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Tingog sa Gugma: A Phenomenological Study on Parenting Hard-of-Hearing Children

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of parents and guardians raising hard-of-hearing children at Jagna Central Elementary School, Bohol, Philippines, during School Year 2025–2026, focusing on caregiving challenges, coping strategies, support systems, and intervention needs. Anchored in the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, Social Support Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design involving eight purposively selected parents and guardians. Data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and examined using thematic analysis. Findings revealed interconnected communication, emotional, educational, financial, and social challenges, particularly difficulties understanding children's needs, emotional acceptance, discrimination, and limited access to specialized services. Participants demonstrated resilience through adaptive communication strategies, patience, unconditional love, acceptance, faith, and perseverance. Family, school, and community support contributed to alleviating caregiving burdens, although assistance remained limited and inconsistent. The study concludes that strengthening parental competencies, collaborative partnerships, and accessible institutional services is essential to improving family well-being and promoting disability inclusion. Four targeted intervention programs were recommended to enhance parental resilience, sign language proficiency, school–family–community collaboration, and access to essential services. Although the study was limited to eight participants within a single educational setting, it provides a contextual foundation for responsive family-centered interventions. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Its contribution to educational, social, community, and institutional sustainability lies in advancing inclusive educational practices, coordinated support services, and equitable developmental opportunities for hard-of-hearing children and their families.

Keywords: Special Education, Qualitative Phenomenological Research, Caregiving Challenges, Coping Strategies, Family-Centered Interventions, Hard-Of-Hearing Children, Inclusive Education, Parental Resilience, Sign Language, Social Support, Jagna, Bohol, Philippines

1. Introduction

Parenting hard-of-hearing children entails challenges involving communication, emotional adjustment, educational participation, and access to appropriate support services. Parents and guardians must adapt their caregiving practices and make informed decisions while responding to their children's developmental and educational needs. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents and guardians raising hard-of-hearing children at Jagna Central Elementary School in Bohol, Philippines, during School Year 2025–2026. It examined their challenges, coping strategies, support systems, and personal insights as a basis for developing responsive family-centered intervention programs.

1.1 Parenting Challenges and Emotional Well-Being

Raising hard-of-hearing children requires considerable emotional resilience, adaptability, and sustained parental involvement. Communication barriers, financial responsibilities, developmental uncertainties, and educational decisions may intensify caregiving demands and affect family well-being. Dikeç et al. (2023) found that parents of children with hearing loss experienced anxiety, sadness, and psychological burdens associated with caregiving responsibilities, which they managed through prayer, social support, and personal adjustment. Marie et al. (2023) similarly identified parental stress and substantial needs for informational and social assistance, emphasizing the importance of support systems responsive to individual family circumstances. The present study specifically focused on hard-of-hearing children while recognizing the relevance of literature involving deaf children and children with varying degrees of hearing loss. These populations may differ in communication preferences, educational requirements, and assistive technology needs.

1.2 Parental Coping, Communication, and Support Systems

Effective coping among parents of children with hearing loss is influenced by access to professional guidance, family assistance, and community resources. Gunjawate et al. (2023) identified family circumstances, child-related concerns, and service accessibility as major sources of parental stress, emphasizing the importance of strengthened support systems. Reynolds et al. (2023) reported that delayed identification, intervention difficulties, and uncertainty regarding communication approaches complicated parental decision-making. Family-centered intervention emphasizes parental involvement, informed decision-making, and accessible services (Moeller et al., 2024; Szarkowski et al., 2024). Rufsvold et al. (2023) found that professional guidance and connections with other families strengthened parental empowerment and advocacy. Ritmeester et al. (2026) further emphasized the importance of accessible communication training and sustained professional assistance, while Aanondsen et al. (2023) identified associations between communicative competence, mental health, and quality of life among deaf and hard-of-hearing children. These findings establish the importance of coordinated interventions that address both children's developmental needs and parental well-being.

