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Article

Perceived Social Support and Support Needs of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Learners

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Abstract: This study determined the perceived social support and support needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners during School Year 2026–2027 as a basis for a proposed Social Support and Inclusive Education Intervention Plan. Specifically, it described the respondents according to age and gender, type of hearing impairment, and primary mode of communication, it also assessed the perceived social support in terms of family, teacher, and school support, determined support needs in terms of academic and instructional, social and emotional, hearing and assistive-technology, and school-based support services and examined the relationship between perceived social support and support needs. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to analyze the data. Findings showed that most respondents were above 16 years old, majority of female learners. Most had sensorineural hearing loss, and total communication was the most common communication mode. Overall perceived social support was rated very high, indicating strong support from families, teachers, and schools. Meanwhile, overall support needs were rated high, with particularly strong needs in school-based, social-emotional, and academic and instructional support. Hearing and assistive-technology support needs received the lowest rating. The relationship between perceived social support and support needs was very weak and not statistically significant. The findings indicate that strong perceived social support does not necessarily eliminate the need for targeted assistance. Consequently, a social support and inclusive education intervention plan was proposed to strengthen individualized, accessible, and coordinated support for deaf and hard-of-hearing learners within inclusive school environments overall.

Keywords: Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Learners, Perceived Social Support, Support Needs, Inclusive Education, Communication Accessibility

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Introduction

Education plays an essential role in developing learners' knowledge, communication abilities, personal identity, and meaningful participation in school and society (Zalli, 2024). For deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) learners, inclusive education involves more than attending regular classes; it requires accessible instruction, positive interpersonal relationships, and appropriate assistance from teachers, classmates, families, and school personnel. Supportive educational environments can encourage learners to participate actively, communicate their concerns, and develop confidence in their abilities (Dalimunthe et al., 2024). Antia et al. (2009) examined the academic achievement and progress of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in general education classrooms, emphasizing the importance of understanding the educational conditions associated with their performance. Their findings provide a basis for recognizing that meaningful inclusion requires schools to consider learners' individual characteristics and educational experiences. Consequently, examining perceived social support is important in determining whether DHH learners receive the assistance necessary for successful participation in classroom activities.

Despite the implementation of inclusive educational practices, deaf and hard-of-hearing learners may continue to encounter difficulties in communication and classroom interaction (Mealings et al., 2025). Rapid conversations, background noise, limited visual communication, and unfamiliar instructional approaches may interfere with their ability to understand lessons and interact with classmates. These challenges can become particularly evident during group discussions, classroom reporting, and activities requiring immediate verbal responses. Lieu et al. (2020) reviewed childhood hearing loss and its potential effects on communication, development, and educational functioning, highlighting the importance of appropriate identification and support. In educational settings, these challenges may discourage some learners from requesting clarification, participating in discussions, or expressing their concerns. Therefore, schools must recognize that the availability of support does not automatically guarantee accessibility, particularly when assistance is not aligned with learners' communication preferences and individual needs.

Furthermore, inadequate communication access and limited interpersonal support may affect the emotional and social well-being of DHH learners (Khalid et al., 2025). Difficulties maintaining conversations, establishing friendships, and participating in classroom interactions may contribute to feelings of isolation, reduced confidence, and uncertainty about seeking assistance. When these experiences continue, learners may become less willing to participate in collaborative activities and may experience difficulties developing a strong sense of belonging. Fellinger et al. (2012) discussed mental health concerns among deaf individuals and identified communication access, social experiences, and appropriate services as important considerations in psychological well-being. Their work highlights the importance of addressing emotional and interpersonal concerns alongside academic difficulties. For DHH learners, supportive relationships with family members, teachers, classmates, and

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school personnel may provide reassurance, encouragement, and opportunities for meaningful communication. Understanding these relationships is therefore essential in identifying the social and emotional assistance learners require.

