

## INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT: THE PARENTAL EXPERIENCES AND COPING STRATEGIES

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### Abstract

*Rare studies address the experiences of parents on interpersonal behaviour problems of their children with hearing impairment in Kano state Nigeria. Children with hearing impairment often have some sort of exceedingly language disability which is a major factor affecting their interpersonal relation with their parents, peers, and family. The present research was pretensioned to probe the interpersonal behaviour problems of children with hearing difficulties as lamented by their parents. The research was a qualitative single case study in which an in-depth interview was conducted with eight parents whose children were profoundly hearing impaired. A thematic analysis of the data identified three core categories: Aggression, judgement from others and seeking social support. On the basis of the research findings, it was concluded that most of the hearing-impaired children are rebellious, they exhibit rudeness, show temper outburst, destroy property and fight perpetually. Whereas, their parents turn to spiritualism and collaborate with other people to cope with the challenging experiences they have. It was emphasized, the parents of the hearing impaired themselves believed they need additional advocacy. This elevates a cardinal blueprint and finds it expedient that hearing impaired parents have found helpful. Eventually, the briefing suggests parental commitment, love and enthusiasm, whereas, governmental intervention to uplift the life of hearing impaired children was equally recommended.*

**Key words:** *Hearing impairment, interpersonal behaviour problems, parental experiences, coping strategies*

### Introduction

Developmental psychologists opine that, at one point or the other children begin to learn interpersonal skills in their early life span. They remain in constant state watching and imitating the actions of their parents, family, peers and any adult person. The ability of a hearing-impaired child to advance in terms of interpersonal behaviour has an inclination on his or her severity of hearing problem. A study carried out by Todd & McLaughlin (2002) reveals that children develop skills of interpersonal relationship that consist: being friendly, making friends, initiating conversation, join social groups, expression of appropriate feelings and choosing appropriate interpersonal behaviour. Children with hearing impairment may be considered as high-risk population due to the presence of indicators such as: articulation problem which involve poor communication skills and lagging behind in emotional and social level (Calderon, 2000). Indeed, the presence of such impairments may cause some difficulties with regard to the development of children and their interpersonal relationships with their parents.

Parents have a primary influence on their children's lives regardless of being normally hearing or hearing impaired as indicated by Oladejo and Oladejo, (2011). They always have insights regarding the behavioural manifestation and needs of their hearing-impaired children. These discernments are useful in devising treatment and behavioural models for children with hearing difficulties in particular. There is no doubt that the child with hearing disability poses some exceptional demands on every member of the family, especially their parents. That is why Davis (1993) and Gill (1997) highlight the extending emotional stress that parents found themselves while parenting children with hearing disability. The extra care that they have for their children and the intense investment of time and energy and financial burden that they experience create a feeling of ambivalence on those parents (Akkok 2000). Parents with hearing impaired children are supposed to cope up with the experiences they have in managing the behavioural problem of their children. Furthermore, research suggests that there are insufficient support services in Nigeria for parents of children with hearing impairment, let alone those parents whose children are being bedevilled with interpersonal behaviour difficulties, which might assist them in coping with the challenging experiences they faced (Kyoto, 2014, Ozoji 2011 & Okeke 2001).

### **The Concept of Interpersonal Behaviour**

Etiologically, the concept of interpersonal was used originally in 1842, from the combination of the words 'inter' and 'personal', it was later presented in 1938 into the psychological sense by H. I. Sullivan (1892-1949) which elaborates on the concept as, behaviour between people in an encounter. Therefore, interpersonal behaviour has been defined in various ways by different researchers, teachers and social psychologists. But most of these definitions given by these experts inclined to the behaviour based on the aspect of verbal communication among individuals, that is why (Venckus 2013) comes with the best operational definition of interpersonal behaviour where he argues that, the term interpersonal behaviour is the ability to hear and perceive the unspoken as well as spoken thoughts, feelings and concern of others. This definition is more comprehensive as it captures both spoken and unspoken thoughts, because a child with a hearing impairment has problem of articulation and communication that deter him from understanding what is being expressed verbally.

