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Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment of Parents of Hearing-impaired Pupils in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between psychological variables and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 185 parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. A sample of 185 parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State was selected for the study using the census sampling technique. A researcher-made instrument, entitled "Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment Questionnaire for Parents" (PVSAQP), was used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by three experts. The internal consistency method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument, and a reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. Pearson Product Moment Correlation

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statistics were used to answer the research questions and also test their corresponding null hypotheses. Data analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between fear of judgement and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils, while no significant relationship was found between emotional stress, self-doubt and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils. In view of the findings of the study, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made, among which is that community sensitisation and awareness programmes should be implemented to reduce stigma and negative perceptions associated with hearing impairment, thereby alleviating parents' fear of judgement and promoting their social engagement.

Keywords: Psychological variables, social adjustment, hearing-impaired, parents, pupils

Introduction

Raising a child with a hearing impairment can present a significant social challenge for parents, particularly in cultural contexts like Nigeria, where disability awareness and support systems are still evolving. In many communities in Nigeria, hearing impairment is usually misunderstood and stigmatised, which may leave some parents emotionally overwhelmed, socially isolated, and psychologically strained. The demands of caregiving, handling medical and educational systems, coping with communication difficulties, and confronting public perceptions could create a stressful environment that may impact the mental health and ability to engage meaningfully in social life of parents of hearing-impaired children. These psychological burdens, if unmanaged, can hinder their social adjustment, which is crucial to their own well-being and their child's development.

As highlighted by Adeyemo (2015), social adjustment is the process by which an individual establishes and maintains satisfying relationships and integrates into their social environment without any psychological conflict or maladaptive behaviour. In the

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context of parenting a child with a hearing impairment, social adjustment implies the parent's capacity to accept the child's condition, interact confidently with others without fear or shame, seek and maintain support networks, and advocate for their child's needs within educational and societal settings. When parents of hearing-impaired pupils are socially adjusted, they tend to demonstrate resilience, emotional stability, and a proactive attitude towards caregiving. They are more likely to form positive relationships with teachers, healthcare providers, and fellow parents, which can facilitate access to educational and therapeutic resources for the child. Socially adjusted parents may equally be more confident in participating in school meetings, engaging in community activities, and building strong family relationships. This supportive and emotionally balanced environment could foster better developmental outcomes for the child, including improved academic performance, emotional security, and social inclusion. Socially adjusted parents can serve as effective advocates, helping to combat stigma and promote disability awareness in their communities.

Conversely, when parents are not socially adjusted, the implications can be far-reaching. They may withdraw from social interaction due to shame or perceived incompetence. This withdrawal can result in isolation, emotional distress, and a lack of access to crucial information and support systems. According to Njoku and Akpan (2018), socially maladjusted parents are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and hostility, which could negatively affect their ability to care for and support their child's education and well-being. Their reluctance to interact with schools and health services may lead to neglect of the child's academic needs and poor communication with teachers, which could hinder the child's social integration and cognitive development. Additionally, such parents may internalise blame or guilt, further diminishing their sense of efficacy and personal fulfilment.

Among the key psychological variables that can influence the social adjustment of these parents are emotional stress, fear of judgement, and self-doubt. Emotional stress refers to a state of mental or emotional strain resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances that exceed an individual's coping capacity (Nwokolo & Okoye, 2016). Emotional stress could result from sustained emotional pressure, which can lead to mental exhaustion, irritability, and emotional dysregulation. For parents of hearing-impaired children, emotional stress could be triggered by the constant burden of caregiving, uncertainty about the child's future, financial strain of medical interventions, and societal indifference to their challenges. This prolonged stress is

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capable of impairing the parent's ability to establish meaningful social connections, attend school functions, or participate in community activities that are essential for achieving social adjustment. Uche and Anya (2017) posited that emotional stress among carers usually leads to withdrawal and social apathy, thereby limiting access to support systems and weakening advocacy efforts for their children. Consequently, high emotional stress could disrupt social functioning, which can lead to isolation, psychological distress, and reduced parental effectiveness.