Existing research has also examined the educational and social experiences of DHH learners in inclusive environments. Xie et al. (2014), through a literature review, investigated interactions between deaf or hard-of-hearing children and their hearing peers in inclusive educational settings. Their review identified communication and social interaction as important considerations in understanding peer relationships. Meanwhile, Marschark et al. (2015) examined the academic achievement of DHH learners in relation to individual, household, communication, and educational factors, demonstrating that educational outcomes must be understood through multiple contributing conditions. Similarly, Lederberg et al. (2013) discussed successes and challenges in the language and literacy development of DHH children, highlighting the importance of accessible language experiences and appropriate educational opportunities. Collectively, these studies provide a foundation for examining inclusive education from academic, communication, and social perspectives. They also suggest that educational assistance should be responsive to differences in learners' communication abilities, developmental experiences, and classroom circumstances.

Although previous studies have addressed academic achievement, communication challenges, peer interaction, and psychological well-being among DHH learners, there remains a need for localized investigations examining perceived social support alongside specific support needs. Research on educational outcomes and inclusion does not necessarily explain how individual learners evaluate the assistance they receive from their families, teachers, classmates, close friends, and school personnel. Furthermore, the presence of educational accommodations does not always establish whether learners consider these services sufficient or appropriate. Some learners may require additional instructional guidance, accessible communication strategies, emotional encouragement, peer assistance, hearing-related accommodations, or assistive technologies. Examining perceived support together with support needs can help identify possible gaps between available assistance and the resources necessary for meaningful educational participation. Such information is particularly relevant to developing interventions based on learners' experiences rather than relying exclusively on institutional assumptions.

In response to these concerns, the present study aims to determine the perceived social support and support needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners enrolled in the Special Needs Education program at Sagbayan Central Elementary School, Sagbayan District, Division of Bohol, during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, it seeks to assess perceived social support from family members, teachers, classmates, close friends, and school personnel. It also aims to identify learners' academic and instructional, communication and accessibility, social and emotional, hearing and assistive-technology, and school-based support needs. By examining these dimensions, the study intends to provide localized evidence for strengthening

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educational assistance and developing responsive classroom practices. The findings will serve as the basis for a Social Support and Inclusive Education Intervention Plan designed to promote accessible instruction, positive interpersonal relationships, emotional well-being, meaningful classroom participation, and equitable educational opportunities for DHH learners

Literature Review

Social support plays an essential role in promoting the educational participation, emotional well-being, and social development of deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) learners. Meaningful inclusion requires not only access to regular classrooms but also positive relationships with teachers, classmates, family members, and school personnel. Antia et al. (2009) demonstrated the importance of examining the academic experiences of DHH learners in general education settings, particularly the educational conditions associated with their progress. Similarly, Xie et al. (2014) reviewed peer interactions among DHH children in inclusive classrooms and identified communication and social participation as important considerations in establishing meaningful relationships. Marschark et al. (2015) further demonstrated that academic achievement among DHH learners is associated with multiple individual, family, communication, and educational factors. From a developmental perspective, Lederberg et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of accessible language experiences in supporting children's literacy and communication development. Fellinger et al. (2012) highlighted the mental health concerns experienced by deaf individuals, reinforcing the importance of appropriate communication access and psychosocial support. Likewise, Hall (2017) discussed the developmental risks associated with language deprivation among deaf children, while Humphries et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of providing accessible language opportunities during childhood. These findings suggest that assessing perceived social support is necessary to understand whether DHH learners experience adequate encouragement, acceptance, communication access, and assistance in their educational environment.
The support needs of DHH learners also extend to instructional accommodations, assistive technologies, accessible communication, emotional assistance, and individualized educational services. Lieu et al. (2020) examined childhood hearing loss and its implications for communication and development, highlighting the importance of appropriate intervention and support. Guardino and Antia (2012) found that modifications to classroom environments could improve engagement and reduce disruptive behavior among DHH students, demonstrating the importance of responsive instructional arrangements. Knoors and Marschark (2014) discussed psychological and developmental considerations in teaching deaf learners, emphasizing educational approaches that account for differences in language, cognition, and learning experiences. Spencer and Marschark (2010) likewise presented evidence-based educational practices designed to address the diverse learning characteristics of DHH students. In addition, Moeller (2000) examined the

