

**Citation** Mangiti, C. A. (2018). Effects of Psycho-Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of Learners with Hearing Impairment at Fr. Oudraa Special Secondary School in Siaya County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 2(3), 43 – 56.

**Effects of Psycho-Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of Learners with Hearing Impairment at Fr. Oudraa Special Secondary School in Siaya County, Kenya**

By

Mangiti, Celestine Akinyi

**Abstract**

Education is a fundamental right that leads to realization of other rights and part of development. However, there exists wastage for learners with hearing impairment and other disabilities through repetition, drop out, poor performance and low transition to other levels of education. This study seeks to investigate how effects of psycho-cultural factors influence academic performance of learners with hearing impairment (HI). A focus on the effects of psycho-cultural factors such as self-esteem, peer pressure, perception, beliefs of parents and teachers, parental engagement, gender mainstreaming and emotional adjustments, cultural practices and attitude of the community was of great significance to this study. The study was carried out at Fr. Oudraa Special School in Siaya County in Nyanza Region. The target population for this study was all teachers, support staff, one EARC officer, the head teacher and available parents of St. Oudraa special school Siaya County. The researcher used a descriptive survey design to identify teacher related challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in Fr. Oudraa Special School in Siaya County, Kenya. The study applied a mixed approach for probability and non-probability. Stratified and random sampling was used to sample teachers and learners; this was to ensure equal representation across the stratum. Purposive sampling was used to select an EARC officer, the head teacher, 12 parents and 6 support staff to allow gender representation. This study used Questionnaires, an interview guide and Focused Group Discussion (FDGs) to gather information from teachers, head teachers, the sub-county EARC coordinator, parents and learners. The findings shows that there is a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.907$ ) between self-esteem and academic performance which is statistically significant ( $p = 0.037$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that statistically significantly as self-esteem rises, the academic performance of learners with HI improves. However, for self-concept, there was a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.264$ ) between self-concept and academic performance which is statistically significant ( $p = 0.003$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings shows that there is a weak negative correlation ( $r = -0.156$ ) between cultural factors and academic performance which is statistically significant ( $p = 0.041$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should put up plans to sensitize the teachers, students and parents on the need for inclusion of the learners with special needs to increase their self-esteem and self-concept.

**Key words:** special school, psycho -cultural factors, academic performance, improved performance, improved transition, elimination of discriminative culture, effects of psycho cultural factors

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**Effects of Psycho-Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of Learners with Hearing Impairment at Fr. Oudraa Special Secondary School in Siaya County, Kenya**

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**Introduction**

Education is a fundamental right that leads to realization of other rights and part of development, as enshrined in the principles in the UN Declaration on Human Rights. It is estimated that 77 million children are currently excluded from education globally and out of these number, a half are children living with disabilities (EFA global monitoring report, 2010). In Kenya, more than 75% of children living with disabilities are out of school and of those enrolled, majority are confined in special schools or a few special units within regular schools (MoE, 2009). Sessional Paper No.4, (2012) shows that children with disabilities constitute only less than 1% of the children enrolled in schools, indicating that physical, social and economic barriers may be dispelling parents from enrolling their children with disabilities in these schools. Researchers and educationists have made attempts to examine the underlying causes of poor enrolment and poor academic performance for learners living with HI and the results reveal rather spurious relationship.

This study was anchored on the recognition of the rights of the child to survival, growth, protection, quality and effective participation in the education. It was based on the effects of psycho-cultural factors on the academic performance of HI and was confined to Fr. Oudraa Special Secondary School fraternity and parents with hearing impaired learners.