Fear of judgement is a psychological state characterised by apprehension about being negatively evaluated or criticised by others due to a socially devalued condition (Amadi & Ekwueme, 2018). In the context of this research, fear of judgement refers to the internal anxiety parents feel when they anticipate being ridiculed, blamed, or marginalised in social settings because of their life circumstances. In many Nigerian communities, disabilities such as hearing impairment are viewed through the lens of cultural superstition, moral failure, or divine punishment. This societal attitude can cause parents to feel ashamed or embarrassed about their child's condition, making them reluctant to attend social gatherings, engage in parent-teacher meetings, or seek external support. Ede and Okeke (2019) observed that fear of societal judgement can lead many parents to conceal their child's disability, which intensifies their isolation and diminishes their ability to adjust socially.

As observed by Okoro and Umeh (2015), **self-doubt** refers to a lack of confidence in one's abilities or decisions, particularly in the face of challenging circumstances. It is a deeply internalised belief that one is inadequate or incapable. Parents of hearing-impaired pupils may experience self-doubt as they struggle to make decisions regarding therapy, schooling, and communication strategies, especially in the absence of adequate professional guidance. This uncertainty could be compounded by cultural myths and unsolicited advice that cast doubt on their parenting skills. When parents of hearing-impaired pupils are plagued with self-doubt, they are less likely to engage socially, express themselves openly, or assert their child's needs, which are critical for social adjustment. Instead, they may retreat into isolation, relinquishing opportunities to build networks that could otherwise support their emotional and social resilience.

The situation in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State further magnifies these challenges. The area is characterised by traditional socio-cultural

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beliefs that usually interpret disability through the lens of spiritual causation or social taboo, which exacerbates the stigma associated with hearing impairment. Many parents in the area lack access to adequate support systems such as inclusive education resources, counselling services, and disability advocacy platforms. Consequently, this may make them more vulnerable to psychological distress and maladaptive social behaviours. Additionally, economic constraints and limited public awareness could further compound the marginalisation experienced by both the children and their parents.

Despite the growing number of children with hearing impairments enrolled in primary schools in the Uyo Local Government Area, there is a noticeable gap in empirical literature examining how psychological factors influence the social adjustment of their parents. Most existing studies have focused on the educational needs of the children, leaving out the equally important psychosocial experiences of their parents. Therefore, this study became imperative in exploring the relationship between psychological variables (emotional stress, fear of judgement, self-doubt) and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

The upbringing of children with hearing impairment presents multifaceted challenges that can lead to social difficulties for their parents. In Nigeria, and particularly in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, these challenges are intensified by cultural misconceptions about disability, poor access to special education services, and limited psychosocial support. While children with hearing impairments face barriers in communication and learning, their parents may simultaneously contend with emotional stress, social stigma, and internal doubts about their capacity to support their children effectively. Emotional stress resulting from the continuous demands of caregiving and handling poorly structured school systems can weaken parents' emotional resilience and reduce their ability to interact socially. Similarly, fear of judgement from extended family, religious groups, and the entire community due to prevailing negative attitudes toward disability can cause parents to withdraw from social and school-based engagements. Furthermore, self-doubt driven by inadequate knowledge, societal pressure, and limited support can undermine parents' confidence in their decisions and social interactions.

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While social adjustment is a critical component of parental well-being and a determinant of effective advocacy and support for children with disabilities, there is a glaring gap in the literature concerning how psychological variables such as emotional stress, fear of judgement, and self-doubt influence the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils. Most available studies in Akwa Ibom State focus on the academic and communicative needs of hearing-impaired children, leaving the psychosocial experience of parents underexplored. This lack of empirical attention has resulted in insufficient data to inform targeted interventions and inclusive education policies that support not only the children but also their parents. Thus, the problem of this study was to investigate the relationship between psychological variables (emotional stress, fear of judgement, self-doubt) and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in Uyo Local Government Area.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological variables and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study aimed to investigate:

1. The relationship between emotional stress and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.
2. The relationship between fear of judgement and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.
3. The relationship between self-doubt and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would be very useful to parents of hearing-impaired pupils, special education teachers, school administrators, guidance counsellors, and future researchers.