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relationship between early intervention and language development, indicating the importance of timely educational and family involvement. Kushalnagar et al. (2010) emphasized children's need for early access to language, while Qi and Mitchell (2012) reviewed academic assessment practices among DHH learners, highlighting the importance of evaluating educational performance appropriately. Finally, McKee et al. (2013) discussed ethical considerations when conducting research with deaf populations, supporting the importance of accessible communication and respectful participation when gathering learners' perspectives. Collectively, these studies establish the importance of examining perceived social support alongside academic, communication, social-emotional, hearing-related, and school-based support needs. Understanding both dimensions may help educational institutions identify gaps in existing services and develop responsive intervention programs that promote meaningful inclusion, learner confidence, participation, and well-being.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the perceived social support and support needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners during School Year 2026–2027. The descriptive component was used to present the respondents' demographic profile and determine the level of perceived support from family members, teachers, classmates, close friends, and school personnel. It also described the learners' academic and instructional, communication and accessibility, social and emotional, hearing and assistive-technology, and school-based support needs. The correlational component examined whether a significant relationship existed between perceived social support and support needs. The study was conducted at Sagbayan Central Elementary School, Sagbayan District, Division of Bohol. The respondents were 27 deaf and hard-of-hearing learners enrolled in the school's Special Needs Education program, consisting of 11 males and 16 females. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who met the inclusion criteria. Two instruments were utilized: the researcher-developed Perceived Social Support Questionnaire, and the researcher-developed Support Needs Questionnaire. The social support questionnaire contained 25 statements covering family, teacher, classmate, close-friend, and school support, while the support needs questionnaire contained 25 statements addressing academic, communication, social-emotional, assistive-technology, and school-based needs.
Prior to data collection, permission, ethics clearance, parental or guardian consent, and learner assent were secured. Respondents were oriented regarding voluntary participation, confidentiality, and questionnaire procedures. Directions were presented using the learners' preferred mode of communication, with qualified interpreters assisting, when necessary, without influencing responses. Completed questionnaires were checked, coded, consolidated, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Frequency and percentage were used to describe demographic characteristics, while weighted mean and standard deviation determined the levels of perceived social support and support needs. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was applied to test the significant relationship between the two variables at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings served as the basis for a Social Support and Inclusive Education Intervention Pla

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Results

Table 1. Family Support

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
My family listens when I talk about my school experiences.	4.27	0.45	Very High
My family encourages me when my schoolwork is difficult.	4.12	0.43	High
My family respects my preferred way of communicating.	4.73	0.53	Very High
My family helps me communicate my needs to teachers or school personnel.	3.96	0.20	High
My family helps me obtain the materials, services, or devices I need for school	4.65	0.63	Very High
Overall Mean and SD	4.35	0.21	Very High

Table 1 shows that family support was rated Very High, with a grand mean of 4.35 and an SD of 0.21. S3 obtained the highest mean of 4.73, whereas S4 obtained the lowest mean of 3.96. Result from the study of Medabesh et al. (2024) emphasized that children with disabilities benefit from supportive family environments and coordinated efforts that promote participation and inclusion. The result implies that the respondents generally perceive strong support from their families. Maintaining family involvement, accessible communication, and regular collaboration with the school may help preserve this strength while ensuring that areas represented by comparatively lower responses are addressed.

