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## Interpersonal Communication of People with Hearing Impairments in Building Social Interaction in the Perumnas Simalingkar Community

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the process of interpersonal communication, communication barriers, and the adaptive strategies employed by deaf individuals in establishing social interactions within the Perumnas Simalingkar community. The study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The participants consisted of two deaf individuals as the primary informants and three community members as supporting informants, selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings reveal that interpersonal communication among deaf individuals is adaptive, relying primarily on nonverbal communication, including sign language, hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and lip movements, supported by the use of digital communication media. Communication barriers arise not only from hearing impairments but also from the limited understanding of nonverbal communication among community members, particularly those with little prior interaction with deaf individuals. The study further demonstrates that adaptation is a reciprocal process in which deaf individuals adjust their communication strategies to suit their communication partners, while community members gradually learn and understand the communication patterns used by deaf individuals. Frequent interaction, communication experience, and social acceptance emerged as the key factors contributing to harmonious, effective, and inclusive interpersonal relationships. The findings imply that improving public literacy regarding deaf communication, strengthening inclusive social environments, and optimizing accessible communication technologies are essential to promoting equal social participation and fostering greater inclusion of deaf individuals within the community.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal Communication; Deaf Individuals; Nonverbal Communication; Social Adaptation; Social Interaction.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses komunikasi interpersonal, hambatan komunikasi, serta bentuk adaptasi yang dilakukan penyandang tuna rungu dalam membangun interaksi sosial di lingkungan Perumnas Simalingkar. Penelitian menggunakan

pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Informan penelitian terdiri atas dua penyandang tuna rungu sebagai informan utama dan tiga orang masyarakat sebagai informan pendukung yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña melalui tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan dengan pengujian keabsahan data menggunakan triangulasi sumber, triangulasi teknik, dan *member check*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi interpersonal penyandang tuna rungu berlangsung secara adaptif melalui penggunaan komunikasi nonverbal berupa bahasa isyarat, gerakan tangan, ekspresi wajah, kontak mata, dan gerak bibir yang didukung oleh pemanfaatan media digital sebagai sarana komunikasi. Hambatan komunikasi tidak hanya disebabkan oleh keterbatasan pendengaran, tetapi juga oleh rendahnya pemahaman masyarakat terhadap komunikasi nonverbal sehingga memengaruhi efektivitas interaksi, terutama pada individu yang belum memiliki pengalaman berkomunikasi dengan penyandang tuna rungu. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa bentuk adaptasi dilakukan secara timbal balik, yaitu penyandang tuna rungu menyesuaikan strategi komunikasi sesuai karakteristik lawan bicara, sementara masyarakat secara bertahap mempelajari dan memahami pola komunikasi yang digunakan. Intensitas interaksi, pengalaman berkomunikasi, serta penerimaan sosial menjadi faktor utama yang mendukung terciptanya hubungan interpersonal yang harmonis, efektif, dan inklusif. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya peningkatan literasi masyarakat mengenai komunikasi penyandang tuna rungu, penguatan lingkungan sosial yang inklusif, serta optimalisasi pemanfaatan teknologi komunikasi yang aksesibel untuk mendukung partisipasi sosial penyandang tuna rungu secara setara dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat.

**Kata Kunci:** Komunikasi Interpersonal, Penyandang Tuna Rungu, Komunikasi Nonverbal, Adaptasi Sosial, Interaksi Sosial.

## INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings who cannot be separated from the process of communication in daily life (Nurhanifah, 2021). Through interpersonal communication, individuals build relationships, express their needs, share feelings, and take part in community life. Interpersonal communication happens through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages aimed at creating mutual understanding and harmonious relationships (Creed, Al-Kalbani, Theil, Sarcar, & Williams, 2024). However, for people who are deaf, the limitation in receiving auditory information becomes a challenge in social interactions because most people still rely on verbal communication. As a result, deaf individuals may face obstacles in getting information, building social relationships, and participating fully in community life.

Deaf people communicate through sign language, body movements, facial expressions, writing, and other visual communication media. The communication barriers they face are not only caused by hearing limitations, but also by the general lack of understanding in society about inclusive communication (Schafer, Dunn, & Lavi, 2021). Various studies show that people who are deaf still face social exclusion, limited communication access, and stereotypes that affect the quality of interpersonal relationships. In fact, according to (DeVito, 2022), Effective interpersonal communication is built through openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, positive attitudes, and equality. Therefore, the success of communication depends not only on the abilities of people who are deaf but also on the readiness of the environment to create inclusive interactions.

