hearing impairment. This knowledge not only guides the refinement of existing programs but also facilitates the development of new initiatives that could serve as a model for similar communities, ultimately improving outcomes for these children.

Furthermore, the study seeks to investigate the relationship between parental engagement in early intervention activities and family cohesion within households. Understanding how parental involvement influences family dynamics is crucial for enhancing the overall well-being of children with hearing impairment and their families. By strengthening familial bonds and support systems, this understanding contributes to the development of holistic support services that address the comprehensive needs of the entire family unit. Ultimately, by empowering both children and parents and fostering a sense of unity within families, this study aims to significantly improve the quality of life and well-being of those navigating the unique journey of hearing impairment in Addis Ababa.

1.7, Scope of the Study

This study is conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on children aged up to 6 years with hearing impairment (HI) across various settings including deaf schools, community school the Ethiopian National Association for the Deaf, and participants' homes. The research spans a concise period, completed within thee months, to assess the effectiveness of Early Intervention (EI) programs and parental engagement (PE) in influencing family cohesion (FC) within these environments. The study also evaluates children's readiness for formal schooling and seeks to optimize resource allocation for interventions.

Methodology

Qualitative Research Methods (QRM): The study utilizes qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews (IDIs) and observations (OBS) to explore the complexities of EI programs and FC among parents of children with HI in Addis Ababa.

In-depth Interviews (IDIs): Conducted with parents in diverse settings including deaf schools, Alpha deaf school, community school,the Ethiopian National Association for the Deaf, and homes, IDIs allow for a deep exploration of parental experiences and perspectives on EI and family dynamics. Open-ended questions facilitate a personalized understanding of how EI impacts familial contexts.

Observations (OBS): OBS complement IDIs by providing firsthand insights into daily interactions within families across different settings. By immersing the researcher in natural environments, OBS documents communication patterns and interactions, revealing implicit influences of EI on family life.

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic Interactionism This sociological theory underpins the study's qualitative approach by emphasizing shared meanings, symbols, and social interactions in shaping human behavior.

Symbolic Interactionism guides the exploration of how parents attribute significance to their interactions within EI contexts. It illuminates how shared meanings and symbols influence family cohesion, offering insights into communication patterns and support dynamics among parents, children, and professionals.

1.8. Limitation of the study

One of the challenges encountered in this study was the difficulty in recruiting parents of children with hearing impairment for in-depth interviews. Despite efforts to reach out to potential participants through various channels, including schools and community organizations, the pool of eligible parents was limited. This challenge significantly impacted the sampling process.

The sampling process presented significant challenges due to the limited pool of eligible participants. The small population of parents of children with hearing impairment in Addis Ababa, coupled with inclusion criteria, constrained the ability to achieve a representative sample. As a result, the sample may not fully reflect the heterogeneity of experiences among parents in the community, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Analysing the qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews posed its own set of challenges. The richness and complexity of the narratives made data analysis time-consuming. Ensuring thorough and nuanced analysis required careful attention to detail and iterative refinement of coding frameworks.

Engaging participants and eliciting open and candid responses during interviews proved to be another methodological challenge. Some participants exhibited reticence or reluctance to share their experiences, possibly due to the sensitive nature of the topic or cultural barriers. Building rapport and trust with participants was essential but sometimes challenging, particularly when scheduling conflicts or other external factors interfered with interview sessions.

These methodological limitations underscore the complexities inherent in qualitative research, particularly when studying sensitive topics with a small sample size. Despite these challenges, efforts were made to address them through proactive recruitment strategies, meticulous data analysis techniques, and ongoing reflexivity in the research process. Recognizing and transparently discussing these limitations is crucial for contextualizing the findings and informing future research endeavours in this area.

1.9 Definition of terms

Early Intervention (EI): Early intervention involves timely and targeted services provided to children with hearing impairments and their families during the critical developmental period from birth to six years old. These services are initiated promptly upon identification of hearing impairment, aiming to mitigate developmental delays, enhance communication skills, support cognitive growth, and foster social-emotional well-being (Dettman, 2020; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2010).

Family Cohesion (FC): Family cohesion operationalizes as the measurable extent of emotional closeness, mutual support, and shared activities among family members, including parents and children with hearing impairments. It encompasses observable interactions, emotional connections, and collaborative efforts within the family unit that contribute to a cohesive and supportive environment for the child's development (García-Vázquez, 2020; Olson, 1983).

Hearing Impaired Children (HIC): Hearing impaired children are individuals experiencing varying degrees of hearing loss, affecting their auditory processing and communication abilities. This term encompasses children with mild to profound hearing impairments, necessitating specialized support for language development and social integration to facilitate their overall development (Leviton, 2017; World Health Organization, 2021).

Parental Engagement: Parental engagement operationally defines as the active involvement, commitment, and collaborative participation of parents in their children's educational, developmental, and social experiences. It includes parents' proactive participation in early intervention programs, advocacy efforts for their child's needs, and active engagement in decision-making processes related to their child's well-being (Easterbrooks, 2013; Brown & Woods, 2015).

These operational definitions emphasize the practical application and measurable aspects of each term within the context of supporting children with hearing impairments and enhancing family cohesion through early intervention strategies. They focus on the actions and outcomes associated with early intervention, family dynamics, the characteristics of hearing impairment, and parental involvement, providing clarity for research and practical implementation in related fields.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature review

2.1. Introduction

Parental involvement (PI) in early intervention (EI) programs for children with hearing impairment (HI) is crucial for optimizing developmental outcomes and promoting family cohesion. Research suggests that early intervention can significantly impact the language acquisition, social skills, and overall well-being of children with HI Abebe,(2018). However, the effectiveness of EI programs depends largely on the level of parental involvement and support (Tadesse, 2016).

2.2. Definitions and Conceptualizations

Early Intervention Programs: Early Intervention Programs refer to systematic and targeted services designed for children with hearing impairment and their families during critical developmental stages. These programs aim to optimize language acquisition, social skills, and overall well-being through interventions such as auditory rehabilitation, speech therapy, sign language instruction, and parental education. Effective early intervention begins ideally before six months of age, leveraging the developmental plasticity of young children to achieve optimal outcomes (Dettman, 2020; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2010).

Family Cohesion: Family Cohesion denotes the emotional bonding, mutual support, and sense of unity among family members, including parents and children with hearing impairment. It encompasses shared activities, values, and emotional connections that contribute to a supportive and resilient family environment. Strong family cohesion is vital for promoting adaptive coping strategies and enhancing the overall well-being of children with hearing impairment and their families (García-Vázquez, 2020; Olson, 1983).

Parental Engagement in Early Intervention: Parental Engagement in Early Intervention refers to the active participation, involvement, and collaboration of parents in their children's early intervention programs. This involvement includes parents' roles in decision-making,

advocacy efforts, and interactions with professionals to support their child's developmental progress effectively. Studies emphasize that high levels of parental engagement positively influence family dynamics, communication patterns, and overall family cohesion (Easterbrooks, 2013; Brown & Woods, 2015).

Challenges in Implementing Early Intervention Strategies: Challenges in Implementing Early Intervention Strategies encompass various socio-economic, cultural, and logistical barriers that parents of children with hearing impairment face when accessing and participating in early intervention programs. These challenges may include financial constraints, limited access to specialized services, cultural beliefs about disability, stigma, and geographic disparities in service availability. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of early intervention programs and supporting families in promoting optimal development for their children (Sarant & Garrard, 2014; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2003).

Effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment

Research in Ethiopia highlights the importance of early identification and intervention for children with hearing impairment (HI). Comprehensive programs encompass auditory rehabilitation, speech therapy, sign language instruction, and parent education to optimize outcomes Desta, (2015).

Auditory Rehabilitation and Speech Therapy

Auditory rehabilitation focuses on maximizing the use of residual hearing and assistive devices, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, to enhance auditory perception and speech understanding in children with HI. This component of early intervention aims to develop and strengthen auditory skills, including sound detection, discrimination, and comprehension (Ching, 2017). Speech therapy plays a complementary role by targeting speech and language development, addressing challenges such as articulation, phonological awareness, and language comprehension (Estabrooks, 2013).

Sign Language and Parent Education

For children who primarily use sign language for communication, early exposure to sign language is essential. Sign language instruction aims to facilitate language development, social interaction, and cognitive functioning in children with HI. Additionally, parent education programs provide caregivers with information and strategies to support their child's communication and overall development effectively (Lederberg & Spencer, 2009; Moeller, 2010).

Early Intervention Services

Research consistently highlights the critical importance of early intervention for children with HI. Ideally, intervention should begin before six months of age to capitalize on the developmental plasticity of the auditory system and maximize outcomes in language acquisition and social interaction (Yoshinaga-Itano, 2003).

Integrated Approaches

Some early intervention programs adopt integrated approaches that combine elements of various interventions to address individual needs comprehensively. These holistic programs recognize that children with HI may benefit from a combination of auditory, visual, and tactile communication modalities. By tailoring interventions to each child's unique profile and promoting family involvement, integrated approaches aim to optimize outcomes across multiple domains and foster a supportive environment for children and their families (Davidson & Lillo-Martin, 2017).

In summary, early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment in Ethiopia encompass a range of components aimed at promoting optimal development and well-being. By addressing diverse needs, leveraging early identification, and promoting family involvement, these programs play a critical role in maximizing outcomes for children with HI and their families.

2.3. Theoretical Perspectives

Symbolic Interactionism in Understanding Parental Engagement and Family Cohesion

Symbolic Interactionism offers another insightful theoretical perspective for examining the dynamics of parental engagement and its impact on family cohesion within the context of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment. This theory focuses on how individuals construct meaning through social interactions and symbols, emphasizing the importance of shared understandings and interpretations in shaping human behaviour.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, parental engagement in early intervention activities can be seen as a process of shared meaning-making within the family. Studies by Adams (2020) highlight how parents and children with hearing impairment negotiate meanings and interpretations of their experiences through everyday interactions. These interactions, whether verbal or non-verbal, shape family dynamics and contribute to the construction of familial identity and cohesion.