The findings of the study would offer parents of hearing-impaired pupils a deeper understanding of how psychological factors such as emotional stress, fear of judgement, and self-doubt affect their ability to adjust socially. By identifying these barriers and highlighting their impact on social engagement and well-being, the findings

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of the study would empower parents with deeper knowledge on the importance of seeking emotional support, building social networks, and adopting healthy coping strategies. This awareness would enhance parents' emotional stability, improve their ability to advocate for their children, and promote better family and community integration.

Through the findings of this study, special education teachers would gain a better understanding of the psychosocial realities faced by parents of hearing-impaired pupils. It would help them recognise that parental involvement is not only influenced by willingness but also by psychological burden. As a result, special education teachers would become more empathetic and proactive in fostering parent-teacher relationships that are inclusive, patient, and sensitive to emotional needs. They would be better equipped to support and collaborate with parents, thereby contributing to the overall success of inclusive education practices.

Moreover, school administrators would benefit from the findings of this study. The findings would guide school administrators in formulating parental engagement strategies that take into consideration the psychological well-being of carers. It would encourage the development of school-based support services such as counselling units, parent education workshops, and peer support groups to help reduce emotional stress and stigma-related fears. Furthermore, guidance counsellors would find the findings of the study beneficial as they provide evidence-based information to design effective counselling interventions tailored for parents of children with hearing impairment. The knowledge gained would help in the development of targeted interventions and group counselling programmes that address emotional stress, fear of societal judgement, and self-doubt. Counsellors would be in a better position to offer psychosocial support that fosters parental confidence, reduces isolation, and promotes social reintegration. This would, in turn, support the developmental needs of the hearing-impaired pupils through more emotionally stable and socially active carers.

Finally, researchers would benefit from the outcome of the study by gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between psychological variables and parental social adjustment, particularly within the cultural and socio-economic context of Uyo Local Government Area. The study would address a gap in literature on parental mental health and disability in the Nigerian education system. It would also serve as a foundational reference for future empirical studies and stimulate scholarly inquiry into broader issues of disability, parental involvement, and psychological well-being.

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Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. What is the relationship between emotional stress and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils?
2. What is the relationship between fear of judgement and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils?
3. What is the relationship between self-doubt and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional stress and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.
2. There is no significant relationship between fear of judgement and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.
3. There is no significant relationship between self-doubt and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.

Scope of the Study

The study examined the relationship between psychological variables and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils. Emotional stress, fear of societal judgement, and self-doubt were investigated as the independent variables, while the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils served as the dependent variable. The study was limited to parents of hearing-impaired pupils enrolled in the Special Education Centre, Mbiabong, and St Vincent's Centre for Inclusive Education, Adiaha Obong, both located in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on stigma theory, which was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1963. According to Goffman, stigma is an attribute that significantly discredits an individual and reduces them in the perception of others. He identified different types of stigma, including physical deformities, character flaws, and group identity. Stigma often leads to societal rejection, internalised shame, identity concealment, and

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diminished social participation. Stigmatised individuals often engage in behaviours aimed at managing or avoiding public exposure, which can result in social isolation.

This theory is applicable to the current study, as it explains the fear of judgement that many parents of hearing-impaired children experience, particularly in sociocultural settings where disabilities are misunderstood or attributed to spiritual causes. Parents may avoid social gatherings, school functions, or public advocacy due to fear of being judged or blamed for their child's condition. This fear can limit their social adjustment, reduce opportunities for support, and prevent meaningful engagement with school authorities and other parents. The theory highlights how fear of negative perception can lead to avoidance and social withdrawal, which are central concerns of the present study.