Therefore, interpersonal behaviour is the behaviour and actions that are present in children with hearing impairment as their process of relationship with family, peers and other people in the society. The way such children behave, interact and communicate with others and all that entails is considered as interpersonal behaviour. In spite of the communication problem that the hearing impaired suffer from, this does not deter them from having interaction with people. Children have their verbal interactions by using cues such as pantomimes, gestures, body language and total communication.

### **The Interpersonal Behaviour Problems of Children with Hearing Impairment**

In (Reitzes' 2012) perception interpersonal behaviour problems are all that tedious and hideous problematic feelings and behaviour demonstration among children with hearing disabilities which create a very negative impact on their ability to form and maintain healthy and rewarding relationship with others. Studies have revealed that defective hearing creates barriers to the general behavioural development of the hearing impaired, bringing about retardation and personality problems. Chief among the barriers to general development is the lack of language brought about by hearing loss. Okeke (2001) states that early severe hearing impairment deprives the afflicted person of the natural ability to acquire verbal language, which impedes normal development. Poor language development or the lack of it robs the hearing-impaired person of a necessary tool for human communication, inner enrichment and clear mental perception. MC Mahon (1994) opines

that perception is the first major process in the cognitive process and that the defects in the hearing organ of the deaf create a deficit in the development continuum of language skills.

Bakare (2000) illustrates that physical deficits also create risks for the development of poor interpersonal behaviour in children with physical impairment. A study in diagnosis, assessment and treatment of externalising problems revealed multiple disruptive behaviours like aggression and suspiciousness. The research attributes these behaviours as causes of their physical disabilities. Similarly, children with hearing impairment exhibit different sorts of antisocial behaviours, such as inability to maintain friendships and failure to maintain relation with class fellows are among the prominent antisocial tendencies of the hearing-impaired children. They often get themselves into the act of damaging, malicious and destructive activities (Nwazuoke 1993; Mba 2002; & Merrill 2003 ;).

The development of language and communication may play an important role in the emergence of interpersonal behaviour of the child with hearing impairment in school. As it has been described by Masten et al (2005), a child's interpersonal behaviour problems have been shown to have a negative impact on a range of developmental, social and educational outcomes. It is a common phenomenon to have seen children with hearing loss exhibiting externalised behaviour in their family and school and their learning (Hastings 2003). In accordance with the Campbell, Shaw and Gillion (2000), the hearing-impaired manifestation of externalise behaviour such as oppositional behaviour aggression, violating the rules are likely to continue in their education. Some evidence suggests that poor visual attention and lack of proper parental communication were the major cause of behaviour problems in children with various degrees of hearing disability (Terwogt & Rieffe 2004).

Myklebust (1999) found that with their normal peers, the hearing-impaired children show a greater degree of social and emotional maladjustment. He maintains that the hearing impaired have a feeling to severe isolation and detachment with aggressive, almost desperate attempts to compensate, and thereby regain interpersonal contacts. Further, he elaborates that the problems of children with hearing impairment might initially relate to how they are viewed by other people rather than the degree or type of disability. The environment and the way hearing impaired children perceive themselves influences their reaction to situations. Lack of language or poor language development can bring about misinterpretation leading to suspicion, distrusts, avoidance or withdrawal.

Eventually, it is important to note that hearing impaired children do not react uniformly to stimuli. They show different signs of maladjustment, which are as diverse as the situations that evoke them. Thus Abosi (1991) isolates a number of variables, which can affect the interpersonal development of hearing impaired. The variables are home and family factors, socioeconomic factors, health status, community climate, cause and time of deafness, amount of residual hearing, types of hearing impairment, age of beginning school and type of school attended method of instruction and stability of the curriculum and the length of time in school. These variables or factors influence or affect the development of the interpersonal behaviour of the child with hearing impairment.