Symbolic Interactionism also sheds light on communication patterns within the family unit. Research by Brown et al. (2019) underscores how symbolic gestures, such as sign language, serve as powerful tools for communication and expression within families of children with hearing impairment. These studies highlight the role of symbols in facilitating understanding, empathy, and connection among family members, thereby fostering a supportive and cohesive family environment.

Moreover, Symbolic Interactionism elucidates how parental engagement influences family roles and identities. Studies by Williams (2016)   explore how parents of children with hearing impairment negotiate their roles and identities within the family, drawing on symbolic meanings attributed to caregiving and advocacy. These studies demonstrate how parental engagement shapes family narratives and identities, contributing to a sense of purpose, belonging, and cohesion.

By integrating Symbolic Interactionism into the study of parental engagement and family cohesion, researchers can uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in everyday interactions and practices within families of children with hearing impairment. This theoretical perspective provides a rich framework for understanding how parents and children co-

construct their realities, navigate challenges, and forge meaningful connections within the family unit (Adams, 2020; Brown, 2019; Williams, 2016).

Symbolic Interactionism offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics of parental engagement and family cohesion in the context of raising children with hearing impairment. By examining the symbolic meanings attributed to parental involvement, communication patterns, and family roles, researchers can develop holistic interventions and support systems that promote positive outcomes for both children and their families (Adams, 2020; Brown, 2019; Williams, 2016).

2.4.1. Effectiveness of Early Intervention Programs

Research from international contexts has contributed valuable insights into the effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment. Studies conducted by Johnson e (2019) and Smith and Jones (2017) have demonstrated the positive impact of early identification and intervention on language outcomes and overall development in children with hearing impairment. These international studies underscore the importance of comprehensive intervention strategies tailored to meet the diverse needs of children and their families.

In the context of Ethiopia, the effectiveness of early intervention programs tailored to the unique needs of children with hearing impairment. Studies conducted by Abebe (2018) and Desta (2015) have underscored the significance of early identification and intervention in improving language outcomes among Ethiopian children with hearing impairment. These studies emphasize the need for comprehensive intervention strategies that address various aspects of child development, including language acquisition, social skills, and academic performance, within the Ethiopian context.

Central to the success of early intervention programs is the inclusion of tailored services designed to meet the diverse needs of children with hearing impairment and their families. Tadesse (2016) highlights the importance of individualized intervention approaches that encompass auditory rehabilitation, speech therapy, sign language instruction, and parent education. Such comprehensive programs aim to optimize language development, communication skills, and overall cognitive functioning in children with hearing loss.

2.4.2. Parental Engagement and Family cohesion

Studies have explored the intricate relationship between parental engagement and family dynamics. Studies by Crowe, Marschark, and Dammeyer (2017) conducted qualitative interviews with families of children with hearing impairment. Their findings revealed that active parental involvement in early intervention activities not only fostered positive family relationships but also enhanced parental confidence in supporting their child's development. These engaged parents were more likely to collaborate with other family members and share responsibilities related to managing the challenges associated with hearing impairment, contributing to a more harmonious family environment.

Parental engagement also exerts a significant influence on communication patterns within the family. Research by Stika(2015) suggests that families who engage in regular communication about their child's progress in intervention programs exhibit more open and supportive communication styles. These families are more likely to engage in discussions about their child's needs, progress, and challenges, fostering an environment of mutual understanding and empathy. Additionally, Tucci and Merson (2015) found that active parental involvement fosters effective communication between parents and professionals, leading to collaborative decision-making and improved outcomes for the child with hearing impairment.

Several studies have explored the broader impact of parental engagement on overall family functioning. For instance, Parving and Hauch (2016) conducted a longitudinal study examining the effects of parental involvement in cochlear implant rehabilitation on family well-being. They discovered that families who actively participated in rehabilitation programs reported higher levels of family satisfaction and adaptive coping strategies. Similarly, Davidson and Lillo-Martin (2017) highlight the role of parental engagement in promoting resilience and family cohesion in the face of challenges associated with raising a child with hearing impairment. Active parental involvement not only enhances the child's development but also strengthens the family's ability to navigate obstacles together, fostering a sense of unity and support.

Studies by Hailemariam and Assefa (2019) emphasize the significance of addressing the psychosocial needs of parents within the context of early intervention. When parents receive adequate support for their mental health and coping strategies, they are better equipped to

navigate the challenges associated with raising a child with hearing impairment, ultimately contributing to improved family cohesion. Additionally, research conducted by Dammeyer (2010) indicates a positive correlation between parental engagement in early intervention programs and family cohesion. Actively involved parents tend to exhibit more effective communication patterns, emotional support, and overall family well-being compared to less engaged counterparts. By participating in intervention activities, parents strengthen their bond with their child, enhance their communication skills, and develop problem-solving strategies that promote positive family dynamics.

Research conducted in Ethiopia, such as that by Tesfaye (2019), underscores the crucial role of parental involvement in early intervention programs for promoting family cohesion and well-being. Higher levels of parental engagement are associated with improved communication patterns, emotional support, and overall family functioning. This suggests that when parents actively participate in intervention activities, such as therapy sessions and educational programs, they contribute significantly to strengthening family bonds and fostering a supportive family environment.

Active involvement in early intervention programs often leads to increased parental satisfaction and bonding with the child. According to Calderon & Greenberg (2011), parents who play an active role in supporting their child's development report greater confidence and competence in their parenting abilities. Additionally, the shared experience of navigating the challenges of hearing impairment can strengthen the bond between parents and their child, fostering a sense of closeness and connection within the family unit.

Family-cantered intervention approaches prioritize the needs and preferences of the family unit, resulting in improved communication patterns. As highlighted by DesJardin (2014), involving parents in decision-making processes and intervention planning helps develop effective communication strategies within the family. Through collaborative efforts, parents become more attuned to their child's needs, leading to more open and supportive communication channels among family members.

Active participation in early intervention programs equips parents with essential problem-solving skills necessary for addressing the challenges associated with raising a child with hearing impairment. As noted by Calderon & Greenberg (2011), parents learn to navigate obstacles proactively, acquiring coping strategies and communication techniques along the

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way. Through collaborative problem-solving efforts, families build resilience and strengthen their bonds, fostering a supportive and adaptive family environment.

The collective impact of parental engagement in early intervention extends to the overall well-being of the family unit. According to DesJardin (2014), actively engaging in their child's intervention program demonstrates parents' commitment to supporting their child's development, leading to a shared sense of purpose and collaboration within the family. This mutual support and understanding contribute to a positive family environment characterized by resilience, cohesion, and satisfaction with familial roles.

In summary, parental involvement in early intervention programs plays a pivotal role in promoting family cohesion and well-being. By prioritizing the needs of the family unit, professionals can empower parents to create a supportive and adaptive environment for children with hearing impairment.

2.4.3. Challenges Faced by Parents in Implementing Early Intervention

The challenges parents encounter in implementing early intervention strategies for children with hearing impairment are multifaceted and often rooted in socio-economic barriers and cultural beliefs. Socio-economic constraints, such as limited financial resources, hinder families' ability to afford therapy sessions, specialized equipment like hearing aids, and transportation to appointments (World Health Organization, 2010). Consequently, families experience heightened stress and strain, impacting their overall well-being and family cohesion (Sarant& Garrard, 2014).

Accessing early intervention services poses significant challenges due to a shortage of qualified professionals, particularly in rural or underserved areas (Yoshinaga-Itano, 2003). Families residing in such regions encounter long waitlists and high demand for services in urban areas, leading to delays in receiving essential care (Fitzpatrick, 2019). Without timely intervention, children miss critical opportunities for language and cognitive development, exacerbating existing challenges faced by families.

Cultural attitudes and beliefs about disability significantly influence families' decisions to seek early intervention services for their child (Easterbrooks & Stoner, 2008). In certain cultures, disability may be stigmatized or perceived as a punishment for past deeds (Dammeyer, 2010). Consequently, families may hesitate to seek support due to fear of

judgment or societal backlash, impacting their willingness to engage in intervention services and exacerbating feelings of isolation.

Children with hearing impairment and their families often confront stigma and discrimination across various contexts, including school, healthcare, and the community (Kushalnagar, 2010). Negative attitudes and misconceptions about hearing loss can lead to social exclusion, bullying, and feelings of isolation among children and their families (Fellinger, 2012). These experiences erode trust in support systems and create barriers to accessing necessary services, further impacting family cohesion and well-being.

In summary, the challenges associated with accessing early intervention services for children with hearing impairment are deeply entrenched in socio-economic disparities, limited access to qualified professionals, cultural beliefs, and experiences of stigma and discrimination. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that considers the unique needs of families and fosters a supportive environment conducive to positive outcomes for children with hearing impairment.

2.5. Contextual Factorsin Addis Ababa

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, socioeconomic factors such as poverty and income inequality significantly affect families' access to early intervention services for children with hearing impairment. According to the World Bank, Ethiopia has a high poverty rate, with approximately 23.5% of the population living below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2021). This economic disparity impacts families' ability to afford healthcare services, including early intervention for children with hearing impairment. Research by Tamirat (2019) highlights the financial challenges faced by families in accessing specialized healthcare services, particularly in low-income urban areas.

Cultural norms and beliefs surrounding disability play a significant role in shaping families' attitudes towards hearing impairment and early intervention. According to Leigh (2008), cultural attitudes towards disability in Ethiopian society may vary widely, influencing families' perceptions of their children's hearing loss. Some cultural beliefs may stigmatize disability or attribute it to supernatural causes, leading to reluctance in seeking support from healthcare professionals. Additionally, research by Woldemariam (2015) emphasizes the

importance of addressing cultural beliefs and taboos to promote awareness and understanding of disability within the community.

The capacity of the healthcare system in Addis Ababa significantly affects the delivery of early intervention services for children with hearing impairment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Ethiopia faces challenges in healthcare infrastructure and workforce capacity, particularly in rural areas (WHO, 2021). Shortages of audiologists, speech therapists, and other specialized professionals may result in long wait times for assessments and interventions, delaying children's access to critical support services. Furthermore, research by Tamirat (2019) highlights the limited resources and infrastructure in rural areas, which may impede families' ability to access specialized services.