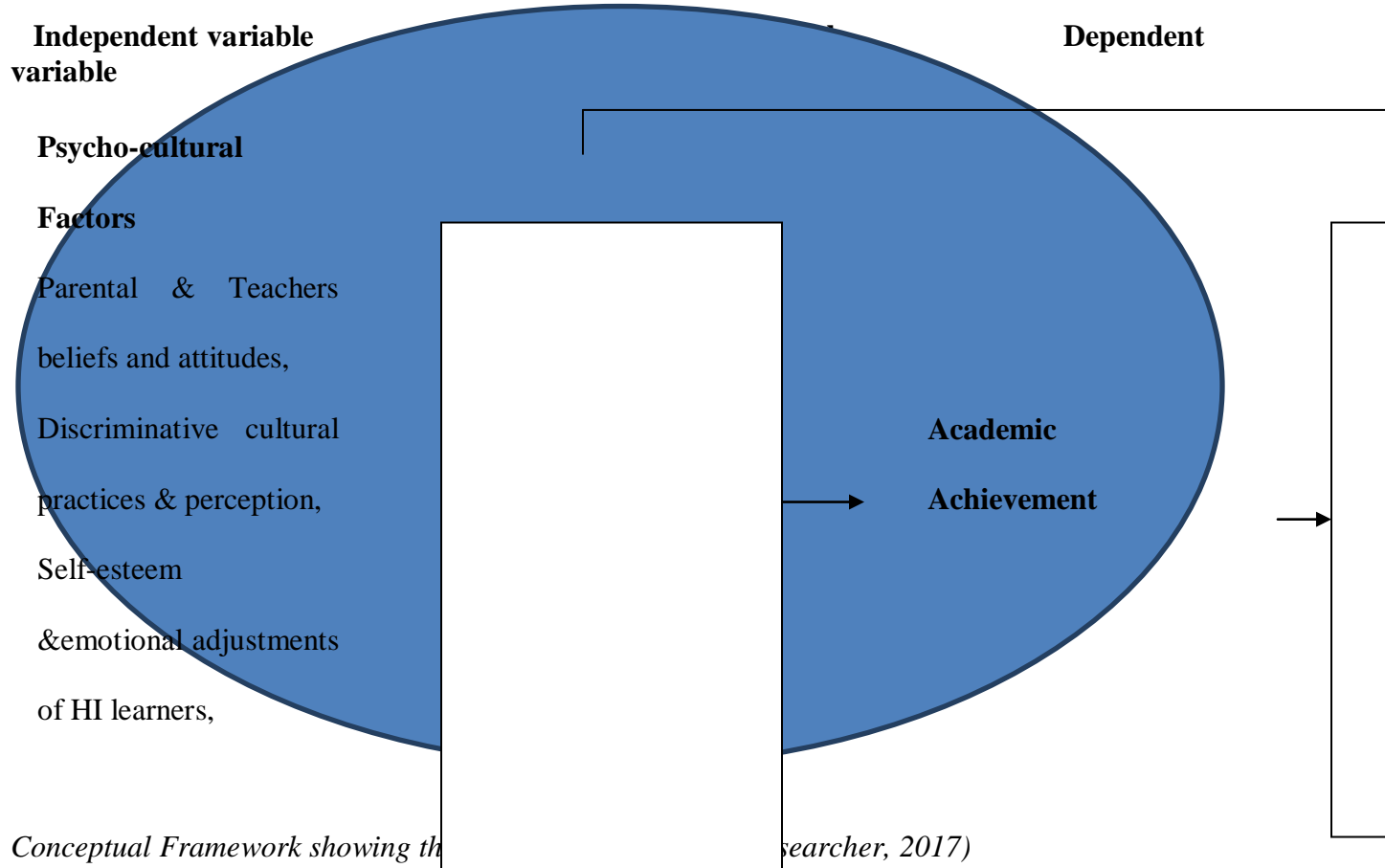
Data of Performance of the HI

| YEAR | MEAN SCORES | MEAN GRADES    |
|------|-------------|----------------|
| 2016 | 2.0         | D-             |
| 2015 | 4.18        | D <sub>+</sub> |
| 2014 | 3.95        | D+             |
| 2013 | 2.83        | D              |
| 2012 | 2.0         | D-             |

Considering the results in this table, there should have been public and parents concern on what was leading to the unpredictable results and what could be done to scale up the performance of HI learners. However, this was not the case for this school, prompting this study. What were the expectations, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and cultural practices contributing to their satisfaction in spite of the widening gap in performance?

