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Article

Behavioral Difficulties and Academic Performance Among Learners with Hearing Impairment in A Special Education Setting

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Abstract: This study determined the behavioral difficulties and academic performance of Grade 9 learners with hearing impairment in the Special Education Program of Zapatera National High School, Cebu City, during School Year 2026–2027, as basis for a Behavioral and Academic Support Intervention Plan. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design involving 32 learners. Respondents were described according to age and gender, primary mode of communication, and use of hearing or assistive devices. Behavioral difficulties were assessed in terms of emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, and peer relationship problems, while academic performance was examined in English, Mathematics, and Science. Findings revealed that most respondents were 14 to 15 years old, with females slightly outnumbering males. Filipino Sign Language was the most commonly used communication mode, while most learners did not use hearing or assistive devices. Overall, behavioral difficulties were low, with emotional symptoms, conduct problems, and hyperactivity or inattention described as Disagree, while peer relationship problems were described as Strongly Disagree. The learners obtained an overall academic average of 86.46, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. English obtained the highest average of 88.63, followed by science at 87.78, while Mathematics had the lowest average of 82.29. Results further revealed no significant relationship between behavioral difficulty dimensions and academic performance, as all p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance level.

Keywords: Behavioral difficulties, academic performance, learners with hearing impairment, emotional symptoms, conduct problems

Introduction

Education supports learners' intellectual, social, and emotional development by creating opportunities to acquire knowledge, communicate meaningfully, and participate in school life (Thakur, 2025). For learners with hearing impairment,

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equitable education requires accessible communication, responsive teaching, and support for behavioral adjustment because learning occurs through both academic instruction and social interaction. Hartman et al. (2023) emphasized that curriculum and instruction for deaf and hard-of-hearing students must account for their distinctive language and learning needs. Similarly, Szarkowski et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of coordinated, familycentered, and developmentally responsive support. Examining behavioral difficulties is therefore important because emotional symptoms, conduct problems, inattention, peer difficulties, and prosocial behavior may shape students' participation and achievement across English, Mathematics, and Science classes.

Despite inclusive and specialized educational provisions, learners with hearing impairment may encounter communication barriers, limited access to classroom discourse, social isolation, fatigue, and difficulty following rapid spoken instruction. These conditions can sometimes appear as inattentiveness, withdrawal, noncompliance, or weak peer interaction, even when the underlying concern is incomplete access to communication. Nightingale, Hollyer et al. (2025) reported that deaf children experience listening challenges across social contexts. Millett and Mulla (2025) likewise explained that hearing technologies can improve access, but their benefits depend on appropriate fitting, classroom use, and professional understanding. When teachers rate behavioral difficulties, they must therefore distinguish emotional or behavioral concerns from responses caused by inaccessible instruction, unsuitable communication modes, or inconsistent use of assistive devices in lessons.

When behavioral difficulties and communication-related barriers are not addressed, learners may participate less, complete fewer tasks, experience strained peer relationships, and show declining confidence in school. Emotional symptoms, conduct concerns, or hyperactivity and inattention can reduce the time and cognitive effort available for learning, while weak prosocial behavior may limit collaboration and classroom belonging. Mason, Marshall, and Morgan (2021) showed that executive function skills are important targets for deaf children because they influence self-regulation. Werfel and Hendricks (2023) also demonstrated that phonological processing contributes to reading and spelling among students with cochlear implants. These concerns may affect achievement in English, Mathematics, and Science, where comprehension, sustained attention, language processing, and active engagement are required for successful classroom performance and academic progress. Conducting the study therefore reflects both the researcher's academic preparation and actual teaching context and may contribute to the development of appropriate behavioral and academic interventions for learners in the SPED program. Existing research shows that the educational outcomes of deaf and hard-ofhearing learners are influenced by language access, instructional design, cognitive skills, technology, and social participation. Couvée, Wauters, and Knoors (2025) found variation in second-grade reading outcomes among children who were deaf or hard of hearing, indicating that academic performance is not uniform within this

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population.

Moreover, Jolly et al. (2024) further documented how access services shape deaf and hardof-hearing students' participation in educational environments. Other studies have examined executive functioning, literacy, communication technologies, and classroom accessibility; however, these strands are often investigated separately. Together, the literature suggests that behavioral functioning and academic performance should be examined in relation to learners' profiles, communication modes, and assistive-device use, in specialized school settings. Although studies have explored mental health, behavior, communication access, and academic outcomes among deaf and hard-of-hearing learners, limited evidence connects teacher-rated behavioral difficulties with subject-specific performance in English, Mathematics, and Science among learners in a Philippine SPED setting. Few localized studies also consider age, gender, type of hearing impairment, primary communication mode, and assistive-device use together. This gap limits school-based understanding of how behavioral and learner characteristics may relate to academic performance in one specific secondary SPED program. At Zapatera National High School, learners with hearing impairment may experience classroom situations involving difficulty following oral instructions, limited participation in group activities, peer communication challenges, inattention during lessons, and frustration when communication support is insufficient This study will determine the behavioral difficulties and academic performance of Grade 9 learners with hearing impairment at the SPED Program of Zapatera National High School, Cebu City, during School Year 2026–2027. Teachers will assess emotional 4 symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior, while learners' performance in English, Mathematics, and Science were examined.