Empirical Literature

Green (2017) examined the extent to which fear of social judgement influences the social participation and adjustment of parents of children with disabilities in selected early intervention centres in the United Kingdom. The study employed a descriptive survey design and involved 164 parents selected through purposive sampling from six rehabilitation and support facilities. Data were collected using a validated Parental Social Evaluation Concerns Scale (PSECS) and the Social Participation and Adjustment Inventory (SPAI), which recorded reliability indices of 0.86 and 0.82, respectively. Analysis of data was carried out using Pearson product-moment correlation and regression statistics. Findings revealed that fear of social judgement significantly predicted parents' levels of social participation ($R^2 = 0.41$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that heightened concerns about blame, misunderstanding, or stigma reduced parents' willingness to engage in social interactions and community activities. Parents experiencing high fear of judgement reported withdrawal tendencies, low confidence in public settings, and reduced help-seeking behaviour, particularly during the initial years of their children's diagnosis. Based on the findings, Green recommended that disability support agencies and counselling professionals create stigma-reduction campaigns and community sensitisation programmes to improve public understanding and encourage healthier social engagement among affected parents.

In another study, Peer and Hillman (2019) examined the indirect influence of emotional stress on the social adjustment of parents of children with hearing and communication impairments in selected community-based rehabilitation centres in New South Wales, Australia. The study adopted a correlational survey design and

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involved 192 parents selected through stratified sampling. Data were gathered using two standardised instruments, namely the Parental Emotional Stress Inventory (PESI) and the Social Adjustment Rating Scale (SARS), which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.87 and 0.83, respectively. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that emotional stress did not directly predict social adjustment ($p > 0.05$); however, it exerted a significant indirect effect through lowered self-esteem and reduced social participation (indirect $\beta = -0.42$, $p < 0.05$). The study also highlighted substantial variability in these pathways, noting that parents with high resilience, strong cultural support networks, or access to psychosocial services were less negatively affected by emotional stress. Peer and Hillman concluded that the relationship between emotional stress and social adjustment is complex and mediated by personal and contextual factors. They recommended that intervention programmes focus on bolstering parental resilience and strengthening community support systems to mitigate the indirect effects of stress.

MacDonald, Harris, and O'Neill (2020) investigated the predictive influence of fear of social judgement on social functioning among parents of children with special needs in semi-urban communities of Ontario, Canada. The researchers adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 238 parents drawn through stratified random sampling from inclusive schools, therapy centres, and community clinics. Two instruments, the Social Judgement Anxiety Scale for Parents (SJASP) and the Parental Social Functioning Assessment (PSFA), were used for data collection, with established reliability coefficients of 0.89 and 0.84, respectively. Data were analysed using multiple regression. Results revealed that fear of social judgement was a strong and significant predictor of reduced social functioning ($\beta = -0.57$, $p < 0.05$), accounting for 49% of the variance in parents' social engagement. Parents who perceived high levels of scrutiny or stigma were more likely to isolate themselves, avoid community events, and show reluctance in seeking both formal and informal support. The study concluded that persistent disability-related stigma within communities continues to shape parental behaviour and adjustment outcomes. The authors recommended community-based support groups and public awareness interventions aimed at reducing stigma and strengthening social networks for families of children with special needs.

Similarly, Guralnick (2020) investigated the social and emotional functioning of parents raising children with developmental delays, focusing on psychological variables such as self-doubt. The results indicated that although self-doubt was a

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common emotional response, it did not significantly influence parents' ability to participate socially or maintain interpersonal relationships. Social support systems, particularly those involving other parents, were found to be more crucial in promoting social adjustment than internal emotional factors. Kyzar (2017) examined the role of family support networks in the well-being of families with children with disabilities. The study concluded that strong support systems positively influenced family outcomes, including parents' social adjustment and coping strategies. Emotional factors such as self-doubt were found to have a reduced effect in the presence of reliable social and community support, emphasising the importance of external buffers in managing internal stress.