Majid & Saif (2011) conducted a study on the classroom social behaviour of hearing impaired children, using a checklist of 40 items to observe the behaviour of the children. The findings revealed that, hearing impaired children show mixed type of behaviour in classrooms. The research concludes that children with hearing loss show positive behaviour such as paying attention to the teacher, remaining calm and follow the rules, cooperate with others, respect elders, enjoys others company and stay away from fighting. Whereas some children with hearing impairment do

not follow discipline rules, they remain uncalm and noisy, they do not discuss their feelings with teachers, do not participate in competition and do not share their belonging with others.

### **Parental Experiences of Hearing Impaired Interpersonal Behaviour Problems**

It is well-known that parenting children with different sorts of impairments brings with it many additional challenges such as higher levels of stress than caring for a child with typical development. According to Kobosko (2010), Ludlow, Skelly & Rohleder (2013), parents of deaf children or those with hard of hearing experience greater parenting stress than parents of typically developing ones. Stress is an inevitable experience, which is felt when an individual is worried about things he cannot control. Moreover, parenting stress is a normal part of parenting experience, which occurs when parents experienced negative emotions and pressures as a result of their children's behaviour dispositions. Therefore, it is accompanied with various stress intensity to become a parent of a deaf child. Both fathers and mothers experience psychological distress related to their child deafness and its implication for the life of the child and the entire family.

Parenting children with disabilities is among the most challenging work an individual face. In terms of dealing with the behaviour of their children, parents of hearing impaired face so many challenges that is why (Judge, 2004) believes that parenting a child with special need features very demanding. This is argued by Pritzlaff (2001) that, higher amount of physical, emotional and psychological demands is seen by parents who have children with disabilities. According to Doshi (2005) and Lazarus (1984), people have to devise a means to accommodate the pressures, tensions and challenges which they face in their place of work, in the career which they pursue or from the difficulty of behavioural problems of their children. Therefore, they opine that coping strategies are specific and psychological efforts that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events. Conceptually, any demand that has exceeded the resources of a person in managing it, that person needs to employ some coping strategies to handle the situation (Lazarus & Folkman 1990). Therefore, parents of hearing impaired also have to deal with another occurring difficulty such as the burden of judgement from others, dealing with the sensory and social problems, a parental sense of loss and grief (Leone & Wiltz, 2006).

### **Parental Coping Strategies in Dealing with the Behaviour of Their children**

Parenting children with disabilities is among the most challenging work an individual face. In terms of dealing with the behaviour of their children, parents of hearing impaired face so many challenges that is why (Judge, 2004) believe that parenting a child with special need features very demanding. This is argued by Pritzlaff (2001) that, higher amount of physical, emotional and psychological demands is seen by parents who have children with disabilities. According to Doshi (2005) and Lazarus (1984), people have to devise a means to accommodate the pressures, tensions and challenges which they face in their place of work, in the career which they pursue or from the difficulty of behavioural problems of their children. Therefore, they opine that coping strategies are specific and psychological efforts that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events. Conceptually, any demand that has exceeded the resources of a person in managing it, that person needs to employ some coping strategies to handle the situation (Lazarus & Folkman 1990). Therefore, coping strategies can be seen as the survival mechanisms that many parents use as a means to deal with the challenging behaviour of their children which they experience in their life.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Research fulfils a vital role in bridging an important gap in the society. It is the means by which ideas are confirmed or refuted. Qualitative research makes a sense of reality, in explaining the social world and develop explanatory models and theories. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to

probe the underlying interpersonal behaviour problems of children with hearing impairment experiences of their parents in the Tudun Maliki Special School for Handicapped. It also seeks to recollect the coping mechanisms used by the parents in dealing with the behavioural problems manifested by their children.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions are the ambiguities that come across in the researcher's mind that triggers him or her to propose for a research. Research questions also serve as a guiding principle upon which the entire study is built. Therefore, in this study, the following research questions are proposed to be addressed by the researchers. In this, the core questions are included:

1. As a parent of a child with hearing impairment, what interpersonal behaviour problem does your child manifest?
2. What is your experience on the interpersonal behaviour problem of your child, as being a child with hearing impairment?
3. What is the coping strategies do you use in dealing with the interpersonal behaviours of your child with hearing impairment?