The development of the disability paradigm has shifted from a medical approach to a social approach, which emphasizes that barriers to participation for people with disabilities are more influenced by environmental factors (Tsimpida, Kontopantelis, Ashcroft, & Panagioti,

2022). This aligns with Law Number 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which guarantees the right of every person with a disability to communicate, interact, and participate without discrimination. In that context, the living environment plays an important role in building inclusive social interactions. Perumnas Simalingkar, as a residential area inhabited by people from diverse backgrounds, becomes an interesting social space to explore how hearing-impaired individuals build interpersonal communication with their neighbors and the surrounding community.

Field observations show that people with hearing impairments develop various communication strategies, such as using sign language, lip reading, facial expressions, body gestures, as well as text-based digital media to support social interactions. However, the public's limited understanding of sign language remains an obstacle that can cause misunderstandings and reduce the intensity of communication. Despite this, social adaptation continues to develop through neighborly relationships and everyday interaction experiences. Based on this situation, research on the Interpersonal Communication of People with Hearing Impairments in Building Social Interaction in the Perumnas Simalingkar community is important to understand the forms of communication, supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as the strategies used by people with hearing impairments to build social relationships in the community environment.

Studies on interpersonal communication of people with hearing impairments have developed in various contexts, such as inclusive education, family communication, public services, and sign language proficiency. Research (Thibodeau, Thibodeau-Nielsen, Tran, & Jacob, Ear & Hearing) focusing on identifying communication barriers, the effectiveness of communication media, and improving the language skills of people with hearing impairments. The research (Aspelin, Östlund, & Jönsson, 2021) It also shows that limited access to communication, low sign language literacy among the public, and social stigma are still factors that hinder the participation of people with hearing impairments in social life. That said, most of these studies have been done in formal institutional contexts, so they haven't really provided a complete picture of how people with hearing impairments interact with others in everyday life.

Based on the literature review, there are still research gaps that need attention. First, previous studies have focused more on communication barriers for people with hearing impairments rather than on how interpersonal relationships with the surrounding community are formed. Second, studies on communication adaptation strategies used by people with hearing impairments in heterogeneous residential environments are still very limited. Third, not many studies have looked into how community acceptance, social support, and two-way communication contribute to creating inclusive social interactions. In fact, according to (DeVito, 2022), Effective interpersonal communication is not only influenced by an individual's ability to convey messages, but also by the openness, empathy, supportive attitude, positive mindset, and equality built by everyone involved in the communication process.

Based on that gap, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on analyzing the interpersonal communication of people with hearing impairments in building social interactions within the Perumnas Simalingkar area, which is a residential area with social and cultural diversity. Unlike previous studies that focused on school, family, or service institution environments, this research positions the community environment as the main space for forming interpersonal relationships. This study also integrates an analysis of the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies used by people with hearing impairments, the forms of community acceptance, environmental support, as well as the factors that facilitate and hinder the realization of inclusive communication. Thus, this study is expected to enrich the study of interpersonal communication from the perspective of community-based inclusive communication and provide practical recommendations for developing a social environment that is more friendly to people with disabilities.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the experiences, meanings, and interpersonal communication processes carried out by the hearing-impaired in building social interactions within the community. Qualitative research allows the researcher to get a comprehensive picture of social phenomena based on the informants' perspectives in a natural context (Creswell, 2018). The research was carried out at Perumnas Simalingkar on January 17, 2026, by combining field research and library research. Field research was used to gather primary data through direct interaction with informants, while library research was done to strengthen the conceptual framework through books, scientific articles, and relevant previous studies (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research subjects were chosen using purposive sampling, which is a technique for selecting informants based on certain criteria that match the research objectives, so they can provide rich and relevant information for the focus of the study (Patton, 2015). The research informants consisted of five people: two deaf individuals as the main informants and three community members as supporting informants. The two deaf individuals were male, aged 40 and 39, had been deaf since birth or early childhood, had lived in Perumnas Simalingkar for more than five years, and actively took part in various community activities. Meanwhile, the three supporting informants were community members consisting of two men and one woman, all adults, living in the Perumnas Simalingkar area and having frequent interactions with the deaf individuals in daily life, whether as neighbors, partners in social activities, or residents who often communicate with them. The selection of the five informants was based on the consideration that they had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied, so they were able to provide in-depth, relevant information that matched the research objectives.