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**Conceptual Framework**



*Conceptual Framework showing the relationship between independent variables, psycho-cultural factors, and academic achievement (Mangiti, 2017)*

The study established the influence of independent variables, psycho-cultural factors, which included; parental and teacher’s beliefs, cultural practices by the community and parents, attitudes of parents, teachers and support staff, emotional adjustment of HI learners, perception of HI and gender mainstreaming among others, on the dependent variable, academic performance of HI learners. It was envisaged that psycho-cultural factors have a strong implication on the academic performance of HI learners in terms of improved performance in all subjects, improved mean score in KCSE results, improved transition, improved self-esteem and elimination of discriminative culture. Moderating or intervening variables such as Implementation of Special Needs Education (SNE) Policy, awareness level of the community, parental support and school administrative culture have direct relationship on the dependent variable, performance of HI learners in KCSE, and an indirect relationship with the independent variables, psycho-cultural factors.

**Statement of the Problem**

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The Basic Education Act, (2013) and SDG goal No.4, emphasises quality, sustainable and inclusive education for all which should be achieved in a school set-up whether special, regular or unit. However, there exists wastage for learners with hearing impairment and other disabilities through repetition, drop out, poor performance and low transition to other levels of education. Although the government has adopted policies and strategies to fast track implementation of special needs education, the learners with hearing impairment lag behind other students in performance at KCSE level. On average a majority of HI learners attain D+ and below. The gap seems to widen because poor performance in special needs schools is accepted as norm and a few people raise concern over it.

Understanding how psycho-cultural factors determine the performance of learners with HI is an important component of promoting social justice in education (Donohue & Bornman 2014). A focus on the effects of psycho-cultural factors such as self-esteem and peer pressure, perception and beliefs of parents and teachers, parental engagement, gender mainstreaming and emotional adjustments, cultural practices and attitude of the community was of great significance to this study.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent are the effects of psychological factors on the academic performance of students with Hearing impairment at Fr. Oudraa special school?
2. What is the effect of cultural factors on the academic performance of students with Hearing impairment at Fr. Oudraa special school?
3. How do psycho-cultural challenges undermine the performance of HI learners at Fr.Oudraa secondary school?
4. What measures can be taken to alleviate the effects of psycho-cultural factors on the academic achievements of HI learners at Fr. Oudraa secondary school?

### **Literature Review**

Failure of parents, professionals and general public to understand and accept HI is the greatest obstacle to the academic success of hearing impaired, Calderon and Greenberg (2011). Negative attitudes and retrogressive cultural practices are detrimental to teaching of HI learners, Chimedza and Peterson (2003). Teachers and parents should try to understand children with hearing impairment (HI) and help them to navigate through learning process and have collaborative interactions that can lead to better social adjustments, (Mushiriwa & Gashua2008) However, lack of earlier interventions and provision of family centered services, parental related stress to having HI children and poor language outcomes affect the success of HI learners in national examinations.

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Gender, age at referral, degree of hearing loss, nature of support services and language used at home and school were major barriers to strong literacy and numeracy skills for HI students, (Watson and Swanwick, 2008). Opondo (2001) in Nyanza revealed that most parents were reluctant to invest in the education of children with serious disabilities because they would not reap economic returns in future. This study sought to understand how perceptions, attitudes and gender stereotypes of parents, teachers and the community influence the decision to support HI learners improving literacy and numeracy abilities which in turn contributes to KCSE performance in secondary school.

Nikolarazi and Makri,(2005) proposed that sign language should be exposed to as many people as possible because they established that hearing individuals who knew sign language held more positive belief regarding capabilities of HI. Sufficient self-esteem is extremely important for psychosocial functioning.

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher used a descriptive survey design to identify teacher related challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in Fr. Oudraa Special School in Siaya County, Kenya. The design is appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret it by producing statistical data on aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators.

This study used Interviews to gather information from the sub-county Educational Assessment Resource Centre (EARC) Coordinator, teachers and head teacher. A Questionnaire was used to gather information from learners, support staff and parents.

Quantitative data was cleaned, questions serialized, a coding key prepared and then data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 which is suitable for accuracy and completeness with minimal errors.

Qualitative data was coded, transcribed and interpreted in themes in line with the study objectives and statement of the problem. Results were presented with the aid of tables and figures using frequencies, percentages and mean scores.