### **Research Methodology**

This study was designed as a qualitative research. Indeed, it is a case study research in a special school seeking to understand the experiences of the targeted respondents. Creswell (2007) unequivocally, states that, "Qualitative research is based on the assumptions that are very different from quantitative designs". In a qualitative research, broad and wide explanation can be disclosed by the informants without any limitation like quantitative method (Shirin, Hassan and Islam, 2014). Therefore, data were collected by means of individual interviews with 8 parents (5 fathers and 3 mothers). Participants were recruited through convenient sampling from people known to the researchers that adequate and rich data could be obtained from them. Participants took part in the individual interviews averaging approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Five interviews were long due to the ample time and adequate deliberation during the sessions of those interviews. Participants returned their signed informed consent. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first researcher. An interview protocol was drawn up by the second researcher. Issues raised by parents were explored further with the aid of probing and follow-up questions.

As regards to data analysis procedure, data collection and data analysis must be simultaneously processed (Merriam, 2009, Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This means that during the data analysis the data should be organised categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continually coded in generating the themes. Issues raised by parents were explored further with the aid of central research questions, follow-up questions and probing questions. Therefore, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then analysed using the techniques of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main ideas of each informant were coded using a 7-column coding template. By classifying and interpreting the main ideas and sub-ideas of the informants, a number of sub-themes and themes were generated from the two main research questions. To maintain the research ethics and ensure confidentiality, the data has been anonymised by ejecting references to the person's name and leading identity.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the collected data, some themes were extracted and gathered in a single script coupled with the relevant transcribed conversation. The script was later taken to two experts in Psychology (Developmental Psychologists) to verify the appropriateness of the generated themes in light of the contextual oral discourse. The average

agreement of inter-raters are 92 per cent and this clearly indicates that the identified themes represent the ideas as intended by the informant (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Besides, credibility and trustworthiness of the data was also attained after the prolong engagement. The more experience and the time spent by the researchers in the field with the informants as a result of the prolong engagement in the actual setting, the more the accurate and valid is the findings of the study as it is being indicated by (Creswell, 2009).

The findings of the study are discussed under the guidance of (Burnard, 2004), and interpreted in accordance with the emerging themes and the research questions are presented as interpersonal behaviour problems, and parental coping mechanisms on the behaviour of their hearing-impaired children. The discussion upon the findings is based on the generated major themes. The themes from the informants are divided into two categories (the behaviour problems of the children and the coping mechanisms employed by parents) on which the research questions were posed during the interview session. The preliminary discussion of the major themes was strictly based on the informant's inputs and far from being a complete critical discussion in light of neither the existing literature review nor the related theoretical or conceptual framework

### **Research Question 1**

As a parent of a child with hearing impairment, what interpersonal behaviour problem does your child manifest?

The above question was formulated to discover the interpersonal behaviour problems shown by the hearing-impaired children, according to what their parents recollected. The data extracted from the informants with regard to the question was that, all of the informants confessed that their children have been manifesting some kinds of interpersonal behaviour problem. They opined that such behaviour, seeing in their children is something debilitating which affect the interpersonal dispositions of their children. Therefore, from the participants' perspectives two main themes, namely **aggression**, which has to do with temper outbursts, destruction and hurting others and **defiance**, which include rudeness, rebellion, indiscipline and fighting emerged as the dominating interpersonal behaviour problems among the children with hearing impairment.