In rural areas of Addis Ababa, families face unique challenges in accessing early intervention services for children with hearing impairment. Limited infrastructure, including healthcare facilities and transportation networks, may impede families' ability to access specialized services in urban centres. According to a study by Tamirat (2019), families living in remote rural areas may have to travel long distances to access assessment and intervention services, increasing the burden of care and financial strain. Additionally, shortages of trained professionals in rural areas may result in inadequate support for children with hearing impairment, limiting their opportunities for early intervention and optimal development.

In conclusion, contextual factors such as socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, healthcare system capacity, and challenges in rural areas significantly impact families' access to early intervention services for children with hearing impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Addressing these factors requires a holistic approach that considers the complex interplay of social, cultural, and economic factors influencing families' experiences. By promoting awareness, investing in infrastructure and training, and fostering partnerships between communities and healthcare providers, stakeholders can work towards overcoming barriers to service provision and improving outcomes for children with hearing impairment and their families.

2.6. Empirical Review

Exploring Existing Early Intervention Programs Implemented by Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment

Several studies have investigated the landscape of early intervention programs tailored for children with hearing impairment, focusing on the role of parental involvement. Research has described various programs designed to address the diverse needs of these children and their families. These programs often encompass a range of services, including auditory rehabilitation, speech therapy, sign language instruction, and parent education (Adams, 2020; Brown , 2019; Williams, 2016). Studies have highlighted the importance of individualized approaches that cater to the unique needs of each child and family. Moreover, early initiation of intervention services, ideally before six months of age, has been consistently emphasized as crucial for optimal outcomes in language acquisition and social interaction among children with hearing impairment (Adams, 2020; Williams, 2016).

Investigating the Relationship Between Parental Engagement in Early Intervention Activities for Children with Hearing Impairment and Family Cohesion Within Households

Empirical evidence suggests a strong link between parental engagement in early intervention activities and family cohesion within households with children with hearing impairment. Studies have found that active parental involvement fosters positive family relationships, enhances communication patterns, and promotes shared responsibility for managing the challenges associated with hearing impairment (Brown, 2019; Williams, 2016). Additionally, parents who actively participate in their child's intervention demonstrate greater satisfaction and bonding with their child, contributing to a supportive family environment. The literature underscores the importance of recognizing and fostering parental engagement as a key factor in promoting family cohesion and well-being (Adams, 2020; Williams, 2016).

Identifying and Analyzing the Main Challenges Faced by Parents in Implementing Early Intervention Strategies for Their Children with Hearing Impairment

Research has identified several challenges faced by parents in implementing early intervention strategies for their children with hearing impairment. Socio-economic constraints, such as limited financial resources and access to qualified professionals, pose significant barriers to accessing essential services (Brown, 2019; Williams, 2016). Additionally, cultural beliefs and experiences of stigma and discrimination may influence families' decisions to seek support for their child (Adams, 2020; Williams, 2016). Moreover,

challenges in rural areas, including limited infrastructure and shortages of trained professionals, exacerbate difficulties in accessing timely intervention (Brown, 2019; Williams, 2016). Understanding and addressing these challenges are critical for designing effective interventions and support systems that meet the diverse needs of families raising children with hearing impairment

CHAPTER THREE

REASERCH METHODS

3.1. Study Area

Addis Ababa, the vibrant and rapidly growing capital city of Ethiopia, serves as the backdrop for this research on the challenges faced by hearing parents of children with hearing impairment.

Socioeconomically, Addis Ababa is a dynamic hub with a diverse population engaged in various activities. From traditional markets reflecting the city's rich cultural heritage to modern commercial centers, the city's economic activities are multifaceted (Central Statistical Agency [Ethiopia], 2020). Additionally, the population comprises diverse ethnic groups, contributing to the city's cultural richness (Lefort, 2014).

Understanding the sociogeographic context of Addis Ababa is crucial for the study's scope. The city's rapid urbanization may pose specific challenges for families with hearing-impaired children, impacting access to services and community support networks (United Nations, 2018). The cultural diversity and socioeconomic activities shape the dynamics of family life, influencing the challenges encountered by hearing parents in effectively supporting their deaf children (Hagos & Yimer, 2021).

The city's distinct characteristics provide a rich context for exploring the challenges within hearing-impaired families, examining the effectiveness of early intervention programs, and understanding the intricacies of social support mechanisms. By delving into the heart of Addis Ababa, this research aims to contribute insights that resonate with the local context, fostering the development of targeted interventions to support families with hearing-impaired children in this dynamic urban landscape.

3.2. Research Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm, also known as interpretivism or constructivism, is a philosophical framework within social science research that emphasizes understanding human experiences

through subjective interpretation rather than objective measurement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

This serves as the guiding framework for the qualitative research. Within this paradigm, the researcher delves into the intricate tapestry of human experiences, emphasizing subjectivity, meaning-making, and contextual understanding. As the researcher engages with parents navigating early intervention programs, aim to illuminate their unique perspectives and interactions.

The research design aligns with qualitative methods. In-depth interviews allowed parents to share their joys, struggles, and coping mechanisms. Participant observation during early intervention sessions will reveal unspoken dynamics—the glances exchanged, the shared smiles, and the silent worries. Through these methods, aim to capture the essence of family cohesion.

3.3. Research Design

The research employ an exploratory research design (ERD) to investigate the intricate relationship between "Early Intervention Programs (EI) and their Influence on Family Cohesion (FC) among Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment (HI)". This design is selected to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with the research questions, allowing for flexibility in data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2013)..

The choice of an ERD is driven by the need to understand complex phenomena within the study's context. This design permits an in-depth investigation into the dynamics between EI programs and FC, providing a nuanced perspective on the experiences of hearing parents and deaf children in Addis Ababa. By employing methods such as in-depth interviews (IDIs), and observations, this design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with the research questions. It permits researchers to capture diverse perspectives and adapt to emerging insights during the course of the study, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the experiences of both hearing parents and deaf children in the specific context of Addis Ababa.

The flexibility offered by the ERD in data collection methods aligns with the study's intention to capture diverse perspectives. Through methods such as IDIs, and observations, the research can adapt to emerging insights during the course of the study, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the design supports the generation of insights, and patterns. By employing open-ended questioning and qualitative data analysis (QDA), the research aims to uncover factors influencing FC and assess the effectiveness of EI programs.

The design's contextual sensitivity is crucial for a culturally diverse setting like Addis Ababa. It allows the research to delve into the specific context, acknowledging the cultural, social, and economic factors that shape the experiences of families dealing with HI in this particular locale.

3.4. Research Approach

This research employed a qualitative research approach. The choice of a qualitative approach is driven by the need to explore the rich, subjective experiences of hearing parents and hearing-impaired children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Creswell, 2013) .

In the culturally diverse and dynamic setting of Addis Ababa, the qualitative approach aligns with the study's goal of contextual sensitivity. This method enables an exploration of how cultural, social, and economic factors uniquely shape the effectiveness of early intervention programs and contribute to or hinder family cohesion. Qualitative research is adept at recognizing and understanding the nuances of the local context.

Through indepth interview qualitative data analysis, the study seeks to uncover patterns, themes, and factors influencing family cohesion. This approach allows for flexibility in adapting the research design as emerging insights shape the trajectory of the investigation.

Moreover, the qualitative approach's participant-centric focus aligns with the study's intention to amplify the voices and perspectives of hearing parents and deaf children. In a study of this nature, understanding the narratives, beliefs, and emotions of the participants is paramount, and qualitative methods provide a platform for participants to share their stories authentically.

3.5. Type and Source of Data

The research followed a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a phenomenological approach, centering on primary data collected directly from parents of children with hearing impairment. This targeted strategy aims to delve into the nuanced experiences and challenges hearing parents and deaf children regarding early intervention programs and their influence on family cohesion. Qualitative methods allow for in-depth exploration of complex phenomena, offering rich insights that quantitative methods may not fully capture.

Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews, providing a platform for parents to articulate their personal narratives and insights. The participant pool wererecruited from local community centres, schools, and organizations supporting families with hearing-impaired children in Addis Ababa, this approach allowed for more nuanced analysis of the challenges and dynamics within families of children with hearing impairment, which may not be fully captured through secondary data sources alone.

To maintain the quality of primary data, the researcher emphasized cultural sensitivity. Participant selection was carefully considered to ensure a diverse representation of experiences within the target group. The data collection processprioritize establishing a safe and comfortable environment, fostering trust between the researchers and participants.

This primary data collection approach seeks to provide an authentic and in-depth exploration of their perspectives. This focused strategy aims to enrich the research with firsthand insights, offering a profound understanding of the impact of early intervention programs on family cohesion within the specific cultural context of Addis Ababa.

3.6.Sampling Design

3.6.1. Population and Sample

This qualitative phenomenological study aims to deeply explore the lived experiences of hearing parents raising deaf children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Phenomenological research seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, emphasizing subjective interpretations and meanings rather than quantitative measurements. The choice of a qualitative approach is deliberate, focusing on capturing the richness and complexity of these experiences within the urban context of Addis Ababa.

Phenomenological study aims to uncover the essence of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by individuals. It explores how people interpret and make sense of their experiences, emphasizing subjective perspectives and meanings rather than objective measurements or generalizations. In this research, phenomenological inquiry allows for an in-depth exploration of how hearing parents of deaf children navigate their unique circumstances in Addis Ababa, shedding light on their personal narratives, challenges, and coping mechanisms.

The sampling strategy employed in this study is purposive sampling, which intentionally selects participants based on their ability to provide rich and diverse insights into the research topic. Criteria for participant selection include being hearing parents actively involved in raising deaf children in Addis Ababa. This approach ensures that participants have direct experiences relevant to the study's objectives, enabling a thorough exploration of the urban dynamics and cultural contexts influencing their experiences.

3.6.2.Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this qualitative phenomenological study is 12 participants. This number has been chosen to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of individual experiences while ensuring a diverse range of perspectives within the target population. Qualitative research, particularly phenomenological studies, emphasizes depth over breadth in data collection. The decision to select 12 participants aligns with this emphasis on delving deeply into the richness and complexity of participants' lived experiences.

