

NURTURING DEAF CHILDREN THROUGH INCLUSIVE PARENTING PROGRAMS COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS FROM INTERNATIONAL DEAF AWARENESS WEEK AND THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SIGN LANGUAGE IN UGANDA- A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Abstract

Background

Inclusive parenting for individuals with disabilities, particularly within deaf families, has garnered global attention. Understanding the unique challenges faced by these families is crucial for developing culturally sensitive interventions on a global scale. This qualitative research was conducted during Uganda's International Deaf Awareness Week 2023 to delve into the diverse context of the deaf population and highlight areas for targeted Parenting interventions.

Methods

The study employed in-depth interviews with 20 deaf parents and utilized NVIVO software for thematic content analysis. Rigorous ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process to ensure the integrity and reliability of the findings. The focus was on exploring the transformative potential of specialized parenting programs tailored to the needs of deaf families.

Results

The findings of the study underscored positive behavioral changes, improved education outcomes, increased awareness levels, and a sense of empowerment among the participants. Key success factors identified include peer support networks, cultural acceptance of deafness, recognition of technology's benefits, and a strong emphasis on sign language as a vital communication tool within deaf communities.

Conclusion

The study advocates for the implementation of tailored interventions that take into account the unique challenges faced by deaf families, particularly in African and Sub-Saharan contexts. The transformative impact of inclusive parenting programs, as highlighted during Uganda's International Deaf Awareness Week 2023, demonstrates the potential for positive changes in family dynamics and educational outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations include adopting a holistic approach that combines awareness campaigns, collaborative efforts between stakeholders, leveraging technology for accessibility, and promoting cultural sensitivity in educational and support programs. These strategies aim to empower deaf families globally and nurture deaf children through context-specific and inclusive strategies

Keywords: Deafness, Parenting programs, International Deaf Awareness Week, International Day of Sign Language, Uganda Sign Language.

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Introduction

In recent decades, the global discourse on inclusive education and support for individuals with disabilities,

particularly within the context of deafness, has gained significant momentum [1]. As societies strive for greater inclusivity, there is a growing recognition of the unique

challenges faced by deaf individuals and, by extension, their families [2]. Parenting, a pivotal aspect of family life, demands special attention when considering the distinctive needs of deaf children [3]. Against this backdrop, our manuscript, "Empowering Families: Nurturing Deaf Children Through Inclusive Parenting Programs," presents a comprehensive analysis derived from a qualitative study conducted during the International Deaf Awareness Week (IDAW) and the International Day of Sign Language (IDSL) celebrations in Uganda.

Globally, the World Health Organization estimates that over 5% of the world's population experiences disabling hearing loss [4]. This underscores the magnitude of the challenge faced by deaf individuals and their families on an international scale, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions and support systems [5].

Within the African continent and specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa, cultural nuances shape perceptions of disability. According to studies like those conducted by Eide et al. (2015), living conditions for people with activity limitations in Sub-Saharan Africa reflect unique challenges. The intersection of cultural factors and disability underscores the importance of culturally sensitive interventions for deaf families [6].

Turning our focus to Uganda, a country characterized by a diverse and substantial deaf population estimated at 1.3 million, we find a distinctive context [7]. Approximately 300,000 individuals in Uganda rely on Uganda Sign Language (USL) as their primary means of communication [8]. Despite this significant demographic, there is a paucity of qualitative studies examining the challenges faced by deaf families and the efficacy of parenting programs in this East African nation.

This manuscript seeks to bridge this gap by presenting insights gleaned from a qualitative study conducted during the vibrant celebrations of IDAW and IDSL in Uganda. Through an in-depth exploration of the experiences, needs, and aspirations of deaf families, we aim to contribute to the global dialogue on inclusive parenting programs, shedding light on transformative approaches that empower families nurturing deaf children.

Methods

Study Design

This research embraced a cross-sectional qualitative approach to explore the transformative potential of specialized parenting programs, targeting empowerment for deaf families and advocating for inclusive interventions. The study leveraged participatory methods during the International Deaf Awareness Week and International Day of Sign Language celebrations from 18-24th September 2023. This qualitative design facilitated an in-depth

understanding of the experiences and perspectives of deaf parents.