#### **Aggression**

The interpersonal behaviour problems being manifested by children with hearing impairment, according to the most of the informants is aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour is quite frequently a hostile over-reaction or outburst, which result from past pent-up anger. This creates a very negative impact on the hearing-impaired ability to form and maintain healthy and rewarding relationship with others. The hearing-impaired manifestation of externalise behaviour problems such as oppositional and non-compliant behaviour led to very poor relationship with their family, parents and even their teachers at school. Consequently, the informants acknowledged that their children have some sorts of aggressive behaviour like:

##### *Temper Outburst*

Temper is one of the most aggressive behaviours exhibited by children with hearing loss, as narrated by most the parents in this study. It is the tendency in which the hearing-impaired child becomes angry easily. This is a common behaviour among such children as stated by many of such parents. This is due to the child's inability to perceive what is being said to them orally. The participants' view with regard to the temper outburst of their children could be supported from the excerpts in which one participant lamented:

*“He easily becomes irritated, whenever his brothers say something that he could not understand he goes ballistic and becomes angry with everybody thinking that they are plotting something evil against him. I always calm him*

*down and inform him that they are his brothers as such, they cannot harm him at all”*

Sequel to the aforementioned narrated assertion, another participant went further to describe to the researchers the extent to which the aggressive behaviour problem in the form of temper outburst that is being exhibited by his child, the father says that:

*“The interpersonal behaviour of my child to be frank, is full of problem behaviour as he cannot hear what is being said, he turns to be very stubborn and show high temper along with some defying behaviour in which he becomes difficult to control let alone calm him down whenever he becomes angry and this effect the entire family and the neighbourhood”*

### **Fighting**

Fighting is a common phenomenon among the children with hearing impairment as reported by the participants in this study. Most of the fighting that the children with hearing loss engaged in their fault, because they always suspect that children are making fun of them, which is not true that is they resort to fighting according to what some of the participants explained. This is evident in what a participant claimed:

*“Mhmmm//(smiling), he fights with the children excessively, and most of the time is his fault because when he sees something in the hand of a child, he claims the ownership of that thing even though it does not belong to him. If the child refuses to give it to him, then he beats the child unless the child fights back and one thing I realized most of the children are afraid of a child with hearing loss.....”*

A direct relationship with the above excerpt, one mother described how she perceives the interpersonal behaviour problem of her child and other hearing-impaired children, she maintained that such children are so problematic as she lamented:

*“In my little knowledge as a woman, children with this problem of hearing have much problem as I know one deaf in our neighbourhood. I understand they are so troublesome children, they fight and bully any child they out powered”*

### **Defiance**

Parenting a child with defiant behaviour is extremely stressful, and defiance behaviour among children with hearing impairment is common. It is a behaviour problem characterised by constant disobedience and hostility. For many children with hearing impairment, or being non-compliance and non-co-operative in their relationship. They have the tendency towards being oppositional, misbehaving, and so refusing to listen, co-operate and acknowledge. Children with this behaviour argue frequently with adults, particularly the most familiar people in their lives such as their parents and siblings. In this study, the following are the common defiance behaviour which the participants reported that their children manifested.

### **Rudeness**

Rudeness is a display of disrespect by not complying with the norms of a group. It is constituted by deviation from whatever count as appropriate in a given context. Some of the participants in this study truly lamented the fact that their children do exhibit some form of non-compliance behaviour which they believe to have been very rude behaviour. This is testified by a participant who asserted that:

*“Her behaviour differs in the sense that she is very rude that is why she fights with people. But what annoyed me most concerning her behaviour is her rudeness, she does not listen to anybody when you tell her what to do, she instantly refused.*

*As I said sometimes she fights, or throw things and even destroy so become difficult to control or calm down”*

Likewise, an informant who shared the same experience on the rude behaviour of children with hearing loss said this:

*“I told you this earlier in my statement that my child is somehow furious and disobedient child. If he is quarrelling with his brothers or when you disallow him from doing something he start to scream loudly by throwing stones and destroy anything he saw that is how he broke the television set when he was fighting with one of his elder brother....”*