1.3 Global, National, and Local Context of Hearing Loss and Inclusive Education

Globally, equitable access to hearing care remains an important public health and social development concern (World Health Organization, 2021). Hatzopoulos et al. (2025) identified barriers to childhood hearing intervention across African settings, while Petrocchi-Bartal et al. (2026) emphasized the importance of coordinated service delivery and professional support in South Africa. In the Philippines, Amoranto et al. (2023) examined community-based hearing screening and referral services, highlighting the potential of accessible and coordinated hearing healthcare. Alvarez et al. (2026) identified hearing-related concerns among learners enrolled in selected special education schools, reinforcing the importance of appropriate screening and educational assistance. Locally, Jagna Central Elementary School supports inclusive education through its Special Education (SPED) program and Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC), for which educational resources and assistive devices were identified in official procurement documents (Department of Education–Schools Division of Bohol, 2024). Derraco et al. (2025) examined the academic performance of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in selected schools in Bohol, including Jagna Central Elementary School, establishing the relevance of the local educational context to the present investigation.

1.4 Theoretical and Legal Foundations of Inclusive Parenting

The study was anchored in the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, Social Support Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory. The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) explains how individuals evaluate stressful circumstances and utilize available resources to manage them. Social Support Theory, as discussed by Kort-Butler (2019), provides a complementary perspective on the protective role of supportive relationships. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory explains how interconnected family, school, community, and societal environments influence child development. These perspectives collectively provided a framework for examining parental challenges, adaptation, and support mechanisms. The study was further grounded in Republic Act No. 11650 (2022), which institutionalizes inclusive education and appropriate services for learners with disabilities; Republic Act No. 7277 (1992), which promotes the welfare, self-reliance, and social integration of persons with disabilities; and Republic Act No. 9155 (2001), which establishes the governance framework for quality basic education. The Department of Education (2025) reinforced inclusive education through the dissemination of the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act No. 11650. These legal foundations support accessible educational services and coordinated assistance for learners with disabilities and their families.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Exploring Parental Experiences

Although existing studies have examined parental stress, communication barriers, early intervention, and educational support, understanding these experiences within specific local contexts remains essential. Derraco et al. (2025) primarily investigated the academic performance of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners during modular distance learning rather than the lived experiences of their parents and guardians. Addressing this gap, the present study explored the challenges encountered by parents and guardians, their coping and adaptation strategies, the

support received from families, schools, and communities, and the meanings they attributed to their caregiving experiences. The findings served as the basis for proposing intervention programs responsive to the needs of families raising hard-of-hearing children at Jagna Central Elementary School.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by addressing parental well-being, inclusive educational participation, and equitable access to support services. These objectives complement international efforts to strengthen disability inclusion and reduce barriers affecting children with disabilities and their families (United Nations, 2025; United Nations Children's Fund, 2021). The study provides a context-specific foundation for developing interventions that promote family welfare, educational accessibility, and social inclusion.

1.7 Contribution to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

The study contributes to educational, social, community, and institutional sustainability by generating insights that may inform inclusive educational practices and family-centered support programs. Its findings may assist parents, teachers, school administrators, the Department of Education, local government units, and community organizations in strengthening communication, educational assistance, and coordinated service delivery. Furthermore, the study provides a reference for future investigations on disability inclusion, parental well-being, and responsive intervention programs, supporting the development of sustainable and equitable environments for hard-of-hearing children and their families.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of parents or guardians raising hard-of-hearing children. Creswell and Poth (2025) describe phenomenology as a qualitative approach that examines the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences of a particular phenomenon. This design facilitated an in-depth understanding of participants' challenges, coping strategies, support systems, and personal insights.The study adopted the Input-Process-Output (IPO) framework, encompassing participants' lived experiences as input; data collection, transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and interpretation as process; and a proposed intervention program addressing the identified needs of families raising hard-of-hearing children as output.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Jagna Central Elementary School, Jagna District, Schools Division of Bohol, Region VII, Philippines. The school was selected because of its Special Education (SPED) program and its development as an Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC), supported by government initiatives to procure assistive devices and educational resources (Department of Education–Schools Division of Bohol, 2024). The school was also included in previous research examining the academic performance of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in modular distance learning (Derraco et al., 2025). Its inclusive educational setting provided a relevant context for investigating participants' caregiving experiences and access to educational and community support.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants comprised eight parents or guardians of hard-of-hearing children enrolled at Jagna Central Elementary School during School Year 2025–2026. They served as key informants whose firsthand accounts constituted the primary source of qualitative data for understanding the challenges, adaptations, and support experiences associated with raising hard-of-hearing children.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with direct experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher coordinated with the school's SPED Coordinator to identify qualified parents or guardians capable of providing meaningful and detailed accounts of their caregiving experiences. Participant selection was guided by the relevance of their experiences to the research objectives.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions aligned with the five research questions. The instrument comprised four sections covering caregiving challenges, coping strategies and adaptation, family, school, and community support, and personal insights and proposed interventions. The interview guide was reviewed, evaluated, and approved before its administration. Follow-up and probing questions were incorporated to clarify responses and facilitate a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection involved three stages: preparation, interviews, and post-interview processing. Following the evaluation and approval of the research proposal by Cebu Technological University–Main Campus, formal permission was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Bohol and the School Principal of Jagna Central Elementary School. Coordination with the SPED Coordinator facilitated participant identification and recruitment. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted using the approved interview guide after obtaining informed consent and permission for audio recording. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, while responses expressed in Cebuano or other local languages were translated into English when necessary. The transcripts were reviewed for accuracy and organized for subsequent analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were systematically reviewed to identify significant statements and meaningful expressions relevant to the research objectives. Initial codes were assigned to pertinent responses, organized into categories and subthemes, and consolidated into broader themes representing participants' shared experiences. The identified themes were examined against the original transcripts to ensure consistency with participants' narratives. Interpretation emphasized recurring patterns, contextual meanings, and significant individual experiences rather than response frequency alone. The findings provided the empirical basis for developing a proposed intervention program for families raising hard-of-hearing children.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the appropriate educational authorities before data collection. Participants were informed of the research purpose, interview procedures, confidentiality measures, and their rights. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent and authorization for audio recording were obtained before each interview. Participants retained the right to decline questions or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Communication Barriers and Emotional Struggles