Literature Review

Behavioral difficulties among learners with hearing impairment are important considerations in understanding their classroom participation, emotional well-being, and academic development. These difficulties may be examined through four dimensions: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, and peer relationship problems. The World Health Organization (2021) emphasized that hearing loss can affect communication, education, and social participation, particularly when appropriate support is unavailable. Hartman et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of recognizing the diverse language and learning needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing students when designing instructional practices. Hammad and Awed (2023) examined thinking styles and self-efficacy among Deaf and hard-of-hearing adolescents, providing insight into psychological factors associated with their learning experiences. Young et al. (2023) also addressed the well-being and self-determination of Deaf and hard-of-hearing young people, emphasizing the relevance of personal and social development. Meanwhile, Jolly et

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al. (2024) investigated students' experiences with real-time captioning services, demonstrating the importance of communication accessibility in educational participation. Hardebeck et al. (2026) explored the perspectives of students with hearing loss regarding participation in mainstream schools, drawing attention to difficulties associated with understanding communication and engaging in school activities. Lane et al. (2025) discussed research-based approaches to managing challenging behaviors in educational settings. Collectively, these studies provide a basis for examining how emotional symptoms, conduct problems, attention-related difficulties, and peer relationships may influence the school experiences of Grade 9 learners with hearing impairment. Teacher ratings of these dimensions can help identify behavioral concerns that may require appropriate classroom strategies, emotional support, and accessible communication practices.

Academic performance is another important indicator of learners' educational development, particularly in English, Mathematics, and Science, where students must understand instructions, process information, complete learning tasks, and demonstrate subject-specific competencies. Couvée et al. (2025) investigated variations in reading among children who are Deaf and hard of hearing, highlighting the importance of considering individual differences in literacy development. Such findings are particularly relevant to English, where vocabulary, reading comprehension, and language-related tasks are central to academic achievement. Millett and Mulla (2025) examined the role of hearing technologies in supporting students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, emphasizing the importance of understanding available communication and learning supports. Nilson and Zimmerman (2023) discussed self-regulated learning strategies that help students organize their academic activities, evaluate progress, and strengthen learning skills. Similarly, Wisniewski et al. (2020), through a meta-analysis of educational feedback research, demonstrated the importance of feedback in improving learning outcomes. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) explained the relationship between motivation and social cognitive processes, offering a foundation for understanding students' engagement in academic tasks. Efklides and Schwartz (2024) discussed metacognition and self-regulated learning, which are relevant to problem-solving and monitoring comprehension in Mathematics and Science. Furthermore, Alsalamah and Poppen (2023) examined educational transition experiences among young women who are Deaf and hard of hearing, emphasizing the importance of educational preparation and individualized support.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the behavioral difficulties and academic performance of learners with hearing impairment. The descriptive component examined the learners' demographic profiles, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, peer relationship problems, and academic performance in English, Mathematics, and

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Science. The correlational component determined the significant relationship between behavioral difficulties and academic performance at the 0.05 significance level. The study employed complete enumeration, including all eligible learners. Their teachers served as primary raters of behavioral difficulties based on classroom observations. The main research instrument was adapted from Goodman's (1997) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which assessed emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior. Academic performance was measured using the learners' official first grading period grades in English, Mathematics, and Science. Before data collection, the researcher secured permission from the school principal and informed participants about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and withdrawal rights. Teachers were oriented on questionnaire administration and completed assessments for individual learners. Academic grades were obtained from official school records with proper authorization. After collection, questionnaires were checked, coded, consolidated, and tabulated. Weighted mean and standard deviation measured behavioral difficulties using a five-point Likert scale. Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to determine the relationship between behavioral difficulties and academic performance.