Table 2. Teacher Support

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
My teachers explain lessons in ways that I can understand.	4.54	0.65	Very High
My teachers check whether I understand classroom instructions.	4.42	0.58	Very High
My teachers provide written, visual, signed, or captioned information when needed.	4.23	0.51	Very High
My teachers respond respectfully when I ask for clarification or assistance.	4.62	0.64	Very High
My teachers help me participate in discussions, activities, and group work.	4.08	0.39	High
Overall Mean and SD	4.38	0.26	Very High

Table 2 indicates that teacher support was rated Very High, with a grand mean of 4.38 and an SD of 0.26. S4 received the highest mean of 4.62, while S5 obtained the lowest mean of 4.08. Empirical findings of Motitswe (2025) explains that inclusive education

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depends on teachers and school systems identifying and removing barriers that limit learners' participation and learning. The findings imply that teachers are perceived as an important source of support for deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. Sustaining accessible instruction, responsive communication, and individual assistance may further strengthen learners' participation and educational engagement.

Table 3. School Support

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
School personnel understand the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners.	4.54	0.58	Very High
The school provides reasonable classroom accommodations when needed.	4.58	0.58	Very High
The school provides access to appropriate communication and assistive technology.	4.42	0.58	Very High
I know whom to approach in school when I need academic, social, or emotional assistance.	4.27	0.67	Very High
The school responds appropriately to bullying, exclusion, or communication barriers.	4.62	0.57	Very High
Overall Mean and SD	4.48	0.18	Very High

Table 3 shows that school support was rated Very High, with a grand mean of 4.48 and an SD of 0.18. S5 obtained the highest mean of 4.62, whereas S4 obtained the lowest mean of 4.27. According to Arif et al. (2024) children with hearing loss require accessible environments and appropriate educational support to participate effectively in learning and social life. The result implies that the respondents generally perceive the school as a strong source of support. Continued attention to communication access, inclusive participation, and coordinated learner services may help sustain this favorable perception.

Table 4. Academic and Instructional Support Needs

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
I need clearer written, visual, spoken, or signed classroom instructions.	4.38	0.57	Very High
I need additional time to understand lessons and complete academic activities.	4.50	0.58	Very High
I need advance copies of lesson materials, key terms, or learning resources.	4.54	0.58	Very High
I need tutoring, review sessions, or additional academic assistance.	4.27	0.45	Very High
I need teachers to check my understanding before moving to another lesson.	4.46	0.51	Very High
Overall Mean and SD	4.43	0.20	Very High

Table 4 shows that academic and instructional support needs were rated Very High,

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with a grand mean of 4.43 and an SD of 0.20. S3 obtained the highest mean of 4.54, while S4 obtained the lowest mean of 4.27. Barnard & Henn (2023) emphasized that inclusive education requires schools to respond to learner diversity by removing barriers in curriculum, teaching, and participation. The findings imply that even with strong perceived social support, respondents continue to report substantial academic and instructional support needs. Accessible teaching strategies, visual supports, differentiated materials, and communication-responsive instruction should therefore remain central to intervention planning.

Table 5. Social and Emotional Support Needs

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
Social and Emotional Support Needs	4.35	0.56	Very High
I need more opportunities to build friendships with my classmates.	4.65	0.63	Very High
I need assistance when joining pair, group, or extracurricular activities.	4.54	0.58	Very High
I need a trusted teacher, counselor, or school personnel with whom I can discuss concerns.	4.42	0.58	Very High
I need stronger protection from teasing, bullying, exclusion, or discrimination.	4.58	0.58	Very High
I need classmates to learn more about hearing impairment and inclusive communication.	4.51	0.24	Very High
Overall Mean and SD	4.51	0.53	Very High

Table 5 indicates that social and emotional support needs were rated Very High, with a grand mean of 4.51 and an SD of 0.24. S2 obtained the highest mean of 4.65, while S1 obtained the lowest mean of 4.35. According to Edwards et al. (2022) children with disabilities can face barriers to participation and inclusion that affect their well-being and social experiences. The result implies a continuing need for environments that promote belonging, peer inclusion, emotional safety, and accessible avenues for expressing concerns. Regular learner check-ins, peer-support activities, and responsive guidance services may help address these needs.