Study Participants

Participants included 20 deaf parents from Uganda, a country with a diverse and substantial deaf population estimated at 1.3 million. Approximately 300,000 individuals in this population rely on Uganda Sign Language (USL) as their primary means of communication. Deaf parents were purposively selected from attendees of events organized by the Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) during the specified celebrations.

Eligibility Criteria (Inclusion and Exclusion)

Eligible participants were parents or caregivers of children with hearing impairment, willing to provide explicit consent. Inclusion criteria emphasized diversity in gender representation, while exclusion criteria considered individuals with physiological conditions hindering meaningful participation.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews, a qualitative data collection method, were employed to create an interactive and engaging environment. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility to explore emerging themes. These interviews provided a private platform for participants to express personal experiences freely.

Data Management

Thematic content analysis was employed to scrutinize the data. Interviews and audio recordings were securely stored, numbered, and transcribed verbatim. NVIVO version 12 software facilitated systematic analysis. The research team engaged in multiple readings developed a comprehensive codebook, and conducted iterative coding, ensuring the emergence of themes and subthemes. The interpretative process involved descriptive analysis supported by verbatim quotes.

Ethical considerations

Explicit written informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring voluntary engagement. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained, with pseudonyms used in reporting findings. Ethical approval from the Uganda Virus Research Institute (GC/1271/8/02/584) Institutional Review Board affirmed adherence to ethical standards in research involving human participants.

Reflexivity

Researchers acknowledged their positions and biases, fostering reflexivity in data interpretation for a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences. The study upheld ethical standards and robust qualitative methodologies to ensure the integrity and reliability of the findings.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the participants

The study included a diverse group of 20 participants, consisting of 11 males and 9 females. The age range of the participants varied from 28 to 43 years old, showcasing a broad spectrum of life experiences as shown in Table 1 below. The average age of the participants was approximately 37 years. The gender distribution reflected a balanced representation, with both males and females actively participating in the study. This diversity aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Sign Language Education and Technological Innovations on parenting in deaf families.

Table 1: Showing the demographic characteristics of the participants.

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>
P1	Female	33
P2	Female	32
P3	Female	37
P4	Male	40
P5	Female	38
P6	Male	43
P7	Male	39
P8	Male	35
P9	Female	36
P10	Male	34
P11	Male	28
P12	Male	36
P13	Male	29
P14	Male	36
P15	Male	37
P16	Female	40
P17	Female	39
P18	Female	41
P19	Male	39
P20	Female	42

The qualitative analysis of interviews conducted during the International Deaf Awareness Week 2023 in Uganda revealed several findings that elucidate the impacts of parenting programs on family life and the development of deaf children. These findings provide valuable insights into the transformative effects of inclusive parenting initiatives. The identified codes are as follows:

Behavioral Change

Parenting programs like the Parenting for Respectability program in Uganda were instrumental in fostering positive behavioral changes in parents. Notably, there was a discernible shift towards greater acceptance of deaf

children, with parents expressing a newfound perspective of their deaf children as blessings as illustrated below.

"Through inclusive parenting programs like the parenting for respectability program in Uganda, we have been able to witness a transformative journey where we parents, who were once hesitant, now embrace our deaf children as unique blessings, fostering a profound shift in our attitudes towards acceptance and understanding."(Male, 34 years)

Education Advancements

The parenting programs positively influenced children's education by motivating parents to enroll their deaf children in schools. This collective effort

contributed to enhancing the educational development of deaf children as one parent stated below.

"Participating in inclusive parenting programs has acted as a catalyst for positive change to us, inspiring us parents to actively engage in our deaf children's education." (Female, 35 years)

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Awareness and understanding

Parenting programs played a pivotal role in enhancing awareness and understanding among hearing parents regarding the unique needs of deaf children. This newfound awareness emphasized the importance of recognizing and addressing the specific needs of deaf children. This is demonstrated by the quotation below.

"We have experienced a profound shift in awareness and understanding among the hearing parents. These programs have served as a guiding light, fostering a newfound recognition of the unique needs of deaf children and emphasizing the importance of tailored support for their holistic development." (Male, 29 years)

Empowerment of Parents

These parenting programs were instrumental in empowering parents, enabling them to advocate for the rights and educational opportunities of their deaf children. Parents reported increased confidence in navigating the challenges faced by their children as illustrated below.