### **Rebellion**

The act of rebellion by hearing impaired children is very frustrating to the parents. Rebellion among such children is synonymous with contrary behaviour, defiance or being disobedient. Hearing impaired children in most cases resist to instruction, whether it comes from their parents, teachers or other adults. Some of the participants argued that their children choose to defy not only their instructions, but general social norms and values. A participant admitted:

*“Sometimes, as I told you I locked her as to deprive her from being so rude to others and at the same time I thought that it was Allah that have tested me with that girl so I leave everything to Allah”*

Moreover, some parents narrated how the rebellious nature of their children affects their entire relationship with the family and other children in the society. With regard to this a participant described his childhood as having rebelled behaviour, indicated that:

*“I think, I mentioned something like this in my earlier statement that my child has a defying behaviour, he refuses to obey most of what you ask him to do that is why he fights excessively with other children and even his siblings. Whenever he is fighting, he does not stop he keeps on, his fighting never ends that is how most of the hearing-impaired children are. Sometimes I beat him as to stop him otherwise he remains in enmity with everybody”*

## **Research Question 2**

What is your experience on the interpersonal behaviour problem of your child, as being a child with hearing impairment?

The above and the second research question was designed to emanate the experiences that parents of hearing impaired children have in managing the challenging behaviours of their children. Parents gain insight into the behaviours of their children through their active participation and involvement, more especially if the behaviours exhibited by the children are so challenging. Therefore, parents of children with difficult behaviours have more opportunity to share their experiences than those parents whose children are neurotypical individuals. In this research question, one major theme was discerned which was **parenting stress** which included a judgement from others, dealing with repetitive behaviour and impact on the family.

### **Parenting Stress**

Parenting a child with hearing impairment brings with it many additional challenges such as higher levels of stress than caring for a child with typical development. Stress is an inevitable experience that is felt when an individual is worried about things he cannot control. Moreover, parenting stress is a normal part of parenting experience, which occurs when parents experienced negative emotions and pressures as a result of their children's behaviour dispositions. Therefore, most of the parents of children with hearing impairment in this study expressed their concern on the display of repetitive

and non-compliance behaviours of their children which present a considerable challenge and distress to them.

#### *Judgement from Others*

While many of the parents were in agreement that managing the interpersonal behaviour of their hearing-impaired children was often difficult, some participants regarded public tantrums and the reaction from others as being the most difficult aspect of such behaviours shown by their children. Three participants commented on how the perceived judgements from others was the most gruelling part rather than the behaviour per se. A common perception of the participants was that others tended to judge their children as just “naughty” children, and that they as parents were not effective in their parenting. For example, one participant said:

*“People complained to me that my child beats or confiscates, this and that or something from the hand of their children. But most of these complaints are verbal, but some parents took the case to the police station in which I had to go and explained to the police that my child is a deaf and sometimes it is the fault of the children because they teased him. But, yet people pass different judgement against me, calling me a father of a ‘diabolic child’ and this is so embarrassing to me”*

However, another participant described his ordeal on how other people look down upon him just because his child has some difficult behaviour where he despaired:

*“Some people, especially my neighbours complained that she is used to taking little children by force and refused to drop the child or give the child back to its mother. In many cases they come in persons and level their complaints to me, some people even threat to take a revenge or legal action for what she has done to their children. One thing that annoys me most is the way other people describe my child. Some believed that she is a mad child while others think that she is a wicked deaf, all sorts of labelling. In fact, people are spreading gossip about me and my child. There was a time when someone accused me that I am the one that is supporting all what my child does”*