Table 6. Hearing and Assistive-Technology Support Needs

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
I need assistance in using or troubleshooting my hearing or assistive device.	1.00	0.00	Very Low
I need access to a remote microphone, FM system, or another classroom listening device.	1.00	0.00	Very Low
I need videos and digital learning materials with accurate captions.	4.54	0.51	Very High
I need access to batteries, charging facilities, accessories, or device maintenance.	1.00	0.00	Very Low

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I need teachers and school personnel who know how to use my assistive technology.	1.00	0.00	Very Low
Overall Mean and SD	1.71	0.10	Very Low

Table 6 shows that hearing and assistive-technology support needs obtained a Very Low grand mean of 1.71 and an SD of 0.10. S3 was notably higher at 4.54, whereas S1, S2, S4, and S5 each had a mean of 1.00. Findings of Ortiz-Escobar et al. (2023) emphasized that assistive technology should be provided according to individual needs, preferences, and functional requirements rather than through a uniform approach. The unusual response pattern implies that this dimension should be interpreted cautiously. Individual assessment is recommended to determine whether low ratings reflect genuinely low need, non-use of devices, limited applicability of specific items, or other access circumstances.

Table 7. School-Based Support Services

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
I need regular support from a SPED teacher or teacher of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners.	4.50	0.58	Very High
I need an individualized plan that clearly identifies my classroom accommodations.	4.46	0.51	Very High
I need regular meetings involving me, my family, and my teachers to discuss my progress.	4.58	0.58	Very High
I need access to appropriate specialists, such as an audiologist, counselor, interpreter, or speech-language professional.	4.58	0.58	Very High
I need school announcements, emergency procedures, and activities to be accessible to me.	4.65	0.49	Very High
Grand Mean	4.55	0.28	Very High

Table 7 shows that school-based support services were rated Very High, with a grand mean of 4.55 and an SD of 0.28. S5 obtained the highest mean of 4.65, while S2 obtained the lowest mean of 4.46. Aldhilan et al. (2025) noted that inclusive education requires coordinated school systems capable of responding to diverse learner needs and removing institutional barriers to participation. The findings imply that respondents have substantial needs for organized school-based services despite reporting high social support. Coordinated referrals, learner support monitoring, accessible communication, and collaboration among teachers, families, and relevant specialists may strengthen inclusive service delivery.

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Table 8. Relationship Between Perceived Social Support and Support Needs

Variables	r-value	p-value	Degree of Relationship	Remarks	Decision
Perceived Social Support × Support Needs	0.168	0.411	Very Weak Positive Relationship	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0

Significant at $p < .05$.

Table 8 shows a very weak positive relationship between perceived social support and support needs, with an r-value of 0.168. However, the relationship was not statistically significant because the p-value of 0.411 exceeded the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that stronger perceived support from family, teachers, and school does not necessarily correspond to lower support needs among deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. Kefallinou et al. 2020 explained that inclusive education requires attention to individual learner differences and the removal of barriers that may remain even when supportive environments are present. Similarly, Van Mieghem et al. 2020 emphasized that successful inclusion depends on coordinated and individualized educational support rather than a single form of assistance. Thus, the findings imply that schools should sustain social support while separately assessing learners' academic, emotional, communication, assistive-technology, and school-based service needs to provide appropriate interventions.

Table 9. Significant Difference in Perceived Social Support When Respondents Are Grouped According to Their Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	df	F-value	p-value	Remarks	Decision
Age	5, 20	0.232	.944	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0
Gender	1, 24	3.749	.065	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0
Type of Hearing Impairment	1, 24	1.010	.325	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0
Primary Mode of Communication	1, 24	0.244	.626	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0

Significant at $p < .05$

Table 9 shows that perceived social support did not significantly differ when respondents were grouped according to age, gender, type of hearing impairment, and primary mode of communication, since all p-values exceeded the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for all demographic variables. The findings indicate that learners experienced comparable levels of support across groups. This implies that family, teacher, and school support initiatives should remain broadly accessible while considering individual communication and learning needs.