"We have experienced empowerment among parents. These programs have not only equipped us parents to advocate for the rights and educational opportunities of our deaf children but also instilled a newfound confidence, transforming us into resilient advocates navigating the unique challenges faced by our children." (Female, 33 years)

Peer Support and Networking

Parenting programs facilitated valuable peer support and networking opportunities among parents of deaf children. This communal platform allowed parents to share experiences and provide mutual advice, creating a supportive network as shown by the quotation below.

"...and we as parents found a valuable platform for peer support, enabling us to share experiences and exchange advice..." (Male, 36 years)

Inclusion of Deaf Parents

The inclusion of deaf parents in parenting programs emerged as a crucial factor. This inclusive approach contributed to a comprehensive strategy for addressing the diverse needs of deaf children and their families as illustrated below.

"...this pivotal inclusion not only enriches the diversity of perspectives but also contributes to a comprehensive

strategy in addressing the unique needs of deaf children and their families, fostering an environment of true inclusivity." (Male, 37 years)

Psychosocial Support

Parenting programs offered essential psychosocial support to parents, assisting them in coping with the challenges, including discrimination and negative societal attitudes. This support played a crucial role in enhancing overall family well-being.

"...Beyond addressing the unique needs of our deaf children, these parenting programs offer vital psychosocial support to us parents, enabling us to cope with challenges and foster a resilient family environment that positively contributes to our overall well-being..." (Female, 40 years)

Importance of sign language

Emphasis was placed on the pivotal role of sign language in the development of deaf children. Parenting programs underscored the significance of sign language and provided training to parents and teachers to facilitate effective communication as shown below.

"...these programs empowered us parents and teachers to facilitate effective communication, recognizing sign language as a cornerstone for the holistic development of deaf children..." (Male, 35 years)

Acceptance and Understanding of Deaf Culture

Parenting programs actively promoted the acceptance and understanding of deaf culture. This inclusive approach aimed to foster a supportive environment that recognizes and celebrates the uniqueness of deaf children as shown below.

"...by actively promoting the acceptance and understanding of deaf culture, these programs worked towards creating a nurturing environment where the uniqueness of deaf children is not only recognized but also embraced, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive community in Uganda our nation, and beyond." (Female, 36 years)

Technology and Digital Resources

Parents acknowledged the potential role of technology in enhancing parenting programs' accessibility and effectiveness. However, they highlighted the need for training on technology use, particularly for the benefit of deaf children's learning as illustrated below.

...we acknowledge the potential of technology in enriching parenting programs. We recognize its role in enhancing accessibility and effectiveness, but we critically need training on technology use, particularly harnessing its

benefits for the unique learning needs of deaf children." (Male, 28 years)

Discussion

The results of this study emphasized the transformative impacts of parenting programs obtained during Uganda's International Deaf Awareness Week 2023. The findings revealed multifaceted positive changes in family dynamics, educational engagement, and the overall parenting journey. These findings align with a global imperative for inclusive interventions, particularly in the context of deafness. Drawing upon pertinent literature, this study discussed the implications of its results within the broader international, African, Sub-Saharan, East African, and Ugandan contexts.

Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over 5% of the world's population experiences disabling hearing loss, emphasizing the significance of tailored interventions [9].

Tailored interventions such as the Parenting for Respectability Parenting program in Uganda hold significant potential for fostering positive mindset changes among parents raising children with hearing loss. The observed behavioral changes in this study align with a broader global imperative for attitudinal shifts toward accepting deaf individuals within their families. Well-crafted disability-inclusive parenting programs, like the Parenting for Respectability program, can effectively address this need. Other programs include sessions and sections advocating for educational provisions for children living with disabilities such as hearing loss. These programs are capable of providing valuable peer support to parents or caregivers of children living with hearing loss.

Furthermore, these findings collectively highlight the positive impact of parenting programs on family dynamics, the educational trajectory of deaf children, and the overall parenting journey. The transformative nature of these programs is evident in the multifaceted improvements reported by participants, ranging from attitudinal shifts to practical empowerment and community building.