### **Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Findings**

#### **Effects of psychological factors on the academic performance of students with hearing impairment**

##### **Self-esteem**

The finding shows that there are nearly half of the learners with HI who do not positively accept criticism thus affecting their self-esteem. Together with anxiety occurring to them in situations where they do not know what is expected of them, it affects their concentration and thus academic performance. Similarly, Mitchell and Karchmer (2004) also asserted that parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children are thrust into situations that may challenge their existing attitudes toward Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) people and what is possible for DHH people-and their DHH child to achieve.

The learners with HI also feel sorry for themselves generally taking blame for most of the misfortunes that befall them. The feeling of failure and being critical of themselves provides an

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indication of relatively low self-esteem which ultimately affects their performance. These findings concur with Harniss (2001) who showed that isolated children display more internalizing problems, such as depression, anxiety and low self-concept.

### **Self-concept**

The findings showed that the learners with HI are capable of following the lessons; fully appreciate the value of hard work in ensuring that they have high performance which can enable them gain entry to colleges and universities. Similar view is held by Chimedza and Peterson (2003) who asserted that deafness does not affect a persons' intellectual capacity to learn and can perform with a normal range of intelligence when tested beyond verbal tests. On the other hand, in as much as learners with HI are able to go through the lessons and understand that if they work hard they could perform well, a significant majority are not interested in their schoolwork and thus do not study hard. This shows that a significant proportion of the respondents do not appreciate their abilities. By extension, Nikolarazi and Makri, (2005) pointed out that HI are considered less intelligent than hearing and the blind due to this assumption. Most deaf learners do not see themselves capable of performing academic tasks and hence it's a psychological factor that determines academic performance.

### **Self-esteem**

Most participants reported that self-esteem of deaf learners affects their academic performance. From the interview it was concluded that self-esteem was a major factor which influenced the academic achievement of deaf learners when they are in school. The way a learner sees herself/himself affects how they perform academic activities in the classroom and this affects the academic achievement among them.

### **Anxiety**

Most participants were of the opinion that anxiety among deaf pupils negatively influenced their academic achievement. More anxious learners are not able to concentrate in class; they are fearful, restless and feel inadequate when handling academic tasks. Anxiety is therefore, a major psychological factor that affects the academic performance of the deaf learners. Feelings of restlessness do not give deaf learners ample time to perform well in academic tasks that they are given.

### **Stress and anxiety**

Stressful experiences of deaf learners have negatively affected their performance in schools. Anxiety is a major psychological factor that affects the academic performance of the deaf learners. Feelings of restlessness do not give deaf learners ample time to perform well in academic tasks that they are given. In most cases, they think of home challenges and thus are not able to deliver in class as required.

### **Effect of cultural factors on the academic performance of students with hearing impairment**

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From qualitative data, there were several cultural factors reported to be responsible for the low academic performance of the deaf learners. The findings shows that there is a weak negative correlation ( $r = -0.156$ ) between cultural factors and academic performance which is statistically significant ( $p = 0.041$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that statistically, as cultural factors increase, the academic performance of learners with HI declines. The finding is an indication that negative cultural factors negatively affect academic achievement of the learners. In this case the factors were stigma and discrimination, negative attitude from parents, teachers and relatives as well as teen pregnancies, stigmatization, early marriage, substance abuse

### **Discrimination**

The findings show that discrimination is a major cultural factor affecting the achievement of learners with HI and this is even meted on them by their parents who favour their siblings without disabilities. The community generally perceives the learners with HI negatively which affects their own perception of themselves and also leads to lack of academic attention. The findings are in agreement with those of Calderon and Greenberg (2011) who observed that failure of parents, professional and general public to understand and accept HI is the greatest obstacle to the academic success of hearing impaired.

### **Stigmatization**

Stigma refers to attitudes and beliefs that lead people to reject, avoid, or fear those they perceive as being different. Most participants reported that stigmatization among deaf learners affected their academic performance negatively. There is still a lot of stigma on deaf learners by their parents and this has greatly affected the academic performance of the pupils in school.

### **Early marriage**

Most participants reported that parents of deaf learners were not interested in their education and as such tended to propose to them for early marriages. This affected the academic performance of the deaf learners as parental care was very low. They end up marrying before they attain the adult age thus drop out of school due to poor parental attitude.

### **Substance abuse**

Most participants reported that some deaf learners were engaged in substance abuse and this in turn affected the academic achievement in school. Some deaf learners were involved in the consumption of drugs and other substances and this affected their consistence at school.