#### *Dealing with Challenging Behaviour*

The hearing-impaired children as they manifest externalise behaviour problems such as aggression, oppositional and violating rules, are referred to as very challenging by parents. Almost all of the participants cited their children’s challenging behaviours as being particularly stressful. The examples given included temper tantrums, repetitive behaviours and aggressiveness. Some parents reported that such behaviours occur on a frequent basis. However, some parents described their children still displaying behaviours atypical in nature, despite their effort to deprive them from doing so. Other parents referred to their children’s challenging behaviours were shown in the form of tantrums and aggressive behaviours even at schools. Under such circumstances, one participant observed:

*“He easily becomes irritated, whenever his brothers say something that he could not understand he goes ballistic and becomes angry with everybody thinking that they are plotting something evil against him. I always calm him down and inform him that they are his brothers as such, they cannot harm him at all. Although, this is pretty difficult for me as a blind person to have been coming down someone who is deaf, can you imagine my situation”*

Another participant in relation to his effort in dealing with the stressful behaviour of his child recalled this:

*“You see, a child with hearing impairment in our culture we regard him as someone with a big problem. Problem in the sense that he cannot live peacefully with people*

*like other children. Traditionally, deaf children wherever they are it is their character that they are perpetually furious they cannot live a like any others. That is how they caused a lot of difficulties to their families I am telling you this from the experience I had with many deaf children including my son”*

### **Research Question 3**

What is the coping mechanisms do you use in dealing with the interpersonal behaviours of your child with hearing impairment?

The research question two was articulated to elicit information on how the parents of hearing impaired children cope up with the challenging behaviours of their children. As coping involves psychological resources and strategies that helps to eliminate, modify or manage a stressful event or crisis situation. Some parents respond to the stresses of raising their children with hearing problems which depends on a wide variety of factors influencing their ability to cope up with the existing situation they find themselves in relation to the challenging and stressful behaviour of their disabled children. In consequence, to the above question two major themes were materialized namely **seeking spiritual support** and **acquiring social support** as the main means of coping mechanisms used by parents in dealing with the challenging behaviours of their children.

#### **Spiritual Support**

Religious belief plays an important role in helping families to cope with the stress of caring for their children with hearing problems. Religious or spiritual coping mechanisms has been the most frequently reported coping strategies among parents of children with various special needs children. Spiritual coping mechanisms, involves relationship with self, others and God. Spirituality helps people appreciate what they themselves cannot control. It also offers guidelines for living and offers a sense of stability. The use of spiritual coping strategies is more or less restricted to those who hold religious beliefs. Indeed, it is a personal way of life in which a person strives to find meaning and significance. Most of the parents of children with hearing impairment find spiritual support in the form of supplications and invocations as very helpful to them in coping up with the stressful and challenging behaviour of their children.

#### *Supplication*

Supplication is a sort of prayer, a request for help from a deity. It is often thought of as a religious prayer which logically applies to any situation in which one must earnestly entreat someone in power for help or favour. Parents use or offer prayers to ease the physical, emotional and spiritual distress they found themselves concerning the behaviour problem of their children. In this regard, five participants were on the religious belief that, they manage to withstand the pressures of their children interpersonal behaviour problems through the supplication they offer seeking divine intervention. This was categorically indicated by a one participant who asserted that:

*“As a faithful Muslim, I surrender everything to Allah and accept what has been given to me, but simultaneously I pray for Allah’s intervention and assistance, although it is really disturbing to have a deaf child who cannot communicate like other children are something very difficult to withstand. But as I said it to you, I accept what Allah has ordained for me.”*

Another participant who holds the same views with that of the above, also explained to the researchers his, belief in seeking spiritual support as a means of coping mechanisms on the behavioural problem of his child. The participant illustrated that:

*“In fact, I did not do anything, I just kept silent, but sometimes I enter into my room and cried because it pains me a lot. But whenever I remember Allah, as a*

*Quranic teacher, I did not allow it hamper my activities. I teach many children and I withstand with their various problems”*