The decision to adopt a qualitative phenomenological design inherently prioritizes depth over breadth in data collection. Therefore, the chosen sample size aligns with this emphasis on exploring the richness and complexity of participants' lived experiences. Additionally, the selection of this sample size is guided by the need to prioritize data saturation. Data saturation refers to the point in data collection where no new information or themes emerge, indicating that the depth and breadth of experiences relevant to the research objectives have been adequately captured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Several factors have been taken into account in determining the appropriate sample size for this study. These factors include the complexity of the research topic, the depth of analysis required to explore participants' lived experiences, and practical constraints such as time, resources, and access to participants. By carefully considering these factors, the selected 12 participants deemed sufficient to achieve the study's objectives while also ensuring the rigor and validity of the research findings.

3.7. Methods of Data Collection

In-depth interviews

the researcher engaged participants in in-deapth , allowing them to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences freely. Probing questions were utilized to explore topics in detail and uncover underlying meanings. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and confidential setting, based on the participants' choise some of them are on the organizations were I found them, some are on their homes and another location of their choice. Field notes were taken during and after each interview to capture important details, such as participants' body language, tone of voice, and any other non-verbal cues. These notes helped contextualize the verbal responses and provided valuable insights into the participants' demeanor and emotional states.

Field notes and observations

During the observations, the researcher actively engaged in immersing themselves in the natural settings of organizations, participants' homes and other relevant locations within Addis Ababa. The researcher observed daily interactions within families, paying close attention to communication patterns, emotional dynamics, and subtle nuances of behavior. Observations were conducted without interrupting or interfering with the participants' activities, ensuring the authenticity of the observed interactions.Field notes were taken meticulously during and after each observation session to document key details and insights. These notes included descriptions of the participants' actions and reactions.

The integration process allowed for the validation of themes and patterns across different data sources, enhancing the credibility and richness of findings. Themes such as parental engagement, emotional support dynamics, and challenges faced in accessing services were

explored through a multi-dimensional lens, offering nuanced insights into the complex realities of families raising children with hearing impairments in Addis Ababa.

This integrated approach ensured that findings were grounded in both participant perspectives and observed behaviors, contributing to a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of early intervention programs in promoting family cohesion within the Ethiopian context

3.8. Data Collection Procedures

The preparatory phase involves developing an informed consent form, obtaining ethical approval, and establishing initial contact with potential participants through community organizations. The recruitment and selection process emphasize clear communication of the study's objectives and obtaining written consent from participants selected using purposive sampling based on diversity in experiences within the urban setting of Addis Ababa.

Interview sessions are done to facilitate one-on-one in-depth interviews at locations chosen by participants, ensuring comfort and privacy.

Field notes and observations are taken during and after interviews, providing contextual information and capturing non-verbal cues, contributing to the holistic understanding of participants' experiences. The data analysis phase involves transcribing recordings, using thematic analysis to identify patterns, and maintaining an audit trail for transparency and rigor.

Data analysis

The data analysis process involved a systematic examination and interpretation of the qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews and observations. This analysis aimed to uncover patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the research questions and objectives.

The analysis commenced with transcription of the recorded interviews, ensuring an accurate representation of participants' responses and perspectives. Transcripts were then reviewed multiple times to familiarize the researcher with the data and identify initial impressions and themes.

Next, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes across the data. This involved coding the data, whereby segments of text were systematically labelled with descriptive codes representing key ideas or concepts. These codes were then organized into broader themes, reflecting commonalities and variations in participants' experiences and perspectives.

Throughout the analysis process, the researcher-maintained reflexivity, acknowledging their own biases and preconceptions, and ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the data. Any discrepancies or divergent interpretations were discussed with peers or supervisors to enhance the rigor and validity of the analysis.

Finally, the identified themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative, providing insights and conclusions relevant to the research questions. This process involved examining the relationships between themes, identifying overarching patterns, and contextualizing findings within existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

Overall, the data analysis process facilitated a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives regarding early intervention programs and family cohesion in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Through rigorous analysis and interpretation, the study generated valuable insights that contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform future research, policy, and practice in this area.

3.9. Trustworthiness

In this study, the researcher focus was on understanding the challenges faced by parents and assessing the impact of these programs on communication skills and family cohesion. To achieve this, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with parents of children with hearing impairment. These interviews provided valuable insights into parents' perspectives, coping mechanisms, and communication strategies. Interview questions covered a range of topics like challenges, emotional experiences, and interactions within the family, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of these families.

In addition to in-depth interviews, the researcher takes time and spent observing families during early intervention sessions, home visits, and organizations. These observations allowed for firsthand witnessing of communication practices, family dynamics, and the effectiveness of intervention strategies in real-world settings. By immersing in the natural

environment of these families, rich data was captured that complemented the insights gained from the interviews. This multi-method approach enhanced the depth and richness of the findings.

Upon collecting data from in-depth interviews and participant observation, the researcher proceeded with rigorous data analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed, and thematic coding was utilized to identify patterns and themes within the data. This systematic approach enabled organization and making sense of the vast amount of qualitative data collected during the study. Constant comparison across interviews and observations further enriched the understanding by allowing for identification of similarities and differences across participants and contexts.

To enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the researcher combining insights from both in-depth interviews and participant observation. By triangulating data from multiple sources, cross-validation of findings and mitigation of potential biases that may arise from using a single data collection method were possible. This comprehensive approach ensured that interpretations were robust and grounded in the lived experiences of the participants. Triangulation also provided a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment and the challenges faced by their families in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

3.10. Ethical Consideration

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, ensuring voluntary participation is crucial. Parents should have the autonomy to decide whether they want to share their experiences with early intervention programs.

Parents should be fully informed about the study's objectives, potential benefits, and any risks involved. Obtaining informed consent is essential, especially when discussing personal experiences related to hearing impairment and family dynamics.

Protecting the identity of participants is vital, particularly when discussing family matters and experiences with hearing impairment. Anonymizing data and maintaining confidentiality foster trust among participants.

Given the emotional nature of the topic, there is potential for participants to experience distress. Acknowledging and addressing potential harm, offering support services, and ensuring open communication channels are important to mitigate any adverse effects.

Clear communication about how the results were shared and used is crucial. Participants should be aware of the intended dissemination and can provide feedback on the findings, ensuring their perspectives are accurately represented.

As research progresses, continuously reviewing and adapting ethical considerations were essential. This iterative process allows for adjustments based on evolving circumstances and emerging ethical concerns.

CHAPTER FOUR

<mark>FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AND DISCUSSION</mark>

Introduction

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Through a qualitative research approach involving in-depth interviews and participant observation, the researcher sought to understand the challenges faced by parents and assess the impact of these programs on communication skills and family cohesion.

In this study, the researcher interviewed 12 guardians with different backgroud and observed a significant trend among them, revealing that a notable portion enroll their children in formal early intervention programs tailored for hearing-impaired (HI) individuals. Similarly, an equal number did not engage with any organization offering such services, indicating a prevalent lack of formal support within the sample.

Within the subset of parents who did not avail themselves of formal early intervention programs, two distinct approaches surfaced. One parent pursued an unconventional path, seeking assistance from deaf neighbors, while another parent adopted a proactive stance, utilizing social media platforms and actively reaching out to available services. These qualitative insights underscore the diverse strategies parents employ when seeking support for their children with HI.

Conversely, among parents who sought assistance from organizations, patterns were evident. Some accessed support from entities such as Mekanisa Deaf School, Alpha deaf school, the National Deaf Association, and community School, demonstrating reliance on formal channels for intervention programs.

This exploration of parental approaches, drawn from interviews the researcher conducted, sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by families of children with HI in Addis Ababa, emphasizing the need for inclusive and accessible interventions tailored to the unique needs of this population.

4.1. Effectiveness of Early Intervention

Understanding the effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment is crucial for enhancing their developmental outcomes and improving their quality of life. In this qualitative study, the researcher aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs by exploring the changes observed by parents in their children following participation in early intervention. By gathering rich, qualitative data through in-depth interviews, and observation,through this approach, the researcher aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of early intervention programs from the perspective of those directly involved

Findings on the Effectiveness of Early Intervention Programs for Children with Hearing Impairment

Emphasis on Sign Language Support and Communication Skills Development

Parents from Mekanisa Deaf School, Alpha Deaf School, and programs offered by the National Deaf Association have lauded the emphasis placed on sign language support and accessible education. One parent shared, *"We appreciated the focus on sign language support. Our child's confidence has improved significantly."* This highlights how these programs prioritize sign language education, which has a profound impact on the children's confidence and communication skills.

The provision of free sign language education for families has been particularly beneficial, as it enhances communication within the household and strengthens familial bonds. As another parent mentioned,

> *"At Mekanisa Deaf School, we're thankful for the emphasis on sign language support and the holistic approach to education. Our children's confidence has soared, thanks to the focus on communication within the program. The free sign language education for families on weekends is an incredible bonus."*

This demonstrates how such initiatives not only benefit the children but also involve and empower the entire family.

Moreover, the use of sign language not only improves communication between children and their families but also facilitates effective communication between educators and students, creating a conducive learning environment. As observed by the researcher, educators proficient in sign language at these schools can easily communicate with students, fostering an inclusive atmosphere where students feel supported and valued. This highlights the pivotal role of sign language in enhancing communication and overall learning outcomes for children with hearing impairment.

Psychological and Emotional Support

Parents expressed deep appreciation for the psychological and emotional support provided by schools and programs, recognizing its significant impact on their and their children's emotional well-being. One parent shared,

> *"When I first came to this school to register my child, I was very emotional. The school principals gave me psychological support, and my child's psychology provided alongside sign language was immensely beneficial not only for my child's emotional well-being but also for me."*

This underscores how the supportive environment created by these institutions extends beyond academic support to encompass emotional well-being.

The supportive guidance offered by these programs has been instrumental in helping parents navigate the emotional challenges associated with raising a child with hearing impairment. Parents highlighted how such support fosters resilience and family cohesion, ultimately contributing to a more supportive and nurturing family environment. As one parent emphasized,

> *"As parents, attending the sign language classes offered by Mekanisa Deaf School has been invaluable. Not only have we learned how to better communicate with our child, but it has also deepened our understanding of their world. Being able to converse fluently in sign language has strengthened our bond with our child and has made us feel more connected as a family."*

This illustrates how the emotional support provided by these programs strengthens familial bonds and enhances overall family well-being.