The number of informants, which is five people, is considered adequate because qualitative research is not aimed at obtaining statistical generalization, but rather at gaining a deep understanding of a phenomenon based on the rich information from purposively selected informants (Patton, 2015). The determination of the number of informants also refers to the principle of data saturation, which is the condition when the interview process no longer produces significant new information or themes (Budhwar, et al., 2023). During the data collection process, the information obtained from two deaf individuals and three community members showed consistent and mutually reinforcing patterns, so the data collected is considered sufficient to answer the research focus on interpersonal communication of deaf people in building social interactions in the Perumnas Simalingkar environment.

Data collection was done through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly watch the forms of communication and social interactions between people with hearing impairments and the community in the Perumnas Simalingkar area. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way to explore experiences, communication strategies, obstacles, and the types of social support the informants received. Meanwhile, documentation like photos, field notes, and supporting documents was used to complement the research data (Creswell, 2018).

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through observation and interviews with informants, while secondary data comes from books, scientific journals, official documents, and previous research related to interpersonal communication and people with disabilities. Data analysis uses an interactive model (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024), which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The analysis process is carried out simultaneously from data collection until the research is completed, allowing researchers to deeply interpret each finding.

The validity of the data is maintained through a credibility test using source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checks. Source triangulation is done by comparing information obtained from deaf individuals and the surrounding community, while technique

triangulation is done by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Furthermore, member checks are carried out by asking the informants to review the researcher's interpretations to ensure alignment between the research findings and their experiences. The implementation of these techniques aims to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research results so that the findings obtained have a high level of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that people with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar area engage in various forms of adaptation to maintain social interactions with the community. These adaptations are reflected through the use of nonverbal communication, the use of digital communication media, and the formation of interpersonal relationships based on ongoing interaction experiences. These findings suggest that the adaptation process is not just an individual's effort to overcome hearing limitations, but also involves positive responses from the community trying to understand the communication patterns of people with hearing impairments. Thus, social adaptation in this study is understood as a reciprocal adjustment process that allows for more effective and inclusive interpersonal communication.

### **The Interpersonal Communication Process of People with Hearing Impairments in Building Social Interaction**

Based on observations conducted in the Perumnas Simalingkar neighborhood, it was found that individuals with hearing impairments are able to actively establish interpersonal communication with members of the community despite their hearing limitations. The observed interactions occurred in various daily activities, including conversing with neighbors, participating in community mutual cooperation (gotong royong), shopping at local stores, and engaging in neighborhood social activities. During these interactions, individuals with hearing impairments primarily relied on nonverbal communication, such as simple sign language, hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and lip movements to convey intentions and understand messages from their communication partners. Meanwhile, community members who had become accustomed to interacting with them demonstrated an ability to adapt their communication styles by responding through body language, facial expressions, brief written messages, and simple gestures, allowing communication to take place effectively.

The observations also revealed that the effectiveness of interpersonal communication was influenced by the intensity and duration of previous interactions. Community members who had maintained longer neighborly relationships with individuals with hearing impairments were able to understand their intended messages more quickly without relying on formal sign language. In contrast, residents with limited prior interaction still required an adjustment period to interpret the meanings of the symbols and gestures used. In several situations, individuals with hearing impairments were observed repeating gestures, pointing to specific objects, or utilizing written messages on their mobile phones when their intended messages were not immediately understood. These findings indicate that interpersonal communication occurs through a process of mutual adaptation between individuals with hearing impairments and community members, ultimately leading to shared understanding of the communicated messages.

In addition to face-to-face communication, the observations demonstrated that mobile phones serve as an important supporting medium for social interaction. Individuals with hearing impairments frequently use instant messaging applications to exchange information, arrange meetings, and communicate with community members whenever face-to-face communication encounters obstacles. Nevertheless, direct interpersonal communication remains the preferred mode of interaction, particularly with individuals who are already familiar with their communication patterns. These findings suggest that technology does not replace interpersonal



communication; rather, it functions as a complementary tool that facilitates the exchange of information in everyday life. The observational findings are also consistent with the results of the interviews presented below. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, each informant was assigned a code ranging from I1 to I5. In-depth interviews were conducted with two individuals with hearing impairments as the primary informants and three community members as supporting informants.