Results

Table 1. Emotional Symptoms

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner frequently appears worried or anxious during classroom activities.	2.08	1.06	Disagree
2. The learner becomes easily discouraged when academic tasks are difficult.	2.58	0.97	Disagree
3. The learner appears sad, withdrawn, or emotionally upset during class.	1.63	0.77	Strongly Disagree
4. The learner shows fear or nervousness when asked to participate or perform in front of others.	1.96	0.91	Disagree
5. The learner frequently complains of physical discomfort when experiencing stress or academic pressure.	1.63	0.82	Strongly Disagree
Aggregate Mean	1.98		Disagree
Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.66	

Table 1 presents the level of emotional symptoms among learners with hearing impairment, as rated by their teachers. The aggregate mean of 1.98 and standard deviation of 0.66, interpreted as *Disagree*, indicate that emotional difficulties were generally not frequently observed. Becoming easily discouraged when academic tasks

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were difficult obtained the highest mean of 2.58, while appearing sad or withdrawn and complaining of physical discomfort both received the lowest mean of 1.63. These findings suggest relatively low teacher-observed emotional symptoms, although learners may still need encouragement and emotional support when encountering challenging academic tasks.

Table 2. Conduct Problems

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner frequently loses their temper when corrected or frustrated.	2.00	0.93	Disagree
2. The learner deliberately refuses to follow clearly communicated classroom rules.	1.88	0.80	Disagree
3. The learner argues with, threatens, or behaves aggressively toward classmates.	1.67	0.56	Strongly Disagree
4. The learner is dishonest about schoolwork, classroom incidents, or personal actions.	2.13	0.80	Disagree
5. The learner intentionally disturbs lessons or interferes with the work of others.	1.83	0.56	Disagree
Aggregate Mean	1.90		Disagree
Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.55	

Table 2 presents the level of conduct problems among learners with hearing impairment, as rated by their teachers. The aggregate mean of 1.90 and standard deviation of 0.55, interpreted as Disagree, indicate that conduct problems were generally infrequently observed. Dishonesty about schoolwork or classroom incidents obtained the highest mean of 2.13, followed by losing one's temper when corrected (2.00). Aggressive behavior toward classmates received the lowest mean of 1.67, interpreted as Strongly Disagree. These findings suggest that learners generally demonstrated appropriate classroom conduct, although continued guidance in honesty, emotional control, and responsible behavior may further support a positive learning environment.

Table 3. Hyperactivity or Inattention

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner has difficulty maintaining attention during classroom instruction.	1.96	0.75	Disagree
2. The learner is easily distracted even when communication and instructional materials are accessible.	2.04	0.75	Disagree
3. The learner frequently leaves tasks unfinished because of limited concentration.	1.88	0.74	Disagree
4. The learner acts or responds impulsively without waiting for	1.96	0.86	Disagree

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instructions or their turn.			
5. The learner displays excessive restlessness that interferes with classroom participation.	1.79	0.83	Strongly Disagree
Aggregate Mean	1.93		Disagree
Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.60	

Table 3 presents the level of hyperactivity or inattention among learners with hearing impairment, as rated by their teachers. The aggregate mean of 1.93 and standard deviation of 0.60, interpreted as Disagree, indicate that hyperactivity and inattention were generally infrequently observed. Being easily distracted despite accessible instructional materials obtained the highest mean of 2.04, followed by difficulty maintaining attention and impulsive responses, both with means of 1.96. Excessive restlessness received the lowest mean of 1.79, interpreted as Strongly Disagree. These findings suggest that learners generally demonstrated appropriate attention and classroom behavior, although continued use of accessible instruction, clear directions, and engaging learning activities may further support concentration and task completion.

Table 4. Peer Relationship Problems

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner has difficulty establishing or maintaining friendships with classmates.	1.71	0.62	Strongly Disagree
2. The learner usually avoids or withdraws from pair or group activities.	1.67	0.56	Strongly Disagree
3. The learner is frequently excluded, teased, or bullied by peers.	1.58	0.50	Strongly Disagree
4. The learner has difficulty communicating or resolving disagreements with classmates.	1.63	0.58	Strongly Disagree
5. The learner prefers to remain alone even when accessible opportunities for peer interaction are provided.	1.79	0.59	Strongly Disagree
Aggregate Mean	1.68		Strongly Disagree
Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.50	

Table 4 presents the level of peer relationship problems among learners with hearing impairment, as rated by their teachers. The aggregate mean of 1.68 and standard deviation of 0.50, interpreted as Strongly Disagree, indicate that peer relationship difficulties were generally rarely observed. Preferring to remain alone despite accessible opportunities for interaction obtained the highest mean of 1.79, while experiencing exclusion, teasing, or bullying received the lowest mean of 1.58. All indicators were interpreted as Strongly Disagree. These findings suggest that learners generally maintained positive peer relationships and participated in classroom interactions. Continued opportunities for collaborative activities, accessible communication, and inclusive peer engagement may further strengthen their social participation and sense of belonging.