Furthermore, families participating in the Deaf Family program noted significant improvements in their children's social interactions and friendships, attributing these positive changes to the supportive familial environment. A parent remarked,

> *"I feel incredibly fortunate to have neighbours who not only communicate effectively with my child but also go above and beyond by dedicating time to teach her sign language. Their support and involvement have truly made a significant difference in our lives."*

This demonstrates how the supportive network created by such programs not only benefits the children directly but also enriches the entire family's social interactions and relationships.

Challenges in Environments with Limited Sign Language Emphasis

In hearing schools where there was a lack of emphasis on sign language education, significant challenges in communication between teachers and students with hearing impairment were observed. Limited emphasis on sign language education resulted in ineffective communication and frustration for both students and educators. One parent expressed dissatisfaction, indicating potential shortcomings in the program's effectiveness, stating,

> *"My child joined this school before six months ago, but the program not emphasized sign language. She doesn't know how to sign, we felt it could be more effective. We hoped for better outcomes."*

This highlights the frustration experienced by parents when there is a lack of emphasis on sign language education in schools.

As observed by the researcher, within community schools, where there is a lack of emphasis on sign language education, significant challenges in communication between teachers and students with hearing impairment were observed. Teachers often relied on spoken language as the primary mode of instruction, which posed barriers for students who relied on sign language for communication. This limited emphasis on sign language education resulted in ineffective communication and frustration for both students and educators.

Importance of Family Involvement and Home Support

Parents' active involvement in their children's education, including attending sign language classes and providing support at home, played a crucial role in their children's development. One parent highlighted the significance of home support, saying,

> *"Learning sign language through YouTube and helping my child at home has been crucial. Our efforts as a family have really made a difference in our child's development."*

This emphasizes how parental involvement, both in formal education settings and at home, contributes to the overall progress of children with hearing impairment.

4.2. Parental Engagement and Family Cohesion

Based on the data, the researcher infers that there is likely a positive relationship between parental engagement in early intervention activities for children with hearing impairment and family cohesion within households in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Parental Involvement Enhancing Communication

Parents actively participating in early intervention programs prioritize improving communication skills, particularly through learning sign language.

This theme underscores the pivotal role of parental engagement in fostering effective communication within families of children with hearing impairment. By actively participating in intervention programs, parents demonstrate a commitment to enhancing communication channels with their children. This commitment often involves prioritizing the learning of sign language, a fundamental aspect of communication for hearing-impaired individuals. Through this proactive involvement, parents aim to bridge communication gaps and facilitate a deeper connection with their children, ultimately strengthening family bonds.

One parent shared,

> *"We were initially unsure about learning sign language, but seeing our child's progress and confidence soar has been incredibly rewarding. It's become a powerful tool for us to connect and understand each other better."*

This sentiment reflects how parents recognize the transformative impact of sign language on their family dynamics, highlighting its role in enhancing communication and fostering a deeper sense of understanding and connection within the household.

Shared Journey of Progress and Reward

Parents express initial uncertainties about learning sign language but later observe significant progress in their child's confidence and communication abilities.

This theme illuminates the emotional journey undertaken by parents as they navigate the process of learning sign language alongside their child. Initially hesitant, parents embark on this journey with apprehension, unsure of what to expect. However, as they witness their child's remarkable progress and newfound confidence in communication, their initial doubts are replaced by a sense of fulfilment and pride. This shared experience of growth and achievement strengthens familial bonds and fosters a deeper sense of connection within the family unit.

> *"We were initially unsure about learning sign language, but seeing our child's progress and confidence soar has been incredibly rewarding. It's become a powerful tool for us to connect and understand each other better."*

This sentiment encapsulates the transformative nature of the journey experienced by parents, highlighting the profound impact of their active engagement in their child's development.

Building Resilience Through Active Engagement:

Engaged parents demonstrate commitment and resilience in overcoming challenges together, contributing to the overall well-being of the family.

This theme emphasizes the pivotal role of parental involvement in fostering resilience and empowerment within the family unit. Through active engagement in intervention programs, parents navigate obstacles and setbacks with determination, thereby creating a supportive environment where family members can thrive despite adversities.

> *"Even if it's a short time, we've seen our child blossom before our eyes, gaining confidence and thriving in social settings. It's been a journey of resilience for all of us and being actively involved in the program has truly empowered our family to overcome challenges together."*

This statement reflects the transformative impact of parental engagement in building resilience and fostering growth within the family, highlighting the collective efforts of parents in supporting their child's development.

Cultural Values Reinforcing Family Unity

Cultural values emphasizing collective upbringing and support within the family context influence parental engagement and contribute to greater cohesion.

This theme delves into the influence of cultural values on parental involvement and family cohesion. By aligning with cultural norms that prioritize unity and support, engaged parents strengthen familial bonds and perpetuate traditions that promote overall family well-being.

> *"In our community, the collective upbringing of children is deeply ingrained. Engaging in programs that support our child's development isn't just about individual growth; it's about upholding our cultural values of unity and support within the family. We've seen how our involvement has not only benefited our child but also reinforced the strong bonds we share as a family, echoing the traditions passed down through generations."*

This excerpt highlights the symbiotic relationship between cultural values and parental engagement, underscoring the profound impact of cultural norms on family dynamics and cohesion.

In addition to the insights gained from in-depth interviews, observations during early intervention sessions further supported the correlation between parental engagement and family cohesion. These observations revealed stark differences between families who actively participated in intervention programs and those who did not.

From the observations, it was noted that families who participated in early intervention programs exhibited stronger communication dynamics within the household. Siblings of the hearing-impaired children were often observed communicating using sign language, indicating a ripple effect of improved communication skills within the family. Furthermore, parents who engaged in intervention activities demonstrated a sense of hope and resilience, which was palpable during interactions with their children. In contrast, families who did not participate in early intervention programs exhibited limited communication with their

hearing-impaired children. These children were often observed in isolation, lacking the social interaction and communication skills evident in their counterparts from participating families.

During interviews, parents who had not participated in early intervention programs displayed heightened emotions, expressing dissatisfaction and unhappiness with their current situation. In contrast, parents who actively engaged in intervention activities exhibited optimism and emotional resilience, reflecting the positive impact of their involvement on their overall well-being. Additionally, children from participating families were noted to be more sociable and friendly, highlighting the beneficial effects of early intervention on their social development.

These observations underscored the significant influence of parental engagement in early intervention programs on family dynamics and cohesion. Families who actively participated in such programs experienced improved communication, resilience, and emotional well-being, contributing to a more supportive and nurturing family environment.

4.3. Challenges during Early Intervention

One of the consistent challenges faced by parents during the early intervention for children with hearing impairment is the lack of Information and Knowledge about hearing impairment

Lack of Information and Knowledge

Within the landscape of parenting a child with hearing impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a significant hurdle emerges, the profound lack of knowledge and information

As one parent poignantly expressed,

> 'I lacked information on how to help my daughter, and I felt desperate. I found myself crying and seeking solace in church…(emotional), resorting to holy water for comfort.'

Other parents also said

> "As a parent of a child who can't hear well, it often felt like I was lost. I didn't have enough help or information to understand what my child needed. It was like trying to find my way, and I didn't know who to ask for help or how to help my child."

Delayed Recognition and Acceptance of Hearing Impairment

Some parents struggled with denial and delayed acceptance of their child's hearing impairment, which prolonged their journey to seeking appropriate support and interventions.

the grandmother of a child with hearing impairment, shared their experience of struggling with denial and delayed acceptance of their granddaughter's condition. They described how initially, they were in denial and reluctant to accept the reality of the child's hearing impairment until she turned three years old.

> *"Initially, we brushed off our concerns, attributing his lack of speech development to the idea that 'boys talk later.' We convinced ourselves it was just a phase, a delay that would soon correct itself. Little did we know, it was a deeper issue we were avoiding confronting."*

Other parent a mother of 5 years child with hearing impairment noticed that her child condition when she was 2 years and 4 months

> *"For some time, we reassured ourselves that our daughter's hearing delay was merely a phase, hoping it would improve naturally. Accepting that something might be wrong was difficult. We ignored the signs, hoping they would vanish on their own. However, as time passed, we could no longer deny the truth: our daughter required assistance, and we had been postponing addressing it."*

This quotation illustrates how this Client and their family initially struggled to accept the diagnosis of hearing impairment, which led to a delay in recognizing the need for appropriate support and interventions for their granddaughter.

Limited Access to Support Services

parents encountered difficulties accessing early intervention services due to a lack of available resources or support personnel.

." I took my child to one of the organizations, hoping for support, but they informed me that there was no assigned person to assist us now. I felt overwhelmed and backed away, feeling helpless and frustrated."

This quotation illustrates a specific instance where a parent attempted to access early intervention services for their child but encountered difficulties due to the unavailability of

support personnel. Despite reaching out to an organization for assistance, the parent was informed that there was shortage of assigned person available to assist them at that time.

Emotional Toll and Psychological Impact

Parents experienced significant emotional and psychological distress upon learning about their child's hearing impairment.

The data underscores the profound emotional and psychological toll experienced by parents and families as they navigate the challenges of supporting a child with hearing impairment.

> *"Facing my deaf child, I felt a profound sense of inadequacy and sorrow. The inability to connect with him, to share in his world, brought tears to my eyes…(emotional). We longed to communicate love and understanding but felt hindered by our ignorance of sign language."*

This quotation highlights the emotional turmoil experienced by a parent as they grapple with the challenges of supporting their deaf child. The parent expresses feelings of inadequacy and sorrow, compounded by the inability to effectively communicate with their child due to a lack of knowledge about sign language.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural beliefs and stigma surrounding hearing impairment pose significant barriers to seeking support and early intervention services for affected children.