**Informant 1 (I1) – Individual with Hearing Impairment (Male)**

*"I usually use sign language, hand gestures, and facial expressions. If someone still does not understand, I point to the object I mean or write it on my phone. Neighbors who have known me for a long time usually understand immediately what I want to say."*

**Informant 2 (I2) – Individual with Hearing Impairment (Male)**

*"I feel that communication becomes easier when I meet the residents more often. They gradually understand the gestures I use, and if communication is still difficult, we use written messages on WhatsApp or notes on our phones to avoid misunderstandings."*

**Informant 3 (I3) – Community Member (Male)**

*"At first, I found it difficult to understand the way they communicated. However, after interacting with them frequently, I gradually understood the meanings of their gestures and facial expressions. Now our communication feels much smoother, and we are able to understand each other."*

**Informant 4 (I4) – Community Member (Male)**

*"They actively participate in community activities such as mutual cooperation and neighborhood meetings. Although communication is carried out through gestures, we can still interact well because we have become accustomed to paying attention to their movements and facial expressions."*

**Informant 5 (I5) – Community Member (Female)**

*"In my opinion, they have a good relationship with the community. Residents make an effort to understand their way of communicating, and when certain information is difficult to convey, we usually use written messages on our mobile phones so that communication continues smoothly."*

Based on the findings from both the observations and interviews, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication among individuals with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar community is adaptive, utilizing sign language, nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, and digital media as complementary communication tools. The effectiveness of interpersonal interaction is influenced by the intensity of social relationships, previous communication experiences, and the willingness of community members to understand the communication methods used by individuals with hearing impairments. Consequently, interpersonal communication is established through a process of mutual adaptation, fostering harmonious, effective, and inclusive social relationships.

The research results show that the process of interpersonal communication among people with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar area happens adaptively through the use of sign language, hand movements, facial expressions, eye contact, lip movements, and digital media as communication support tools. These findings indicate that hearing limitations are not the main barrier to building social interactions as long as there is an effort for mutual understanding between people with hearing impairments and the community. From the perspective of interpersonal communication theory (DeVito, 2022), Effective communication is not only determined by the ability to speak and listen but also by openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. These five elements are reflected in research findings, where the community shows a willingness to adjust their way of communicating, while people with hearing impairments actively use various forms of nonverbal communication

to ensure their messages are understood. This situation shows that the success of interpersonal communication is the result of a two-way communication process involving adjustments from both parties.

The findings of this study are in line with previous research. (Silveira-Zaldivar, Özerk, & Özerk, 2021) which states that nonverbal communication plays a dominant role in building social relationships for people with hearing impairments because it can replace the function of verbal communication through sign language, facial expressions, and body movements. Research (Collaborators, 2021) It also shows that nonverbal communication becomes a key way to build interpersonal closeness between people who are deaf and the community, especially when the environment understands the meaning of the symbols and movements used. This study's results support that finding by showing that communication becomes more effective with repeated interactions. The longer people interact with someone who is deaf, the easier it is for them to understand the meaning behind the movements and expressions used, making communication smoother and less prone to misunderstandings.

This study also found that interaction experience is an important factor in building shared meaning between communicators and their audience. Communities that have lived alongside people with hearing impairments for a long time can understand messages without needing to master formal sign language. On the other hand, communities interacting for the first time need a process of adaptation to interpret the messages conveyed. These findings are in line with previous research (Ginapp, et al., 2023) which explains that interpersonal communication is the process of creating shared meaning through feedback that happens continuously. In this study, feedback is shown not only through verbal language but also through nods, facial expressions, body movements, and actions that show the message has been understood. So, effective interpersonal communication comes from ongoing interaction, not just from language skills.

Besides nonverbal communication, this study shows that using digital media, like WhatsApp and the note feature on mobile phones, becomes a communication strategy that helps people who are deaf when face-to-face communication hits a barrier. Even so, digital media doesn't replace direct communication but serves as a complement in conveying information. These findings are in line with research (McDaid, Park, & Chadha, 2021) which states that digital technology can expand communication access for people with hearing impairments and reduce barriers in information exchange. However, this study offers a broader perspective that successful communication is not only determined by the use of technology, but is more influenced by the interpersonal relationships built through daily interactions. In other words, technology serves as a supporting medium, while social closeness and community acceptance remain the main factors in creating effective communication.