#### **Invocation**

An invocation is a kind of prayer or request which is serious and intentional calling upon God for assistance. But it can also be an appeal for help to any other person with a higher power. Some parents prefer invocation thus, by taking their children to someone like a clergyman or an Islamic teacher for prayers. Whereas some go to the extent of visiting exorcist for exorcism. This practice of seeking someone’s spiritual assistance through invocations has been demonstrated by the following participants. One of them unequivocally stated:

*“Both his mother and I are used to his behaviour. Before I used to react furious as he is, but later when I realized that this problem is peculiar to deaf children then I became conversant with his habit. So, I do not make harsh reaction against any of his problematic behaviour because I realized it is inherent in them. So, we resort to taking him to an exorcist for a prayer because we believed that there must be some “Jinn” (Devils) behind him who is acting and pushing him to such type of behaviour”*

Another participant who shared similar opinions with the above in taking the child to someone for divine and spiritual intervention said:

*“I tell my brother who is also my neighbour because she always goes to hide in his house about her behaviour so that he can help me and I also collaborate with her mother and I used to take her to my teacher to pray for her because nothing is above Allah’s capacity. With Allah, anything problematic could be solved*

#### **Social Support**

Acquiring or seeking social support is referred to as individuals, group, or institutions that provide assistance to help other individuals to overcome stresses that strain a person’s resources. Seeking social support has been positively associated with the strength of the family, and family confidence. Social support can be measured as the perception that one has assistance available. This support can come from many sources, such as self, family, friends, neighbours, school organisations and government. To this end, most of the participants described the kind of social support which they sought in the form of consultations and discussing the issue with friends and members of the family. In relation to this, two participants believed in informational support, two went on individual and family support, one participant believe in the voluntary nondisclosure and another one was in the habit of accepting what has happened to him. A typical example, with regard to this was a statement of a participant who regards educational consultations as the process of seeking social support where he stated:

*“.... I must have to collaborate with other people I don’t want to do things alone or else I might have been taken as a dictator rather I collaborate with the special teachers, those that specialised in teaching children who have hearing impairment. I collaborate with them by asking them to work with him I mean I give some money out so that teachers with the hearing impaired will give a one to one training to him that is in addition to the general classroom training that he receives alongside other children with hearing impairment. I am thinking that he will be given a one to one training so that he has that specialisation in total communication or sign language that will make him build his dream up to what he wants to become in future”*

This participant has a similar view to that of the above, he spoke about how he found it easier to cope up with the situation through social support from different sources. Therefore, he asserted that:

*“That is why I put him in their deaf school, he finished primary school there and now in this first year at secondary school. I believed in their deaf school, he must have met with children of his age and behaviour so that he will learn a lot including his trouble behaviour and the teachers there will deal with him. When you have a child with this problem you may not be the only one to help him. Government and even my other children are doing well in at correcting him wherever he wronged”*

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Findings from this study have shed light as observe by Merrell (2003), Terwogt & Rieffe (2004) and Masten et al (2005) children with hearing impairment happened to have been demonstrating different interpersonal behaviour problems which affect their relationship with their parents and other people around them. This makes most of the parents of hearing impaired children to have experienced greater parenting stress than parents of typically developing children (Kobosko & Ludlow 2010; Skelly & Rohleder 2010). Despite the difficult and challenging nature of parenting a hearing-impaired child, many parents have devised means to accommodate all the stresses, pressures and tensions they faced in dealing with their children’s problematic behaviours through various coping strategies such as spiritualism and social support (Lazarus, 1985 & Doshi, 2005). Therefore, parents should develop the zeal and enthusiasm to accept, love and care for their hearing-impaired children notwithstanding the impact that the behaviour of their children caused to the family. They should also take on complete responsibility, by consulting professional counsellors and not rally around in search of unnecessary advice or assistance from anybody as their initial response. There is the need for an assistance to parents which should be from professionally trained personnel in early childhood care and education. Such assistance could be in the form of case work, counselling, visitation work. This may help parents adjust to the managing a child with hearing difficulty.

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