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Table 5. Academic Performance of the Respondents According to Subject

Subject	Average Grade	Description
English	88.63	Very Satisfactory
Mathematics	82.29	Satisfactory
Science	87.78	Very Satisfactory
Overall	86.46	Very Satisfactory

Table 5 presents the academic performance of learners with hearing impairment in English, Mathematics, and Science. The overall average grade of 86.46, interpreted as Very Satisfactory, indicates generally favorable academic achievement. English obtained the highest average grade of 88.63, followed by Science at 87.78, both classified as Very Satisfactory. Mathematics recorded the lowest average grade of 82.29, interpreted as Satisfactory. These findings suggest that learners performed relatively better in English and Science, while Mathematics may require additional instructional support, accessible learning materials, and targeted activities to strengthen mathematical understanding and achievement.

Table 6. Relationship Between Behavioral Difficulty Dimensions and Academic Performance

Behavioral Difficulty Dimension	rho-value	p-value	Degree of Relationship	Remarks
Emotional Symptoms	-0.161	0.453	Low Negative	Not Significant
Conduct Problems	0.301	0.153	Low Positive	Not Significant
Hyperactivity or Inattention	0.004	0.985	Negligible	Not Significant
Peer Relationship Problems	-0.101	0.640	Low Negative	Not Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 6 presents the relationship between behavioral difficulty dimensions and academic performance among learners with hearing impairment. Emotional symptoms ($\varrho = -0.161$, $p = 0.453$) and peer relationship problems ($\varrho = -0.101$, $p = 0.640$) showed low negative correlations, while conduct problems ($\varrho = 0.301$, $p = 0.153$) showed a low positive correlation. Hyperactivity or inattention ($\varrho = 0.004$, $p = 0.985$) demonstrated a negligible relationship. Since all p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance level, none of the relationships was statistically significant. Thus, the null hypotheses were not rejected. These findings indicate that the measured behavioral difficulties were not significantly associated with academic performance in this group of learners.

Discussions

The findings of the study revealed that learners with hearing impairment enrolled in the Special Education (SPED) Program of Zapatera National High School generally demonstrated low levels of behavioral difficulties, as rated by their teachers. Emotional symptoms obtained an aggregate mean of 1.98, followed by hyperactivity or inattention (1.93), conduct problems (1.90), and peer relationship problems (1.68). These results

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indicated that teachers generally did not observe frequent emotional distress, disruptive behavior, attention-related difficulties, or negative peer interactions among the learners. Although behavioral difficulties were relatively low, certain concerns were identified, particularly discouragement when academic tasks became difficult, occasional dishonesty regarding schoolwork, distractibility, and preference for being alone. Regarding academic performance, the learners achieved an overall average grade of 86.46, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. English recorded the highest average grade of 88.63, followed by Science at 87.78, while Mathematics obtained the lowest average grade of 82.29, interpreted as Satisfactory. These findings suggest that the learners generally maintained favorable classroom behavior and academic achievement. However, Mathematics remained an area requiring additional instructional attention. Accessible learning materials, visual teaching strategies, individualized academic guidance, and opportunities for positive peer interaction may further strengthen learners' educational experiences and overall development.

Furthermore, the study revealed that none of the four behavioral difficulty dimensions had a statistically significant relationship with academic performance. Emotional symptoms ($\varrho = -0.161$, $p = 0.453$) and peer relationship problems ($\varrho = -0.101$, $p = 0.640$) demonstrated low negative relationships, while conduct problems ($\varrho = 0.301$, $p = 0.153$) showed a low positive relationship. Hyperactivity or inattention ($\varrho = 0.004$, $p = 0.985$) exhibited a negligible relationship. Since all p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance level, the null hypotheses were not rejected. These findings indicate that the behavioral difficulties measured in the study were not significantly associated with learners' academic performance. Nevertheless, the absence of statistically significant relationships does not imply that behavioral and emotional concerns are unimportant to learners' educational experiences. Academic performance may also be influenced by instructional accessibility, communication support, individual learning needs, teaching strategies, and the availability of appropriate accommodations, although these factors were not directly tested in the study. Therefore, the findings emphasize the importance of providing comprehensive educational support that addresses both academic and socioemotional needs.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that learners with hearing impairment enrolled in the Special Education (SPED) Program of Zapatera National High School generally exhibited low levels of behavioral difficulties in terms of emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, and peer relationship problems, as rated by their teachers. The learners also demonstrated a Very Satisfactory level of academic performance, particularly in English and Science, while Mathematics obtained a Satisfactory rating, indicating a need for additional instructional support. Furthermore, the study established that none of the behavioral difficulty dimensions had a statistically significant relationship with academic performance. Thus, the null hypotheses were not rejected, indicating that variations in teacher-rated behavioral difficulties were not

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significantly associated with differences in learners' academic achievement. Nevertheless, the findings emphasized the importance of continuously addressing learners' behavioral, emotional, social, and academic needs through accessible and individualized educational support.

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