From an inclusive communication perspective, this research also shows that the success of interpersonal communication is greatly influenced by a social environment that accepts the presence of people who are deaf. This finding is in line with (Aljedaani, et al., 2022) which emphasizes that the main obstacles for people with disabilities do not just come from physical conditions, but also from an environment that is not fully inclusive. In the Perumnas Simalingkar community, people who have experience interacting show an open, patient attitude and are willing to adjust their way of communicating. This attitude creates a more equal space for interaction, allowing deaf people to still participate in social activities, such as community work, neighborhood meetings, and daily activities. These findings reinforce that inclusive interpersonal communication comes from the collaboration between the adaptive abilities of deaf people and the support of the social environment.

From an Islamic communication perspective, the findings of this study reflect the implementation of the values of *ta'aruf* (getting to know each other), *tafahum* (mutual understanding), and *ta'awun* (mutual help) in community life. When the community strives to understand the communication methods of people who are deaf and those who are deaf try to adjust how they convey messages, a harmonious relationship is built, reflecting the values in

QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13 about the importance of getting to know one another and respecting differences. Therefore, interpersonal communication in this study is not just a process of exchanging information but also serves as a medium for building inclusive social relationships, strengthening social solidarity, and showing respect for the dignity of every individual regardless of their physical condition.

### **Communication Barriers Faced by Deaf People in Social Interactions**

Based on observations conducted in the Perumnas Simalingkar neighborhood, it was found that the communication barriers experienced by individuals with hearing impairments are not solely attributable to their hearing limitations but are also influenced by the limited understanding among some community members of the nonverbal forms of communication they use. In several situations, individuals interacting with persons with hearing impairments for the first time experienced difficulty interpreting sign language, hand gestures, and facial expressions. As a result, the communication process often required more time, occasionally led to misunderstandings, and necessitated the repetition of messages or further clarification through simpler gestures or written communication.

The observations also revealed that the effectiveness of communication was strongly influenced by the intensity and duration of previous interactions. Community members who had lived alongside individuals with hearing impairments for a longer period were generally able to understand the meanings of gestures, facial expressions, and simple communication symbols used in everyday interactions more easily. In contrast, residents with little or no prior experience interacting with individuals with hearing impairments required additional time to interpret the intended messages. In several instances, individuals with hearing impairments were observed pointing to specific objects, repeating gestures, or using their mobile phones to communicate through written text when face-to-face communication was not immediately understood by their conversation partners.

Furthermore, the observations indicated that individuals with hearing impairments communicated more frequently with people who were already familiar with their communication patterns than with those who had little or no previous interaction with them. During various social activities, individuals with hearing impairments appeared more confident when interacting with neighbors or community members who were accustomed to using simple signs and gestures. Conversely, when communicating with individuals unfamiliar with their communication methods, they tended to become more passive, reduce the frequency of communication, or wait for assistance from others who could facilitate the exchange of messages. These observational findings are consistent with the interview results presented below. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, each informant was assigned a code ranging from I1 to I5. In-depth interviews were conducted with two individuals with hearing impairments as the primary informants and three community members as supporting informants.

#### **Informant 1 (I1) – Individual with Hearing Impairment (Male)**

*"When I meet people who have known me for a long time, communication is not too difficult because they already understand the gestures I use. However, when I meet new people, I often have to repeat my signs or write on my mobile phone so they can understand me."*

#### **Informant 2 (I2) – Individual with Hearing Impairment (Male)**

*"The communication barrier I experience most often is when people do not understand sign language. Sometimes I choose to remain silent or communicate only with people who already understand my communication style to avoid misunderstandings."*

#### **Informant 3 (I3) – Community Member (Male)**

*"At first, I found it difficult to understand what they wanted to communicate because I was not familiar with sign language. However, after interacting with them more frequently, I*



*gradually learned the meanings of their gestures and facial expressions, making communication much easier."*

**Informant 4 (I4) – Community Member (Male)**

*"In my opinion, communication barriers do not arise solely from individuals with hearing impairments but also because not all of us in the community understand how they communicate. As we meet and interact more often, we gradually learn to understand one another."*

**Informant 5 (I5) – Community Member (Female)**

*"When community members are unfamiliar with them, communication is usually somewhat difficult. However, we often help explain what they mean or use written messages on a mobile phone so that the information can be understood clearly."*

Based on the findings from both the observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the communication barriers experienced by individuals with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar community are caused not only by hearing limitations but also by the community's limited understanding of nonverbal communication. The effectiveness of communication is influenced by the intensity of social interaction, previous communication experience, and the willingness of both parties to understand one another. Therefore, improving public literacy regarding the communication methods used by individuals with hearing impairments is an essential factor in promoting more effective, inclusive, and misunderstanding-free social interactions.