In the African context, studies by Eide et al. (2015) highlight the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, including those with hearing impairments, in Sub-Saharan Africa [10]. People with hearing loss face daily challenges like communication barriers, social isolation, and educational difficulties. Employment opportunities can be limited due to communication needs, leading to financial strains. Emotionally, they may experience stress, anxiety, and depression. Access to hearing aids and support services is crucial but often limited, exacerbating safety risks and societal stigma, impacting their overall well-being and quality of life. Cultural nuances shape perceptions of disability, underscoring the importance of culturally

sensitive interventions [11]. Our findings resonate with the need for inclusive approaches grounded in cultural understanding. The Sub-Saharan setting, with its diverse cultural landscape, amplifies the call for targeted interventions. The collective effort to enhance educational development aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of education for children with disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa [12].

In the East African context, this study in Uganda contributes to the limited body of qualitative research on the challenges faced by deaf families. The positive influence on education and the empowerment of parents are critical considerations in line with regional efforts to address the needs of individuals with hearing impairments.

Within Uganda, this study provides a unique insight into the diverse and substantial deaf population, estimated at 1.3 million, and the reliance on Uganda Sign Language [13]. The emphasis on sign language aligns with the national context and the need for targeted efforts to support deaf children's development.

This study's findings corroborate the importance of psychosocial support, as highlighted in studies on disability in low-income countries [14]. Additionally, the acknowledgment of technology's potential, coupled with the call for training, resonates with global discussions on leveraging technology for inclusive education [15].

In summary, this study provides valuable insights into the transformative effects of inclusive parenting programs, offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by deaf families. The implications of these findings extend globally, while the focus on specifically African, Sub-Saharan, East African, and Ugandan contexts underscores the importance of tailoring interventions to diverse cultural and regional needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illuminates the transformative impact of inclusive parenting programs observed during Uganda's International Deaf Awareness Week. The positive changes in family dynamics and educational engagement underscored the global necessity for inclusive interventions, particularly in addressing deafness. Aligned with a broader need for attitudinal shifts, this study's findings resonate with the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the imperative for culturally sensitive interventions, especially in the African and Sub-Saharan contexts. The study's insights contribute to the limited body of qualitative research in East Africa, offering a unique glimpse into Uganda's diverse deaf population and advocating for tailored interventions that recognize the significance of Uganda's Sign Language. The corroborated importance of psychosocial support and acknowledgment

of technology's potential align with global discussions on inclusive education, positioning this study as a valuable contribution to the discourse on empowering families and nurturing deaf children for a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Recommendations

This study recommended a comprehensive approach to inclusive parenting programs arising from the findings from Uganda's International Deaf Awareness Week 2023. This study's proposals include universal awareness campaigns, participatory methods, and collaboration with local authorities, incorporating behavioral change components, leveraging technology with training, fostering culturally sensitive peer support, encouraging global collaboration, emphasizing inclusivity in African contexts, aligning with Uganda's community-based healthcare approach, and developing multifaceted programs. These recommendations aim to empower families, nurture deaf children, and create a more inclusive and supportive environment globally, recognizing diverse cultural nuances and aligning with local contexts for sustainable impact.

Strengths

The study presents a comprehensive analysis of inclusive parenting programs during Uganda's International Deaf Awareness Week, offering global relevance and contributing to the international discourse on inclusive interventions for deaf families. Emphasizing cultural sensitivity, the participatory approach actively involves deaf parents, tailoring interventions to community-specific needs. Acknowledging technology's potential, the study advocates for a balanced approach to training. The proposed recommendations advocate for multifaceted programs, collaborating with local and global partners, aligning with Uganda's healthcare approach, and tailoring interventions to diverse cultural contexts. The study's strength lies in fostering empowerment, inclusivity, and positive change for deaf families globally and at community levels.

Limitation

Being a cross-sectional study, this study lacked longitudinal data to track changes in attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes over time, missing potential insights into long-term parenting programs' effectiveness.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available to the principal investigator without undue reservation.

Abbreviations

IDAW: International Deaf Awareness Week
IDSL: International Day of Sign Language
WHO: World Health Organization
UNAD: Uganda National Association of the Deaf

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Authors' Contribution

All authors significantly contributed to the proposal development, data collection and analysis, and manuscript writing.

Conflicts of Interest

All the authors declare no conflict of interest.


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