Hastings and Taunt (2022) examined positive perceptions among parents of children with developmental disabilities, including how these perceptions influenced emotional well-being and social adjustment. The findings revealed that despite experiencing emotional stress, many parents reported strong social connections and adaptive coping strategies. Positive outlooks, personal growth, and resilience were common themes, suggesting that emotional stress did not necessarily inhibit social functioning, and in some cases, parents developed stronger support networks because of their parenting experiences. Peer and Hillman (2019) explored the psychosocial experiences of parents raising children with special needs, focusing on self-perception and social participation. It found that while emotional stress and fear of judgement were prevalent, their effects on social adjustment varied widely. For some, these emotions led to reduced social engagement, while for others, active involvement in advocacy and support groups mitigated the negative impacts. The study emphasised that contextual factors such as community support and cultural expectations moderated the relationship between internal stress and outward social behaviour.

Based on the foregoing, it is evident that while previous studies have examined various factors influencing social adjustment in different populations, none of the past empirical literature reviewed specifically investigated the relationship between psychological variables and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils, particularly within the context of Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This gap is noteworthy given the critical role that psychological well-being plays in enabling parents to cope with the unique challenges associated with raising children with hearing impairments, including societal stigma, emotional stress, and reduced social participation. The absence of localised empirical research in this area can

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limit the ability of educators, counsellors, and policymakers to develop targeted interventions that support parents' social adjustment and, by extension, the holistic development of their children. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to address this significant gap so as to provide deeper understanding of the relationship between some psychological variables and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils and offer evidence-based recommendations for improving parental well-being and community integration.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilised a correlational research design, commonly employed to assess the strength and direction of relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. This approach was considered appropriate given the primary objective of the study: to examine the nature and extent of the relationship between selected psychological variables and the social adjustment of parents with hearing-impaired children. Employing a correlational design enabled the researcher to gather data from participants and perform statistical analyses to investigate the associations among the variables of interest.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 185 parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State (Head Teacher's Office, 2025). This population was derived from two schools, namely Special Education Centre, Mbiabong Etoi, Uyo, and St Vincent's Centre for Inclusive Education, Adiaha Obong, Uyo. While Special Education Centre, Mbiabong Etoi, Uyo, had 167 parents, there were 18 parents in St Vincent's Centre for Inclusive Education, Adiaha Obong, Uyo.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 185 parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State was selected for the study using the census sampling technique. This sampling technique is suitable for the study since the population is not large.

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Instrument for Data Collection

A researcher-made instrument, entitled “Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment Questionnaire for Parents” (PVSAQP), was used for data collection. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A contained 15 items. Five items were used to measure each of emotional stress, fear of judgement and self-doubt, while section B contained 15 items which measured social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.

The items were presented as statements to which the respondents were instructed to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point, respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was submitted for face validation to one expert in measurement and evaluation from the Department of Psychological Foundations and two experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, all of whom are affiliated with the University of Uyo. The researchers ensured that all the areas recommended for corrections were incorporated before producing the final draft.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the internal consistency method to ensure that the items in each section of the instrument measured the same construct consistently. In carrying out this process, the instrument was pilot-tested on a sample of 20 parents of hearing-impaired pupils in Ikot Ekpene and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas. The responses obtained from the pilot test were subjected to statistical analysis using the Cronbach's alpha reliability technique. The analysis yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.76, which implies that the instrument possesses a satisfactory level of internal consistency and is therefore reliable for use in the main study.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument for the study was administered to the respondents through the direct delivery method. However, the researchers administered the instrument directly to the respondents with the assistance of one research assistant chosen from each of the two

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schools in the research area. Copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents during school as they proceeded to carry their children. The exercise lasted for two weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the corresponding hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level, and data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

Table 1: Pearson's correlation on the relationship between emotional stress and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in Uyo Local Government Area

Variable	n	r-value	p-value	Decision
Emotional stress	185	-0.243	0.761	Accepted
Social adjustment				

Table 1 presents the Pearson's correlation result on the relationship between emotional stress and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area. The analysis shows a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.243, indicating a weak negative relationship between emotional stress and social adjustment. However, the p -value of 0.761 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, suggesting that the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, implying that emotional stress does not have a significant relationship with the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.