The findings further demonstrate that the communication barriers experienced by individuals with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar community are influenced not only by auditory limitations but also by environmental factors, particularly the limited public understanding of nonverbal communication. Based on the observational and interview data, community members who had interacted with individuals with hearing impairments over an extended period were generally more capable of understanding simple sign language, hand gestures, and facial expressions, whereas those with limited prior interaction required a period of adaptation. These findings indicate that communication barriers are reciprocal in nature, as they are shaped both by the ability of individuals with hearing impairments to convey messages and by the ability of community members to interpret those messages accurately. Consequently, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication depends not only on individuals with hearing impairments but also on the readiness of the surrounding social environment to foster inclusive communication practices.

The findings of this study are in line with (McKee, et al., 2022) which emphasizes that the main obstacles faced by people with hearing disabilities do not only come from hearing impairment, but also from a social environment that has not provided adequate communication access. Along with that, (Garg, Deshmukh, Singh, Borle, & Wilson, 2021) stating that the low understanding of society about the communication needs of people with disabilities is one of the factors that limits their social participation. This research supports that view because it shows that communication difficulties mostly arise when deaf people interact with a community that does not understand sign language or other forms of nonverbal communication. On the other hand, when people have experience interacting, communication barriers tend to decrease and the message-sharing process becomes more effective.

Research results also show that the intensity of interaction becomes an important factor in reducing communication barriers. People with hearing impairments admit that it is easier to communicate with neighbors who have known them for a long time, while the community also states that understanding simple sign language develops through continuous interaction. These findings align with the interpersonal communication theory proposed by (Sharma, Chern, & Golub, 2021) that effective communication happens when the communicator and the audience can create shared meaning through continuous feedback. In this study, shared meaning isn't formed because people formally know sign language, but because ongoing communication

experiences allow both parties to understand the symbols, expressions, and movements used in daily life.

Additionally, this study found that people who are deaf tend to be more confident when communicating with individuals who understand their communication style. On the other hand, when they are dealing with strangers, they are more likely to repeat gestures, use writing on their cell phones, or even choose to reduce the intensity of communication to avoid misunderstandings. These findings are in line with research (Davis, et al., 2021) which explains that negative communication experiences can affect the self-confidence of people with hearing impairments in building social relationships. Therefore, social acceptance and the community's ability to understand nonverbal communication become important factors in boosting the self-confidence and social participation of people with hearing impairments in the community.

The use of mobile phones as a medium to support communication also turned out to be one of the strategies found in this study. When nonverbal communication couldn't clearly convey the message, people with hearing impairments used text messaging apps or note features on their phones so that the information could be understood by the person they were talking to. This finding supports the research (Ruusuvuori, et al., 2021) which states that digital media can improve communication access for people with hearing impairments through text-based communication. However, this study shows that technology only serves as a supporting tool. The most important factor in successful communication still lies in people's willingness to understand the way people with hearing impairments communicate. Thus, technology does not replace interpersonal communication but strengthens the communication process when face-to-face interaction barriers occur.

From the perspective of inclusive communication, this research shows that communication barriers are a shared responsibility between people who are deaf and the community. This aligns with previous studies (Saunders, Jackson, & Visram, 2021) which explains that the success of social interactions for people with disabilities is greatly influenced by environmental support, social acceptance, and the community's ability to provide equal communication access. Therefore, improving public literacy about basic sign language, nonverbal communication, and the characteristics of people who are deaf becomes a strategic step to reduce communication barriers and expand their social participation in community life.

From an Islamic communication perspective, this research finding highlights the importance of applying the values of *tafāhum* (mutual understanding) and *ta'āwun* (mutual help) in building social relationships. Communication barriers that occur shouldn't be a reason to limit interaction; rather, they should encourage each individual to understand and help each other according to their abilities. These values align with Islamic teachings, which place all humans on an equal footing and promote harmonious social relationships regardless of physical conditions. Therefore, inclusive interpersonal communication not only reflects effective message delivery but also serves as a form of respect for human dignity and a way to implement humanitarian values in community life.

### **Ways Deaf Individuals Adapt in Building Social Interactions**

Based on observations conducted in the Perumnas Simalingkar neighborhood, it was found that the communication barriers experienced by individuals with hearing impairments are not solely attributable to their hearing limitations but are also influenced by the limited understanding among some community members of the nonverbal forms of communication they use. In several situations, individuals interacting with persons with hearing impairments for the first time experienced difficulty interpreting sign language, hand gestures, and facial expressions. As a result, the communication process often required more time, occasionally led to misunderstandings, and necessitated the repetition of messages or further clarification through simpler gestures or written communication.