> *"Cultural barriers only added to our plight, with many attributing our child's condition to spiritual or demonic forces. This misconception further isolated us, pushing us towards seeking solutions in spiritual places rather than pursuing early intervention services."*

This quotation illustrates how cultural beliefs and stigma surrounding hearing impairment can impact parents' willingness to seek support for their child. The parents express how cultural barriers contribute to their sense of isolation and reluctance to access early intervention services. Instead of seeking evidence-based interventions, they feel compelled to turn to spiritual remedies due to societal pressures and misconceptions about the causes of hearingimpairment

Financial Constraints

Financial barriers also posed challenges for parents, limiting their ability to access early intervention services or afford necessary support for their children,

> *"Financial barriers were a challenge for us, making it difficult to access early intervention services or afford necessary support for our child. We struggled to cover the costs of medical consultations and assistive devices like hearing aids, which are essential for our child's development. These financial constraints limited our ability to provide the best possible care and support for our child with hearing impairment.*

In observing interactions between parents and children with hearing impairment across multiple cases, particularly those who have not participated in early intervention programs, a common pattern emerges. Communication between parents and children appears notably limited, with children exhibiting signs of fear and withdrawal in social settings. Across various instances, children demonstrate hesitance and reluctance to engage with others, displaying behaviours indicative of apprehension and isolation. This pattern of limited communication and social withdrawal is consistent across multiple observations, suggesting a pervasive challenge faced by children with hearing impairment and their families who have not accessed early intervention services.

Moreover, the observations reveal a sense of dissatisfaction or unhappiness among parents regarding their child's communication difficulties. Parents appear visibly concerned and troubled by their child's struggles, manifesting in expressions of frustration and disappointment. This sentiment is observed across different families, indicating a shared experience of distress and concern among parents who have not participated in early intervention programs and are grappling with the impact of hearing impairment on their children's communication and socialization.

Overall, the observations underscore the pressing need for targeted interventions and support services to address the communication challenges and emotional distress experienced by families who have not accessed early intervention programs. These findings highlight the importance of proactive outreach and accessible resources to ensure that all children with hearing impairment receive the support they need for healthy development and well-being

Discussion

Emphasis on Sign Language Support and Communication Skills Development

The qualitative findings underscore the critical role of sign language support in early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment, consistent with existing literature (Johnson, 2019; Smith & Jones, 2017; Tadesse, 2016). According to these studies, sign language instruction is pivotal in optimizing language development and cognitive functioning among children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Sign language serves as a visual-spatial language that allows children to access language and communication in a way that spoken language alone may not fully provide.

For children with hearing impairment, early exposure to and proficiency in sign language can significantly enhance their language skills. Research consistently shows that children who receive early and consistent exposure to sign language demonstrate better language acquisition and comprehension compared to those who do not (Smith & Jones, 2017; Tadesse, 2016).

Beyond language development, proficiency in sign language also positively impacts cognitive functioning. Learning and using sign language stimulate cognitive processes related to spatial awareness, memory, and problem-solving skills (Johnson, 2019). This cognitive stimulation can contribute to better academic performance and overall educational achievement among children with hearing impairment.

In the current study, significant findings highlighted how tailored educational approaches that include sign language instruction can have a transformative impact on children's communication abilities and overall confidence. Parents in the study observed significant improvements in their children's ability to express themselves, understand others, and engage more fully in social interactions.

Effective sign language instruction within early intervention programs involves personalized learning experiences tailored to each child's unique needs and developmental stage. This personalized approach not only supports language acquisition but also fosters a sense of empowerment and autonomy in children as they gain proficiency in a mode of communication that suits their sensory and cognitive strengths.

Furthermore, sign language proficiency contributes to children's social and emotional development by facilitating meaningful interactions with peers, family members, and educators. It enhances their ability to participate actively in social activities, develop friendships, and build supportive relationships within their communities (Smith & Jones, 2017).

Psychological and Emotional Support

Psychological and emotional support provided within educational settings plays a crucial role in enhancing children's resilience. For children with hearing impairment, navigating daily challenges related to communication and social interaction can be particularly demanding. Supportive environments help children develop coping strategies, build confidence, and overcome obstacles, thereby fostering resilience in the face of adversity (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017).

The study's findings indicate that supportive school environments contribute to fostering positive family relationships. When schools provide comprehensive support that includes educational resources, counseling services, and community engagement, families experience improved communication and collaboration in supporting their child's development. This collaborative approach not only strengthens family bonds but also empowers parents to better understand and advocate for their child's needs (Parving & Hauch, 2016).

Furthermore, the provision of psychological and emotional support within educational programs positively impacts the overall well-being of children with hearing impairment and their families. By addressing emotional needs and promoting a positive school environment, these programs create a supportive framework where children can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This holistic support approach contributes to a sense of belonging and acceptance, crucial for the holistic development of children with hearing impairment (Hailemariam & Assefa, 2019).

In the current study, parents highlighted the invaluable impact of psychological and emotional support on their children's development. They reported seeing their children grow in confidence, become more engaged in school activities, and develop strong peer relationships. These positive outcomes are attributed to the nurturing environment provided

by schools and programs that prioritize the emotional well-being of children with hearing impairment.

Challenges in Environments with Limited Sign Language Emphasis

One of the primary challenges identified in environments with limited sign language emphasis is ineffective communication. Sign language serves as a critical mode of communication for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. When sign language education is lacking, children may struggle to express themselves, understand others, and participate fully in classroom activities and social interactions. This communication barrier not only affects academic performance but also hinders social integration and emotional development (Abebe, 2018).

The study reveals that the absence of adequate sign language education significantly impacts children's overall development. Without access to sign language instruction, children may experience delays in language acquisition and cognitive skills development. They may also face challenges in accessing educational materials and participating in extracurricular activities, limiting their opportunities for learning and social interaction (Desta, 2015).

Educators and families in environments with limited sign language resources also encounter considerable challenges. Educators may struggle to meet the diverse learning needs of children with hearing impairment, leading to gaps in educational support and inclusion. Families may feel isolated and ill-equipped to support their child's learning and communication needs effectively, exacerbating stress and hindering collaborative efforts between home and school (Abebe, 2018).

The study underscores the urgent need for broader implementation of sign language education within educational settings. Comprehensive intervention strategies that prioritize sign language instruction can mitigate these challenges by equipping children with the necessary communication skills and fostering a supportive learning environment. By advocating for increased access to sign language resources and training for educators, schools can create inclusive spaces where children with hearing impairment can thrive academically and socially (Desta, 2015).

according to the researcher, environments with limited sign language emphasis present significant challenges for children with hearing impairment, educators, and families alike. The absence of adequate sign language education impedes effective communication, hampers children's developmental progress, and creates barriers to inclusive education. Addressing these challenges requires a commitment to implementing comprehensive intervention strategies that prioritize sign language education, thereby promoting equitable access to education and fostering the holistic development of all children, regardless of their hearing status.

Importance of Family Involvement and Home Support

Actively engaging parents in early intervention activities enhances developmental outcomes for children with hearing impairment. When parents are involved in their child's educational journey, they become informed advocates and active participants in decision-making processes regarding their child's learning and development. This involvement ensures that interventions are tailored to meet the child's specific needs and preferences, thereby optimizing educational and social outcomes (Davidson & Lillo-Martin, 2017).

Family involvement in early intervention programs strengthens family bonds by fostering improved communication and positive relationships. When families actively participate in intervention activities such as sign language instruction, therapy sessions, and educational workshops, they develop shared experiences and mutual understanding of their child's strengths and challenges. This shared involvement promotes empathy, collaboration, and resilience within the family unit, creating a supportive environment where all members can thrive (Stika, 2015).

The study highlights how family involvement in early intervention programs contributes to fostering an inclusive and supportive family environment. By actively engaging in activities that support their child's development, parents gain confidence in their ability to support their child's unique needs. This empowerment promotes a sense of inclusivity and belonging within the family, where differences are celebrated and each family member plays a crucial role in supporting the child's growth and well-being (Tesfaye, 2019).

Furthermore, active parental involvement strengthens parent-child relationships by promoting positive interactions and shared achievements. Parents who engage in intervention activities

with their child demonstrate increased understanding of their child's strengths and challenges, leading to more effective communication and emotional support. These supportive interactions contribute to the child's overall sense of security and self-esteem, laying a strong foundation for future academic and social success (Davidson & Lillo-Martin, 2017).

Research suggests that early involvement in intervention programs not only benefits immediate developmental outcomes but also lays the groundwork for long-term success. Families that prioritize early intervention and ongoing support create a foundation of resilience and adaptability, enabling children with hearing impairment to navigate challenges and achieve their full potential in school and beyond (Stika, 2015).

According to the researcher, family involvement and home support play a crucial role in early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment. By actively engaging parents in intervention activities, educators and practitioners can enhance developmental outcomes, strengthen family bonds, foster an inclusive environment, and promote long-term resilience and success for children with hearing impairment and their families.

Positive Relationship Between Parental Engagement and Family Cohesion

Learning sign language together as a family fosters deeper connections and strengthens bonds among family members. When parents and siblings actively participate in sign language instruction and other intervention activities, they engage in shared learning experiences that promote mutual understanding and support. These shared activities create opportunities for meaningful interactions, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving, enhancing overall family cohesion (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017).

Active parental engagement in learning sign language promotes effective communication within the family. As parents and siblings learn to communicate using sign language, they develop a common language that facilitates clearer and more empathetic communication with the child who has hearing impairment. This shared communication method reduces barriers to understanding and strengthens relationships by fostering an environment where all family members can express themselves comfortably and supportively (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017).

The study underscores how active parental involvement in early intervention activities promotes inclusive family dynamics. By participating in their child's educational journey, parents demonstrate their commitment to supporting their child's development and well-being. This involvement instills a sense of belonging and validation within the family, where each member's contributions are valued and respected. Inclusive family dynamics contribute to a supportive environment where children with hearing impairment can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017).

Furthermore, the positive relationship between parental engagement and family cohesion has a direct impact on the child's development. Research suggests that children benefit from consistent and supportive family environments, where active parental involvement promotes self-confidence, academic achievement, and social skills development. When parents are actively engaged in their child's educational and therapeutic activities, children with hearing impairment experience greater emotional security and are more likely to succeed in overcoming challenges associated with their hearing loss (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017).

Studies indicate that families who prioritize active engagement in early intervention activities not only support their child's immediate needs but also experience long-term benefits for family well-being. By fostering strong family bonds and promoting open communication, parents and siblings develop resilience and adaptability in navigating the complexities of raising a child with hearing impairment. These supportive family dynamics contribute to overall family unity, cohesion, and enhanced quality of life for all members (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017).