3.1.1 Difficulty in Understanding the Child's Needs

Participants identified communication as a primary challenge in raising hard-of-hearing children. Limited proficiency in formal sign language made it difficult for parents to understand their children's requests, gestures, and emotional expressions. Consequently, families relied on home signs, gestures, pointing, and writing. Despite these adaptations, misunderstandings caused frustration among children and feelings of helplessness among caregivers. These findings highlight the importance of accessible communication in addressing children's needs and maintaining meaningful parent–child relationships. Scherer et al. (2023) identified communication barriers and limited family knowledge of hearing loss as factors affecting the psychological well-being and social inclusion of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

3.1.2 Emotional Pain and Difficulty in Acceptance

Participants experienced sadness, confusion, fear, and helplessness upon learning about their children's hearing condition. Acceptance was a gradual process accompanied by emotional distress, self-doubt, and uncertainty about their children's future. Experiences of bullying and discrimination further intensified these concerns. The findings suggest that parental adjustment involves managing emotional difficulties alongside caregiving responsibilities. Sealy et al. (2023) found that unresolved feelings regarding a child's hearing loss diagnosis were associated with lower parenting morale and greater perceptions of child vulnerability, emphasizing the importance of appropriate psychosocial support.

3.2 Acceptance Through Love, Patience, and Faith

3.2.1 Developing Patience and Understanding

Participants identified patience, understanding, and unconditional love as essential to managing caregiving challenges. Despite initial difficulties, parents gradually adapted to their children's needs through consistent care, compassion, and emotional support. Parental acceptance reflects an evolving process of emotional adjustment and commitment to caregiving. Dikeç et al. (2023) reported that parents of children with hearing loss gradually developed acceptance as they acquired knowledge and adapted to increased caregiving responsibilities.

3.2.2 Reliance on Faith and Prayer

Participants regarded faith and prayer as important sources of emotional strength. Many interpreted their children's hearing condition through their religious beliefs and relied on prayer to manage stress, fear, and uncertainty. Spirituality served as a coping mechanism that helped participants find meaning and emotional comfort amid caregiving difficulties. Similarly, Dikeç et al. (2023) identified prayer and social support as coping strategies employed by parents of children with hearing loss.

3.3 Importance of Family, School, and Community Support

3.3.1 Educational Support and Sign Language Learning

Participants acknowledged the school's contribution to improving communication with their children through sign language training, educational assistance, and parental guidance. These interventions helped caregivers better understand their children's needs and develop confidence in their caregiving responsibilities. School-based support provides opportunities for families to develop communication competencies and participate more effectively in their children's education. Scherer et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of accessible sign language education, teacher training, and family awareness in promoting the inclusion of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

3.3.2 Financial and Emotional Support from Family and Community

Participants received financial, material, and emotional assistance from family members, schools, local government units, and organizations. Support included educational materials, transportation, food, and financial assistance. Although assistance was sometimes limited and inconsistent, encouragement from relatives and teachers helped alleviate caregiving burdens. These findings underscore the value of coordinated support systems in addressing families' practical and emotional needs. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2022) emphasized the importance of school and community support in addressing the challenges experienced by caregivers of children with disabilities and facilitating access to appropriate resources.