The observations also revealed that the effectiveness of communication was strongly influenced by the intensity and duration of previous interactions. Community members who had lived alongside individuals with hearing impairments for a longer period were generally able to understand the meanings of gestures, facial expressions, and simple communication symbols used in everyday interactions more easily. In contrast, residents with little or no prior experience interacting with individuals with hearing impairments required additional time to interpret the intended messages. In several instances, individuals with hearing impairments were observed pointing to specific objects, repeating gestures, or using their mobile phones to communicate through written text when face-to-face communication was not immediately understood by their conversation partners.

Furthermore, the observations indicated that individuals with hearing impairments communicated more frequently with people who were already familiar with their communication patterns than with those who had little or no previous interaction with them. During various social activities, individuals with hearing impairments appeared more confident when interacting with neighbors or community members who were accustomed to using simple signs and gestures. Conversely, when communicating with individuals unfamiliar with their communication methods, they tended to become more passive, reduce the frequency of communication, or wait for assistance from others who could facilitate the exchange of messages. These observational findings are consistent with the interview results presented below. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, each informant was assigned a code ranging from I1 to I5. In-depth interviews were conducted with two individuals with hearing impairments as the primary informants and three community members as supporting informants.

**Informant 1 (I1) – Individual with Hearing Impairment (Male)**

*"When I meet people who have known me for a long time, communication is not too difficult because they already understand the gestures I use. However, when I meet new people, I often have to repeat my signs or write on my mobile phone so they can understand me."*

**Informant 2 (I2) – Individual with Hearing Impairment (Male)**

*"The communication barrier I experience most often is when people do not understand sign language. Sometimes I choose to remain silent or communicate only with people who already understand my communication style to avoid misunderstandings."*

**Informant 3 (I3) – Community Member (Male)**

*"At first, I found it difficult to understand what they wanted to communicate because I was not familiar with sign language. However, after interacting with them more frequently, I gradually learned the meanings of their gestures and facial expressions, making communication much easier."*

**Informant 4 (I4) – Community Member (Male)**

*"In my opinion, communication barriers do not arise solely from individuals with hearing impairments but also because not all of us in the community understand how they communicate. As we meet and interact more often, we gradually learn to understand one another."*

**Informant 5 (I5) – Community Member (Female)**

*"When community members are unfamiliar with them, communication is usually somewhat difficult. However, we often help explain what they mean or use written messages on a mobile phone so that the information can be understood clearly."*

Based on the findings from both the observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the communication barriers experienced by individuals with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar community are caused not only by hearing limitations but also by the community's limited understanding of nonverbal communication. The effectiveness of communication is influenced by the intensity of social interaction, previous communication experience, and the willingness of both parties to understand one another. Therefore, improving public literacy regarding the communication methods used by individuals with hearing

impairments is an essential factor in promoting more effective, inclusive, and misunderstanding-free social interactions.

The findings further demonstrate that the communication barriers experienced by individuals with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar community are influenced not only by auditory limitations but also by environmental factors, particularly the limited public understanding of nonverbal communication. Based on the observational and interview data, community members who had interacted with individuals with hearing impairments over an extended period were generally more capable of understanding simple sign language, hand gestures, and facial expressions, whereas those with limited prior interaction required a period of adaptation. These findings indicate that communication barriers are reciprocal in nature, as they are shaped both by the ability of individuals with hearing impairments to convey messages and by the ability of community members to interpret those messages accurately. Consequently, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication depends not only on individuals with hearing impairments but also on the readiness of the surrounding social environment to foster inclusive communication practices.

The findings of this study align with research (Arif, Rani, & Siddique, 2024) which explains that people who are deaf develop various adaptive communication strategies, such as using sign language, facial expressions, body movements, and visual communication to maintain social relationships with their environment. These strategies are a form of adjustment to hearing limitations so that the communication process can still run effectively. The results of this study reinforce these findings because they show that people who are deaf actively change the way they convey messages, for example by clarifying movements, pointing to certain objects, or using writing on a cell phone when the conversation partner does not yet understand the intended communication. This shows that communication adaptation is a skill that develops through everyday interaction experiences.