Table 2: Pearson's correlation on the relationship between fear of judgement and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in Uyo Local Government Area

Variable	n	r-value	p-value	Decision
Fear of judgement	185	-0.737	0.002	Rejected
Social adjustment				

Table 2 displays the Pearson's correlation result on the relationship between fear of judgement and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in Uyo Local Government Area. The correlation coefficient (r) of -0.737 indicates a high negative relationship between fear of judgement and social adjustment. However, the p-value of 0.002 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, meaning the relationship is statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that fear of judgement has a significant relationship with the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.

Table 3: Pearson's correlation on the relationship between self-doubt and social adjustment of hearing-impaired pupils in Uyo Local Government Area

Variable	n	r-value	p-value	Decision
Self-doubt	185	-0.182	0.436	Accepted
Social adjustment				

Table 3 presents the Pearson's correlation result on the relationship between self-doubt and social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils in the Uyo Local Government Area. The correlation coefficient (r) of -0.182 indicates a very weak negative relationship between self-doubt and social adjustment. The p-value of 0.436 exceeds the 0.05 level of significance, showing that the relationship is not statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that self-doubt does not significantly affect the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils.

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Discussion of Findings

The finding that there is no significant relationship between emotional stress and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils suggests that, although emotional stress is usually considered a critical factor influencing psychological and social functioning, it may not directly impact how these parents adapt to social situations. A possible explanation for this is that parents of children with hearing impairments may develop resilience and coping mechanisms over time, allowing them to handle social interactions regardless of their emotional stress levels. Their adjustment may be shaped more by external support systems, community acceptance, or personal beliefs than by the internal emotional burden they carry. This present finding aligns with the study by Hastings and Taunt (2022), who found that while parents of children with disabilities reported high levels of stress, many demonstrated remarkable emotional strength and social adaptability. Their study emphasised the role of positive coping strategies, such as seeking social support or engaging in advocacy, in mitigating the effects of emotional distress. On the other hand, a study by Peer and Hillman (2019) noted that for some parents, emotional stress could indirectly influence social adjustment through lowered self-esteem or reduced social participation. However, they also concluded that this impact varies widely depending on individual resilience, cultural norms, and access to support resources.

The finding that fear of judgement has a significant relationship with the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils suggests that concerns about stigma, negative evaluation, or societal perceptions play an important role in shaping how these parents function in social environments. This implies that parents who experience a high level of fear of judgement may struggle with participating in social activities, forming relationships, or engaging comfortably in community interactions. A probable explanation for this outcome is that the social stigma usually associated with disability in many communities may heighten parents' sensitivity to how others perceive them and their children. This heightened awareness can lead to withdrawal, avoidance of social gatherings, or reduced confidence in public settings. In contexts where disability is poorly understood or stigmatised, parents may feel scrutinised or blamed, which can in turn negatively affect their social adjustment. Conversely, parents with lower fear of judgement may adjust more successfully because they feel more accepted or supported within their social networks. The present finding aligns with the work of Green (2017), who reported that parents of children with disabilities often experience strong fears of

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being judged, and that these fears can significantly hinder their social participation, particularly in the early years of diagnosis. Green emphasised that feelings of shame, blame, or misunderstanding from others often reinforce social withdrawal among parents. In a similar vein, MacDonald *et al.* (2020) found that fear of social judgement was a strong predictor of reduced social functioning among parents of children with special needs, especially in communities where disability-related stigma remains persistent. Their study showed that parents who perceived high levels of social scrutiny tended to isolate themselves more readily and were less likely to seek support. These studies support the present finding by showing that fear of judgement can exert a substantial influence on parents' social adjustment, particularly when stigma is strong and supportive community structures are limited.