### **Challenges faced in the enhancement of academic performance of learners with HI**

English language is used in exams yet the official language for the Deaf is Sign Language, and the HI learners have limited sources of information to help them in their academic undertakings. Similarly, Newall and Newall (2010) established that parents found themselves under-informed on decision making and powerless in monolithic school system. This has affected their academic performance negatively.

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### **Assistive Devices**

Further, the study found that there is a shortage of assistive devices in schools for learners with HI. These findings show that deaf learners face challenges in terms lack of devices as well as lack of trained teachers to be able to handle their special needs thus hindering the learners with HI from improving their academic achievement.

### **Parental involvement**

The other challenge which emerged from findings was parental involvement, or lack of it, in the education of learners (children) with HI. This finding shows that although parents generally provide basic needs, this is probably not adequate for the learners with disability and some parents do not provide the same. The Lack of basic needs provided by parents/guardians hinders the academic progress and performance of learners with HI.

### **Communication barrier**

It was reported that there was a major problem of unqualified personnel in schools as this made it difficult to communicate with the deaf learners. Some teachers did not have signing skills, some workers were too ignorant of the signing skills too and the same to most parents. This negatively affected the academic performance of the deaf learners. From the interview, it was clear that most workers are not trained in the sign language and this has negatively affected academic performance of the deaf learners in schools.

### **Lack of teaching resources**

Most participants reported that there was lack of teaching resources to enable the teachers teach deaf learners appropriately. Some schools had obsolete materials while others lacked even basic materials. In some schools, there were very poor maintenance problems of the resources which had already been bought in school. From the interview transcripts above, it can be concluded that there was inadequate materials which negatively affected teaching and learning among deaf learners.

### **Absenteeism among deaf learners**

Most participants reported that there were several cases of absenteeism among deaf learners since they reported to school very late as compared with other learners. The deaf learners reported to school late and this limited the time they had for learning to take place. Teachers had to wait for most learners to report to school before beginning their learning sessions in school. From the two interview transcripts above, it can be concluded that deaf learners had serious cases of absenteeism and this negative affected them because they lost lots of learning hours.

### **Strategies of addressing challenges**

The fourth objective was on the Strategies of addressing challenges faced in enhancement of academic achievement among deaf pupils. The findings showed that there were several strategies that could be used to address the challenges experienced with deaf learners in schools.



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### **Employment of qualified staff**

This means employment of qualified staff that has knowledge of Sign Language to assist in communication with the deaf learners. This would ease communication with deaf learners in the schools and at home. Board of Management of deaf learners Schools need to consider the employment of teachers and workers with Sign Language in schools to solve communication problems and challenges.

### **Training parents on deaf awareness**

Most respondents were of the opinion that there was need to train parents on deaf awareness as this could make them have the best ways of handling the deaf learners at home and in schools. Most deaf learners were not treated well by their parents as some had bad attitude towards them.

### **Training deaf learners in Assertive Skills**

The views suggested that deaf learners still need to develop good personal and interpersonal skills, so as to be aware of the different ways of communicating with others to avoid undesirable consequences. Assertive behavior should make it clear that the other person's contributions are valued and that they be encouraged to communicate their idea and emotions freely without feeling under pressure.

### **Sensitization of deaf pupils on Affirmative Action**

Learners With HI are subordinated because of social, religious and cultural practices and beliefs in society and therefore, need to be sensitized on certain policies and Affirmative Actions that will make them agents of change on how the society should view deaf learners.

## **Research Findings,**

### **Psychological factors and academic performance**

Findings for research question one revealed that there is a strong positive correlation ( $r=0.907$ ). This indicated that as self-esteem rises, the academic performance also improves. Therefore the teachers are required to enhance learners with esteem in order to feel wanted and hence improve their learning and performance. However for self-concept, there was a weak positive correlation ( $r=0.246$ ) between self-concept and academic performance which was statistically significant at  $p=0.003$ ;  $p<0.05$ . This weak relationship implies that there is a slight improvement in academic performance with every rise in self-concept.