Besides individual abilities, this study found that community acceptance is an important factor in supporting the successful social adaptation of people with hearing impairments. Residents who have interacted for a long time seem to find it easier to understand the meaning of gestures and expressions used, making communication flow more smoothly compared to those interacting for the first time. This finding aligns with research (Timmer, et al., 2024; Hanifah, Ramadhan, & Setiawaty, 2025) which states that the success of social adaptation for people with disabilities is greatly influenced by an environment that is accepting, provides opportunities to participate, and can adjust communication patterns according to individual needs. Thus, social adaptation is not only the responsibility of the deaf, but is a collaborative process involving the community as communication partners.

This research also shows that repeated interaction experiences can help build a shared understanding between people who are deaf and the community. As communication intensity increases, people start to understand simple symbols without having to master formal sign language. This situation aligns with the theory of interpersonal communication (Bennett, Saulsman, Eikelboom, & Olaithe, 2022) which explains that effective communication is built through openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, a positive outlook, and equality that develops through continuous interaction. In this study, the relationships formed in neighborhood life become a social learning medium that allows both parties to adjust to each other, so communication barriers are gradually reduced.

Research results also show that cell phones become a supportive medium in the social adaptation process for people with hearing impairments. Using messaging apps and note features helps convey information when nonverbal communication cannot fully explain the message. However, face-to-face communication remains the main choice because it can build emotional closeness and stronger interpersonal relationships. These findings support the research (Jepsen & Pedersen, 2025) which states that digital media can improve communication access for people with hearing impairments through text-based communication. However, this

study provides more specific findings that technology only serves as a supporting tool, while the success of social adaptation is more influenced by the quality of interpersonal relationships and societal acceptance of people with hearing impairments.

Furthermore, the results of this study show that the social adaptation carried out by people with hearing impairments is not only aimed at overcoming communication barriers, but also at maintaining their involvement in various community activities, such as mutual cooperation, neighborhood meetings, and everyday interactions. These findings are in line with research (Olsson, Dag, & Kullberg, 2021) which emphasizes that the social participation of people with disabilities will increase if the environment provides inclusive communication access and removes various social barriers. Therefore, the higher the acceptance of people with hearing impairments by society, the greater the chances of creating equal, participatory, and sustainable social relationships.

From an Islamic communication perspective, the forms of adaptation found in this study reflect the implementation of the values of *ta'āwun* (mutual help), *tafāhum* (mutual understanding), and *ukhuwah insāniyyah* (human brotherhood). The willingness of people with hearing impairments to adjust their way of communicating, as well as the community's willingness to understand nonverbal communication, shows cooperation in creating harmonious social relationships. These values align with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of getting to know each other (*ta'aruf*), respecting differences, and building an inclusive community life without discriminating against someone's physical condition. Thus, the results of this study confirm that the success of adaptation for people with hearing impairments is a combination of individual abilities, community support, and the application of social values that promote effective and dignified interpersonal communication.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication among individuals with hearing impairments in the Perumnas Simalingkar community is adaptive, relying on nonverbal communication, the use of digital media, and a process of mutual adjustment between individuals with hearing impairments and members of the community. Although communication barriers remain due to hearing limitations and the limited understanding of nonverbal communication among some community members, the intensity of social interaction, prior communication experience, and social acceptance contribute significantly to reducing these barriers, thereby fostering harmonious, effective, and inclusive social relationships. The implications of this study suggest that strengthening public literacy regarding communication with individuals with hearing impairments, promoting inclusive attitudes, and supporting the use of accessible communication media are essential steps toward creating a more disability-friendly social environment and encouraging the equal participation of individuals with hearing impairments in community life.

### Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted solely in the Perumnas Simalingkar community with a limited number of participants; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to hearing-impaired communities in other settings. Second, the use of a qualitative approach means that the findings are contextual and reflect interpersonal communication experiences within the specific social environment of the research site. Consequently, the interpretation of the findings should be considered in light of the characteristics of the study context.



## Recommendations

Future research is recommended to involve broader research settings and a more diverse group of participants in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal communication among individuals with hearing impairments. In addition, future studies may explore the effectiveness of sign language training for community members, the utilization of more accessible communication technologies, and the development of inclusive communication models to enhance the social participation of individuals with hearing impairments.

## Author Contributions

All authors actively contributed to every stage of the research, including the conceptualization of the study, research design, data collection and analysis, interpretation of the findings, manuscript preparation and revision, and final approval of the version submitted for publication.

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