3.4 Hope for Better Opportunities and Inclusive Support

3.4.1 Need for Continuous Sign Language Training

Participants expressed the need for regular sign language seminars and communication training. They believed that developing their proficiency in sign language could minimize misunderstandings, improve parent–child interactions, and strengthen family relationships. Continuous sign language education is important in establishing an accessible communication environment at home. Lieberman et al. (2024) highlighted the communication needs of hearing parents learning sign language and the challenges associated with accessing sustained learning opportunities.

3.4.2 Desire for Government and Institutional Assistance

Participants expressed the need for regular financial assistance, affordable hearing aids, speech therapy, and accessible healthcare services. They also raised concerns regarding their children's future employment opportunities and capacity for independent living. These concerns reflect the financial and institutional challenges associated with raising children with hearing loss. Carraro et al. (2022) documented the substantial additional expenses experienced by Filipino households raising children with disabilities, while the World Health Organization (2021) emphasized equitable access to comprehensive hearing care and rehabilitation services.

3.5 Overall Analytical Synthesis

The findings revealed that raising hard-of-hearing children involved interconnected communicative, emotional, educational, financial, and social challenges. Parents addressed these difficulties through adaptive communication strategies, emotional resilience, acceptance, and spirituality. Although family, school, and community assistance supported their caregiving responsibilities, concerns regarding the accessibility and continuity of specialized services persisted. Collectively, the findings emphasize the importance of strengthening school–family collaboration, providing continuous sign language education, and ensuring sustained institutional assistance. Addressing these needs is central to improving family communication, supporting parental well-being, and promoting the social inclusion and long-term independence of hard-of-hearing children.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study established that parenting hard-of-hearing children involves interconnected communication, emotional, educational, financial, and social challenges. Difficulties in establishing shared communication practices affected parents' and guardians' ability to understand and respond to their children's needs and emotions. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience through acceptance, patience, unconditional love, perseverance, and faith, which strengthened their capacity to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities. Support from families, schools, and communities played a significant role in addressing the children's educational, developmental, and psychosocial needs. However, limited access to communication training, specialized healthcare, educational resources, and financial assistance highlighted the need for more comprehensive institutional support. Collectively, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening parental competencies, fostering collaborative partnerships, and promoting inclusive services that address the diverse needs of hard-of-hearing children and their families.

The study recommends the implementation of four targeted intervention programs: GUGMA UG PAGLAUM, which strengthens parental acceptance, emotional resilience, and positive coping strategies; TINGOG SA

PANAGHIUSA, which develops basic sign-language proficiency and effective family communication practices; GUGMA SA PANAGHIUSA, which enhances school-family-community collaboration; and TABANG SA DALAN, which facilitates access to educational, healthcare, rehabilitation, financial, and social services. The school should oversee the implementation of these programs under the supervision of the Special Education (SPED) Focal Coordinator, with assistance from the Guidance Designate and active participation from parents, teachers, community stakeholders, and partner organizations, including IDEA Philippines. Systematic monitoring and periodic evaluation should be undertaken to assess program effectiveness, ensure responsiveness to identified family needs, and support the continuity of inclusive educational and developmental services.

The study was confined to the lived experiences of eight parents and guardians of hard-of-hearing children enrolled at Jagna Central Elementary School. Its qualitative phenomenological design and reliance on in-depth interviews enabled a contextual understanding of participants' experiences but limited the transferability of findings to broader populations and different socioeconomic, geographical, and educational settings. The investigation primarily examined parental and guardian perspectives, excluding the direct accounts of children, teachers, and other stakeholders. Consequently, the findings represent the experiences and interpretations of the selected participants within the specific research context. Furthermore, the proposed intervention programs were formulated from the identified needs, and their effectiveness remains subject to subsequent implementation and evaluation. These methodological and contextual boundaries should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying the proposed interventions to other settings.

5. Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study adhered to ethical research principles throughout its implementation. Participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality were respected, and voluntary participation was ensured during data collection.

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