The finding that there is no significant relationship between self-doubt and the social adjustment of parents of hearing-impaired pupils suggests that parents' uncertainty about their abilities or decisions does not necessarily hinder their capacity to engage socially or adapt to societal expectations. One possible reason is that, despite experiencing self-doubt, these parents may rely on external support systems, shared experiences with other parents, or culturally ingrained values of perseverance and family responsibility to maintain their social functioning. Their ability to adjust socially may be more influenced by practical coping mechanisms and communal interactions than by internal feelings of inadequacy. This present finding aligns with the study by Guralnick (2020), who found that while self-doubt was common among parents of children with developmental challenges, it did not significantly predict their levels of social participation or interaction. Instead, factors such as community involvement, family support, and access to information played a greater role in their social adjustment. Similarly, research by Kyzar *et al.* (2017) emphasised that emotional factors like self-doubt can be moderated by the strength of support networks and parent advocacy groups, which often empower parents to function effectively despite personal insecurities. These findings suggest that self-doubt alone may not be a defining factor in determining how well parents of children with hearing impairments adjust socially.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that while internal emotional challenges such as stress and self-doubt may be managed or mitigated through personal resilience or support systems, the perception of social scrutiny or external judgement

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remains a key barrier to effective social adjustment. Overall, the study highlights the importance of addressing societal attitudes and stigma in interventions aimed at enhancing the social well-being of parents of children with hearing impairments.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in view of the findings of the study:

1. It is recommended that health institutions and support organisations should focus on reinforcing social support networks such as family, peer groups, and community-based associations to enhance the overall well-being and integration of parents of hearing-impaired children.
2. Community sensitisation and awareness programmes should be implemented to reduce stigma and negative perceptions associated with hearing impairment, thereby alleviating parents' fear of judgement and promoting their social engagement.
3. It is recommended that mental health and counselling services provided to parents of hearing-impaired children prioritise resilience-building, life skills, and adaptive coping strategies that support social functioning, as these may be more beneficial than interventions narrowly targeting emotional stress or self-doubt.

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Appendix

Psychological Variables and Social Adjustment Questionnaire for Parents (PVSAPHIPQ)

Instruction: Please, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the items by ticking () against any of the response options below.

- SA = Strongly Agree
 A = Agree
 D = Disagree
 SD = Strongly Disagree

Section A: Psychological Variables

S/N	Emotional stress	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I often feel overwhelmed by my emotions.				
2.	I experience frequent mood swings due to stress.				
3.	I feel emotionally drained at the end of most days.				
4.	Small problems tend to upset me more than they should.				
5.	I often feel helpless when faced with emotional challenges.				
	Fear of Judgement				
6.	Emotional stress has reduced my willingness to participate in school meetings				
7.	I get easily irritated during conversations with others due to the mental pressure I face at home.				
8.	Sometimes, I avoid going out because I am emotionally unprepared to deal with people's reactions to my child.				
9.	The emotional burden of caregiving has made me withdraw from community activities.				
10.	I feel embarrassed in public when people notice my child's hearing impairment.				

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	Self-Doubt				
11.	I often question whether I am doing enough for my child.				
12.	I lack confidence when making decisions about my child's education.				
13.	I feel unsure about how to handle my child's emotional needs.				
14.	I doubt my ability to teach my child basic life skills.				
15.	I avoid expressing my opinions because I think others know better.				

Section B: Social Adjustment

1.	I experience positive attitudes from others due to my child's hearing impairment.				
2.	I do not avoid conversations about my child's hearing challenges with neighbours or acquaintances.				
3.	My social life has not been affected since I discovered my child's hearing impairment.				
4.	I have adjusted well to the social challenges that come with raising a hearing-impaired child.				
5.	I do not feel embarrassed when people ask about my child's condition.				
6.	I am confident in expressing my child's needs in social settings.				
7.	I do not struggle to communicate with professionals (teachers, counsellors) about my child's condition.				
8.	I do not avoid public gatherings because I fear people's reactions to my child.				
9.	I do not feel isolated from my community because of my child's condition.				
10.	I feel comfortable discussing my child's hearing impairment with others.				