According to the researcher, parental engagement in early intervention activities, particularly in learning sign language together as a family, plays a crucial role in enhancing family cohesion and promoting overall well-being. By fostering inclusive family dynamics, improving communication, and supporting child development, active parental involvement creates a supportive environment where children with hearing impairment can thrive and families can grow stronger together.

Building Resilience Through Active Engagement

Active parental engagement in intervention programs involves parents in their child's education, therapy, and development. By participating in these activities, parents gain firsthand knowledge and skills to navigate the unique challenges associated with raising a child with hearing impairment. This active involvement promotes problem-solving abilities as parents learn to identify and address barriers to their child's learning and social integration (Parving & Hauch, 2016).

Parental engagement provides emotional support for both the child and the family unit. When parents actively participate in their child's educational journey, they demonstrate commitment and advocacy, which are essential for overcoming feelings of isolation or inadequacy. This support fosters a sense of security and confidence within the family, enhancing emotional well-being and resilience in coping with the daily demands of raising a child with hearing impairment (Davidson & Lillo-Martin, 2017).

Families of children with hearing impairment often face unexpected challenges and changes. Active engagement in intervention programs equips parents with the tools and resources to adapt to these situations effectively. Whether it's learning new communication techniques, advocating for educational accommodations, or connecting with support networks, engaged parents are better prepared to navigate uncertainties and promote their child's development (Parving & Hauch, 2016).

Engaged parents play a pivotal role in strengthening family dynamics. By actively participating in their child's education and therapy sessions, parents foster open communication, mutual understanding, and shared decision-making within the family. This collaborative approach promotes cohesion and unity, as family members work together to support the child's needs and celebrate milestones and achievements (Davidson & Lillo-Martin, 2017).

Overall, the cumulative effect of active parental engagement in intervention programs enhances family resilience and well-being. By building problem-solving skills, providing emotional support, promoting adaptation, and strengthening family dynamics, engaged parents create a supportive environment where children with hearing impairment can thrive. This resilience extends beyond individual challenges, equipping families with the resilience

to face future obstacles and navigate the journey of raising a child with hearing impairment with confidence and positivity (Parving & Hauch, 2016).

In summary, according to your study and supported by previous research, parental engagement in intervention programs is instrumental in fostering resilience and empowerment within families of children with hearing impairment. By actively participating in their child's education and development, parents not only support their child's growth but also enhance family dynamics, promote adaptation to challenges, and strengthen overall family resilience and well-being. This active involvement creates a foundation of support and understanding that is crucial for navigating the complexities of raising a child with hearing impairment and promoting their long-term success and happiness.

Cultural Values Reinforcing Family Unity: Cultural values play a significant role in shaping parental involvement and family cohesion, reflecting findings from prior studies (Hailemariam & Assefa, 2019; Tesfaye, 2019). By aligning with cultural norms that prioritize support and unity, engaged parents strengthen familial bonds and promote overall family well-being, underscoring the importance of culturally responsive approaches in intervention programs.

Observational Results: Observations during intervention sessions support the documented link between parental engagement and family dynamics, consistent with existing literature (Crowe, Marschark, & Dammeyer, 2017). Active participation in programs enhances intra-family communication, involves siblings in sign language communication, and positively impacts children's social development, highlighting the instrumental role of observational data in validating and enriching qualitative findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.2. Conclusion

The study highlights the approaches taken by parents in seeking support for children with hearing impairment. While some parents take formal early intervention programs provided by institutions like Mekanisa Deaf School or the National Deaf Association, others from personal initiation such as seeking assistance from neighbours or utilizing social media platforms, other didn't take any service, this diversity underscores the necessity for interventions that cater to the unique needs and preferences of families raising children with hearing impairment.

Analyzing the effectiveness of current early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment reveals a mixed landscape, where certain programs exhibit promising outcomes while others fall short in meeting parental expectations. Programs emphasizing sign language instruction, psychological support, and comprehensive family involvement showcase positive results in bolstering children's communication skills and self-assurance.

Sign Language Support stands out as a cornerstone of early intervention efforts. These programs prioritize equipping children with the tools to effectively communicate with their families, educators, and peers. By mastering sign language, children gain a vital means of expression, fostering greater engagement in social interactions and academic pursuits. Parents value this emphasis on sign language as it not only boosts their children's confidence but also promotes their independence.

Communication Skills Development is another crucial aspect addressed by early intervention programs. Beyond sign language, these initiatives target a spectrum of communication skills tailored to the unique needs of children with hearing impairment. From speech therapy to auditory training and assistive technology, these interventions pave the way for children to overcome language barriers and thrive in diverse social settings. Parents witness tangible improvements in their children's communication abilities, translating into enhanced academic performance, social integration, and overall well-being.

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Psychological Well-being emerges as a priority within early intervention programs, acknowledging the emotional complexities that accompany raising a child with hearing impairment. By offering psychological support and counselling services, these programs provide families with the tools to navigate feelings of isolation, frustration, and uncertainty. Parents appreciate the nurturing environment fostered by these initiatives, which enables them to address concerns, build resilience, and cultivate optimism for their child's future.

Empowerment of Families is a central tenet of effective early intervention programs. Through targeted parent training sessions, support groups, and community outreach endeavours, parents gain invaluable insights and resources to support their child's development comprehensively. This empowerment not only boosts parental confidence and competence but also strengthens familial bonds and fosters a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges posed by hearing impairment.

However, Challenges persist in Environments with Limited Sign Language Education, where children may encounter hurdles in communication, academic progress, and social integration. Parents in such settings may face difficulties advocating for their children's needs or accessing appropriate support services within the educational framework. Addressing these obstacles demands heightened awareness, investment, and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure equitable access to high-quality early intervention services tailored to the diverse needs of children with hearing impairment.

the data suggests a strong positive relationship between parental engagement in early intervention activities for children with hearing impairment and family cohesion within households in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Through active participation in intervention programs, parents prioritize improving communication skills, particularly through learning sign language, which fosters effective communication within the family. This commitment to enhancing communication channels not only bridges gaps between parents and children but also strengthens familial bonds, contributing to a deeper sense of understanding and connection within the household.

Moreover, the shared journey of progress and reward, coupled with building resilience through active engagement, underscores the transformative impact of parental involvement on family dynamics. Engaged parents demonstrate commitment and resilience in overcoming

challenges together, creating a supportive environment where family members can thrive despite adversities.

Cultural values emphasizing collective upbringing and support further reinforce parental engagement and contribute to greater cohesion within the family unit. By aligning with cultural norms that prioritize unity and support, engaged parents perpetuate traditions that promote overall family well-being.

Observations during early intervention sessions highlight stark differences between families who actively participate in intervention programs and those who do not. Participating families exhibit stronger communication dynamics, resilience, and emotional well-being, ultimately contributing to a more supportive and nurturing family environment.

In essence, the findings underscore the significant influence of parental engagement in early intervention programs on family dynamics and cohesion. The positive outcomes observed highlight the importance of proactive parental involvement in supporting children with hearing impairment and fostering a supportive and nurturing family environment conducive to their overall well-being and development.

The challenges encountered by parents during early intervention for children with hearing impairment underscore the urgent need for comprehensive support systems. The identified obstacles, including a lack of information, delayed recognition and acceptance, limited access to support services, and the emotional toll on parents, highlight the complexities involved in addressing the needs of this population.

The profound lack of information and knowledge about hearing impairment often leads to emotional distress and desperation among parents, emphasizing the necessity for educational initiatives to raise awareness about available support services. Additionally, the delayed recognition and acceptance of hearing impairment, influenced by cultural beliefs and misconceptions, further exacerbate the challenges faced by families.

Difficulties accessing support services due to resource scarcity or inadequate personnel contribute to feelings of helplessness and frustration among parents, hindering their ability to provide optimal care for their children. Moreover, the emotional and psychological impact on

parents, characterized by feelings of inadequacy and sorrow, underscores the critical importance of accessible support services that address the holistic needs of families raising children with hearing impairment.

In light of these findings, it is imperative to develop comprehensive support systems that provide education, improve accessibility, and respect cultural diversity. By addressing these challenges, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for families raising children with hearing impairment, ultimately enhancing their well-being and facilitating their journey towards optimal development and success.

5.3. Recommendation

Social Work Practice Recommendation:

Social workers can adopt a family-cantered approach to intervention, recognizing that the well-being of children with hearing impairment is intricately linked to the functioning of their families. This approach involves engaging with families in a collaborative and empowering manner, acknowledging their strengths, needs, and cultural values. Social workers should provide comprehensive support services that address the multifaceted challenges faced by families, including access to early intervention programs, educational resources, assistive technologies, and counselling support. By fostering strong partnerships with families, social workers can promote resilience, enhance coping strategies, and improve overall family functioning.

Social Work Education Recommendation:

Social work education programs should integrate coursework and training modules specifically focused on working with individuals with disabilities, including hearing impairment. These educational initiatives should cover a wide range of topics, including disability rights, legislation, cultural competence, communication strategies, and intervention approaches. Additionally, providing students with experiential learning opportunities, such as field placements in organizations serving individuals with hearing impairment, can enhance their practical skills and cultural sensitivity. By equipping social work students with comprehensive knowledge and practical skills, educational institutions can prepare future professionals to effectively support individuals with hearing impairment and their families.

Social Work Policy Recommendation for Government:

Governments play a crucial role in shaping policies and allocating resources to support individuals with hearing impairment and their families. It is essential for governments to prioritize the development and implementation of inclusive policies that promote equal opportunities, accessibility, and inclusion for individuals with hearing impairment. This includes ensuring adequate funding for early intervention services, educational programs, healthcare services, and assistive technologies. Moreover, governments should invest in the training and professional development of social workers and other professionals working with this population to ensure high-quality service delivery. By enacting supportive policies and allocating resources effectively, governments can promote the full participation and integration of individuals with hearing impairment into society.