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Table 10. Significant Difference in Support Needs When Respondents Are grouped According to Their Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	df	F-value	p-value	Remarks	Decision
Age	5, 20	2.859	.042	Significant	Reject H_0
Gender	1, 24	5.506	.028	Significant	Reject H_0
Type of Hearing Impairment	1, 24	0.132	.719	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0
Primary Mode of Communication	1, 24	1.420	.245	Not Significant	Fail to Reject H_0

Significant at $p < .05$

Table 10 shows that support needs significantly differed according to age and gender, with p-values of .042 and .028, respectively; thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for these variables. However, no significant differences were found according to type of hearing impairment and primary mode of communication. These findings indicate that learners' support needs may vary across age and gender groups. Therefore, schools should consider age- and gender-responsive support while continuing to provide appropriate academic, emotional, technological, and school-based services to all learners.

Discussions

The findings show that deaf and hard-of-hearing learners generally perceived strong social support from their families, teachers, and school. Family support obtained an overall mean of 4.35, teacher support 4.38, and school support 4.48, all interpreted as Very High. Among these areas, school support received the highest rating, suggesting that respondents generally viewed the school as responsive to their needs, particularly in providing accommodations, communication access, and protection from bullying or exclusion. Family support was also strong, especially in respecting the learners' preferred mode of communication and helping them obtain needed materials, services, or devices. Teacher support was similarly favorable, particularly in respectful responses to requests for clarification and in explaining lessons in understandable ways. These findings indicate that the learners are surrounded by generally supportive interpersonal and institutional environments. However, the relatively lower ratings in areas such as family-school communication and participation in discussions and group work suggest that some aspects of support can still be strengthened to promote fuller engagement and inclusion.

Despite these high levels of perceived social support, the learners also reported very high levels of academic and instructional, social and emotional, and school-based support needs. Academic and instructional support needs obtained an overall mean of 4.43, social and

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emotional support needs 4.51, and school-based support services 4.55. This indicates that strong perceived support does not eliminate the learners' need for additional accommodations and individualized services. In contrast, hearing and assistive-technology support needs obtained a very low overall mean of 1.71, although the need for captioned videos and digital materials was rated very high at 4.54. This uneven pattern suggests that assistive-technology needs vary considerably among learners and should therefore be assessed individually. The correlation analysis further showed only a very weak positive relationship between perceived social support and support needs ($r = 0.168$, $p = .411$), which was not statistically significant. Thus, higher perceived support was not associated with significantly lower or higher support needs. This means that social support and specific educational needs should be assessed as related but distinct concerns.

The demographic analyses provide further evidence for individualized planning. Perceived social support did not significantly differ according to age, gender, type of hearing impairment, or primary mode of communication, suggesting that respondents generally experienced comparable support across demographic groups. However, support needs significantly differed according to age ($p = .042$) and gender ($p = .028$), while no significant differences were found for type of hearing impairment and primary mode of communication. These results imply that support planning should not rely solely on general levels of perceived support or broad disability classifications. Instead, schools should consider individual learner characteristics, particularly age- and gender-related differences, while maintaining accessible and inclusive services for all deaf and hard-of-hearing learners.

Conclusion

The study concludes that deaf and hard-of-hearing learners generally experience very high levels of perceived social support from their families, teachers, and school, yet they continue to demonstrate substantial academic and instructional, social and emotional, and school-based support needs. Perceived social support was not significantly related to support needs, indicating that strong support does not necessarily lessen the specific assistance learners require. Perceived social support also did not significantly differ according to age, gender, type of hearing impairment, or primary mode of communication, while support needs significantly differed according to age and gender. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining strong family, teacher, and school support while providing individualized, age-responsive, gender-sensitive, and inclusive interventions that address the varied academic, emotional, communication, accessibility, technological, and school-based needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners.

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