A regression analysis done on the third research question revealed a weak negative correlation ( $r=-0.156$ ) between cultural factors and academic performance which was significant at  $p=0.041$ ;  $p<0.05$ . This shows significantly that as cultural factors increases, the academic performance of learners with HI decreases. The finding is an indication that negative cultural factors negatively

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affect academic achievement of HI learners at Fr Oudraa Secondary school. In this case, the findings were stigmatization and discrimination, negative attitude from parents, teachers and relatives, early marriage as well as teenage pregnancies.

**Research question four addressed the challenges of learners with HI. Some of the findings indicated**

There was need for employment of qualified staff, training of parents on the deaf children, training the HI with assertive skills, enhancing positive attitude change among the HI learners and sensitizing of deaf learners on affirmative action to know which policies govern their lives. This will make them agents of change on how the society should view the deaf.

**Cultural factors and academic performance**

On the second objective, the study found that majority of the respondents (77.7%) cumulatively agreed that discrimination affects the academic achievement of deaf learners. Similarly, 65.7% of learners with HI cumulatively agreed that stigma and discrimination by parents affect the education of deaf learners. Majority of the respondents also cumulatively indicated that negative attitudes of teachers (50.8%), the parents (50.7%), relatives (47.7%) and the community at large (53.8%) affect the education of learners.

The study also found that communication barrier is a factor which affects academic achievement of learners with HI where majority (32.8%) strongly agreed that communication barriers affect the academic achievement of deaf learners while 20.9% agreed. However, a significant 37.3% cumulatively disagreed with this view indicating that communication barrier is not a setback in them achieving their academic goals. Regarding teen pregnancies affecting education of girls who are deaf, the study found that this was not a major issue as majority of the respondents (44.8%) cumulatively disagreed. On the contrary, a significant 34.3% of the learners with HI acknowledged teen pregnancies as a challenge affecting education and academic performance of deaf girls. The study established that there is a weak negative correlation ( $R = -0.156$ ) between self-esteem and academic performance which is statistically significant ( $p = 0.041$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Challenges faced in the enhancement of academic performance of learners with HI**

On the third question, the study found that the English language used in exams is somehow complex to understand for the deaf as reported by majority of the respondents (55.2%) who cumulatively agreed. The study also found that very limited sources of information to deaf learners are a challenge (47.7%) of the learners. The study also found that there is a shortage of assistive devices in schools for learners with HI as indicated by 56.8% of the respondents. Similarly, the study found that there are few teachers who are trained to teach deaf learners (53.8%).

Further, the study indicated that majority of the respondents (58.3%) cumulatively disagreed with the statement that there is low parental assistance offered to the deaf learners, a significant 26.9% agreed indicating that more than a quarter of the parents of learners with HI do not offer them the adequate support. Similarly, 25.4% of the respondents cumulatively agreed

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that parents don't provide basic needs to deaf learners against a majority of 59.7% of the respondents who cumulatively disagree with the statement.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that psychological factors directly influence academic performance of learners with HI such that significantly, as the self-esteem rises, the academic performance improves and a slight improvement with every rise in self-concept, Self-esteem, anxiety, and feeling of failure affects the performance of learners with HI hence the need to help them improve through positive support. Cultural factors e.g. early marriage, early pregnancy, parental role also have a negative influence on performance of HI learners. English language, limited learning resources among others were found to be the major challenges faced by HI in their pursuit for academic performance.

### **Way forward**

The Ministry of Education should put up plans to sensitize the teachers, students and parents on the need for inclusion of the learners with special needs to increase their self-esteem and self-concept. Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) should advise its members on the best ways of handling learners with HI to achieve their full academic potentials. Moreover, specialized training among the teachers should be increased as well as investing in assistive devices for learners with HI should be increased to help them to cope with the challenges and improve where possible. The Ministry of Education should also create an enabling environment for the inclusion of learners with special needs. This they can do through reforming and restructuring special education delivery programs. The curriculum developers could also design a curriculum that would focus and cater for the diverse needs of all learners in an inclusive setting. On early pregnancy, every effort through provisional of adequate learning materials and equipment for HI, strengthening child rights and rights of people with disabilities should be made to encourage girl-education for their good academic performance.

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**Citation** Mangiti, C. A. (2018). Effects of Psycho-Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of Learners with Hearing Impairment at Fr. Oudraa Special Secondary School in Siaya County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 2(3), 43 – 56.

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