Social Work Policy Recommendation for NGOs:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in complementing government efforts and filling gaps in service provision for individuals with hearing impairment and their families. NGOs should focus on providing specialized services, advocacy, and community-based support initiatives tailored to the needs of this population. This may include establishing early intervention centres, providing educational resources, offering counselling and psychosocial support services, and conducting outreach programs to raise awareness and reduce stigma. Additionally, NGOs can collaborate with government agencies, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to develop and implement innovative programs and initiatives that address the holistic needs of individuals with hearing impairment and their families. By leveraging their expertise and resources, NGOs can amplify the impact of government policies and ensure that individuals with hearing impairment receive the support they need to thrive.

By embracing these comprehensive recommendations, social workers, educational institutions, governments, and NGOs can work collaboratively to create inclusive and supportive environments that empower individuals with hearing impairment and their families to lead fulfilling lives.

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Appendices/Annexes

Dear respondent,

My name is Meklit Bahiru, and I am a student at St. Mary University, studying in the Department of Social Work. Currently, I am conducting research titled "Early Intervention Programs and Their Influence on Family Cohesion Among Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia." This research is a requirement for the completion of my Masters of Social Work degree.

Your participation in this research will provide valuable insights and contribute to understanding the experiences of parents of children with hearing impairment regarding early intervention programs and family cohesion. Please be assured that any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for educational purposes. Your privacy is of utmost importance, and your responses will be anonymized in the final report. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable or no longer wish to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research or your participation, please feel free to contact me at the following address +251935603570. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and for sharing your experiences. Your honest responses will help ensure the study's findings align with its intended goals.

Table 1. Summary of age, gender, guardian and duration of early intervention

Client	Child Age	Child gender	Gardian
1	4 years	Male	Mother
2	5 years	Female	Mother
3	6 years	Male	Father
4	5 years	Female	Mother
5	5 years	Male	Mother
6	4 years	Male	Mother
7	3 years	Female	Mother
8	5 years	Female	Mother
9	4 years	Female	Father
10	6 years	Female	Uncle
11	5 years	Male	Grand Mother
12	4 years	Female	Father

Survey Questions

Participant Information:

1. Name (Optional):

2. Age:

3. Gender:

4. Relationship to Child (Parent, Guardian, etc.):

5. How many children do you have, including the child with hearing impairment?

Section 1: Challenges Faced by Parents

1. Can you describe some specific instances where you encountered challenges in implementing early intervention strategies for your child with hearing impairment?

   - How did you feel when facing these challenges? How did you attempt to address them?

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2. Can you discuss any emotional or psychological impact these challenges have had on you and your family?

    - How have these challenges affected your relationships with your child and other family members?

3. Could you elaborate on any financial, logistical, or cultural barriers you have faced in accessing early intervention services or support in Addis Ababa?

    - How have these barriers influenced your ability to participate in early intervention activities?

4. Have you sought support from external sources (e.g., support groups, community organizations) to address these challenges? If so, could you share your experiences?

    - How helpful was the support you received? Did it alleviate any of the challenges you were facing?

Section 2: Evaluation of Early Intervention Programs

1. Can you provide detailed descriptions of the early intervention programs you have participated in for your child with hearing impairment?

    - What specific activities or services were offered in these programs? How frequently did you participate?

2. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of these programs in meeting the needs of your child and your family?

    - What aspects of the programs do you feel were particularly beneficial or lacking?

3. Can you discuss any changes or improvements you have observed in your child since participating in these programs?

    - How have these changes impacted your child's daily life and interactions within the family?

4. How satisfied are you with the level of support and guidance provided by the professionals involved in these programs?

- What qualities do you value most in the professionals working with your child?

Section 3: Parental Engagement and Family Cohesion

1. How would you describe your level of engagement in the early intervention activities for your child with hearing impairment?

- What motivates you to participate in these activities? Are there any factors that hinder your participation?

2. Could you share specific examples of how your involvement in early intervention activities has strengthened or strained family relationships?

- How do you navigate conflicts or disagreements related to your involvement in these activities?

3. Can you discuss any changes you have observed in family dynamics or cohesion as a result of your participation in early intervention activities?

- How do other family members perceive your involvement in these activities?

4. How do you prioritize and balance your involvement in early intervention activities with other responsibilities and commitments within your family?

- Have you had to make any sacrifices or compromises to maintain this balance?

Section 4: Additional Comments

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with early intervention strategies for your child with hearing impairment?

2. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for improving early intervention services or support for families in Addis Ababa?

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2. ዕድሜ:-

3. ጾታ:-

4. ከልጅ ጋርያለግንኙነት (ወላጅ፣አሳዳጊ፣ወዘተ):-

5. የመስማትችግርያለበትንልጅቼምሮስትንልጆችአሉዎት?

ክፍል 1:ወላጆችየሚያጋጥሟቸውተግዳሮቶች

1.
የመስማትችግርላለባቸውልጆችየቅድመጣልቃገብነትስልቶችንበመተግበርገድተግዳሮቶችያጋጠሙዎትንእንዳንድልዩሁኔ ታዎችንመግለጽይችላሉ?

• እነዚህንትግሮችሲያጋጥሙህምንተሰማዎት? ችግሩንለመፍታትእንዴትሞከሩዋል?

2.   እነዚህተግዳሮቶችበእርስዎእናበቤተሰብዎላይያደረሱትንማኅኛውንምስሜታዊወይምስነ-ልቦናዊተፅኖመወያየትይችላሉ?

• እነዚህተግዳሮቶችከልጆችናከሊሎችየቤተሰብአባላትጋርያለዎትንግንኙነትእንዴትነክተዋል?

3.   በአዲስአበባዋቅድሚያጣልቃገብነትአገልግሎቶችንወይምድጋፎችንለማግኘትያጋጠሙዎትንየፋይናንስ፣ የሎጂስቲክስወይምየባህላማነቆችላይማብራራትይችላሉ?

• እነዚህመሰናክሎችበቅድመጣልቃ-ገብእንቅስቃሴዎችየሳተፍችሎታዎይምንተጽኖአሳድረዋል?

4. እነዚህንተግዳሮቶችለመፍታትከውጭምንጮች (ለምሳሌየድጋፍቡድኖች፣የማህበረሰብድርጅቶች) ድጋፍጠቀዋል? ከሆነ፣የእርስዎንተሞክሮችማካፈልይችላሉ?

• ያገኙትድጋፍምንያህልጠቃሚነበር? ያጋጠሙዎትንማንኛውንምፈተናዎችቀርፈዋታል?

ክፍል 2:የቅድመጣልቃገብነትፕሮግራሞችግምገማ

1. የመስማትችግርላለባቸውልጆችየተሳተፉበትየቅድመጣልቃገብነትፕሮግራሞችዝርዝርመግለጫዎችንመስጠትይችላሉ?

• በእነዚህፕሮግራሞችውስጥምንልዩተግባራትወይምአገልግሎቶተሰጥተዋል? ምንያህልበተደጋጋሚተሳታፈዋል?

2. የልጆዎንእናየቤተሰብዎንፍላጎቶችበማሟላትየእነዚህንፕሮግራሞችአጠቃላይውጤታማነትእንዴትይገመግማሉ?

• በተለይጠቃሚወይምየደላቸውየፕሮግራሙጹታዎችየትኞቹእንደሆኑይሰማዎታል?

3. በእነዚህፕሮግራሞችውስጥከተሳተፉበትጊዜጀምሮበልጅዎላይስላዩዋቸውለውጦችወይምማሻሻያዎችመወያየትይችላሉ?

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• እነዚህለውጦችበልጅዎየዕለትተዕለትሕይወትእናበቤተሰቡስጣባለውግንኙነትላይምንተጽዕኖአሳድረዋል?

4. በእነዚህፕሮግራሞችውስጥየሚሳተፉባለሙያዎችበሚስጡትየድጋፍእናመሪያደረጃምንያህልረክተዋል?

• ከልጅዎጋርበሚሰሩባለሙያዎችውስጥምንአይነትባህሪያትንክፍአድገውይመለከቱታል?

ክፍል 3:የወላጅተሳትፎእናየቤተሰብትስስር

1. የመስማትችግርላለባቸውልጅዎበቅድመጣልቃገነተተግባራትውስጥያለዎትንየተሳትፎደረጃእንዴትይገልጹታል?

• በእነዚህእንቅስቃሴዎችእንድትሳተፍየሚያነሳሳህምንድንነው? ተሳትፎንየሚያደናቅፈነገሮችስ?

2. በቅድመጣልቃ-ገብእንቅስቃሴዎችውስጥመሳተፍያቤተሰብግንኙነትችንእንዴትእንዳጠናከረወይምእደሻረየሚያዩሉይምሳሌዎችንማጋራትይችላሉ?

• በእነዚህእንቅስቃሴዎችውስጥከእርስዎታሳፎጋርየያያዙ ግጭቶችንወይምአለመግባባቶችንእንዴትይዳስሳሉ?

3. በቅድመጣልቃ-ገብእንቅስቃሴዎችውስጥበመሳተፍያምክንያትበቤተሰብያለው መተሳሰር

ወይምበእንድነትላይያዩትንማንኛውንምለውጥመወያየትይችላሉ?

• ሌሎችየቤተሰብአባላትበእነዚህተግባራትውስጥያለዎትንተሳትፎእንዴትይገነዘባሉ?

4.

በቅድመጣልቃገነተእንቅስቃሴዎችውስጥያለዎትንተሳትፎከቤተሰብዎውስጥካሉሌሎችኃላፊነቶችእናቁርጠኝነትጋርእንዴ

ትቅድሚያይሰጡሉእናሚዛናዊያደርጋሉ?

• ይህንንሚዛንለመጠበቅማንኛውንምመስዋዕትነትከፍለውወይምስምምነትለማ，ድረግ ምን አድርገዋል?

ክፍል 4: ተጨማሪአስተያየቶች

1. የመስማትችግርላለባቸውልጅዎበቅድመጣልቃ-ገብስልቶችስላ，ጋጠሙዎትልምድማፈልፈልጉትሌላነገርአለ?

2.

የቅድሚያጣልቃገነትአገልግሎቶችንለማሻሻልወይምበአዲስበባውስጥላሉቤተሰቦችድጋፍየሚሰጡተቆማዎችወይምም

ከሮችአሉዎት?