

## **Psychological Correlates of Social Adjustment among Students with Hearing Impairment in a Tertiary Institution in Oyo State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Issues with social adjustment among students in the College of Education with hearing impairment can significantly impact their interpersonal functioning. The study investigated emotional intelligence and self-esteem as key factors in the social adjustment of students with hearing impairment at the Special Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The research design employed was a descriptive correlational study, with a sample of 402 male and female students with hearing impairments in years 1, 2, and 3. Data were collected using the Social Adjustment Scale, the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The results revealed a significantly high positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment ( $r = 0.838$ ) among students with hearing impairments at the Special Federal College of*

*Education. It was also established that a positive relationship exists between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among students with hearing impairments ( $r = 0.789$ ). The study highlights the urgent need for counselling psychologists to implement regular interventions to enhance the emotional intelligence and self-esteem of students with hearing impairments, thereby improving their social adjustment.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional intelligence, self-esteem, social adjustment, students with hearing impairment*

## **Introduction**

In a society where sounds are carefully calibrated, the silence experienced by students with hearing impairment presents a unique set of psychological and social dynamics that demand immediate attention. These students must navigate academic hurdles and an environment designed primarily for their hearing peers. Social adjustment is a vital aspect of life, requiring individuals to interact competently while pursuing their goals. Anxiety, depression, social support, and resilience are just a few of the many psychological variables that are intertwined with social adjustment in students with hearing impairments. These components play a pivotal role in shaping the academic and social development of these students within the campus community. Hearing impairment among students can be categorised into two dimensions: deafness, where the individual is entirely incapable of receiving sound, and hard of hearing, where the person can still receive sound with the help of a hearing aid. Both deafness and hearing impairment can be either congenital or acquired. Regardless of the case, students with hearing impairments (deaf or hard of hearing) face unique challenges in developing a sense of identity related to their incapability, and social adjustment becomes problematic.

In this context, social adjustment refers to how students with hearing impairments learn to adapt to and navigate the social norms, expectations, and interactions within their academic setting. The ability to function harmoniously with people, society, and the community is referred to as adjustment, although social adjustment encompasses emotional, physical, and social dimensions (Mazaheri et al., 2006). A well-adjusted individual is emotionally and physically balanced, and such a person becomes eligible when society's customs, rules, and values are strictly followed. The way these exceptional students are perceived by society has a significant impact on their social adjustment. It is worth noting that the acceptance and support of society are crucial for the emotional and physical stability of students with hearing impairments. Every individual or member of a particular community

has the right to live and act by a specific set of rules and regulations, and it is the responsibility of society to ensure that these rules and regulations are inclusive and supportive of all individuals, including those with hearing impairments.

Healthy interpersonal relationships require people to behave in a manner that is not harmful to others, either socially or psychologically. A student, individual, or person who is hearing impaired has a deficit or shortfall that indicates something is inaccurate, making the person less than whole. Everyday social interactions depend heavily on hearing, and hearing impairment can cause severe emotions of loneliness, guilt, and shame, as well as crisis and grief reactions (Lindsay et al., 2019). Apart from social stigmatisation or harsh treatment due to prevailing hearing issues among students who are impaired in the auditory sense, these students themselves could have self-stigma. They could, on their own, decide to exclude individuals from their social circle who are hard to hear. The deaf culture, which often causes persons with hearing impairments to relate more frequently with their peers, may hinder their social adjustment. Some individuals with hearing impairment observably relate and even marry people with the same disability. They isolate themselves, seemingly due to feelings of inadequacy or the perception that their peers may treat them unequally. This deaf culture is responsible for the practice of students with hearing impairment to always be in the midst of only one person with hearing impairment for study, social gatherings and marriage. The ear is an important sense organ and the gateway to learning for humanity; the inability to hear or hearing impairment negatively affects emotional well-being and comprehension. Communicating, reasoning, and conceptualising depend on the ear to thrive. Most importantly, among the five senses God creates, the auditory sense is essential; it is the primary way we interact and relate to the linguistic world (Moon, 2011). The National Association of the Deaf (2015) defines hearing impairment as a condition affecting individuals with limited hearing, and deafness is referred to as the audiological condition of not being able to hear. In addition, hearing impairment is considered a generic, audiological term that encompasses all levels related to hearing difficulty and total deafness, including various degrees of hearing loss (Olusanya et al., 2019). A deaf person has hearing damage that will likely limit their relationship because of real and perceived inadequacy. Hearing loss may bring about feeling less of a person psychologically, adding to the physical damage caused by the predicament. In other words, hearing loss occurs when any part of the ears is damaged in a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, which may affect behaviour (Mathers et al., 2010).

In this study, the two psychological correlates that determine the social adjustment of deaf and hard-of-hearing students are emotional intelligence and self-esteem. Self-esteem is crucial and germane in all facets of life; how you perceive yourself and the value you put on yourself determines how you will relate with people and how people relate to you. Self-esteem refers to a person's self-perception and self-assessment. Self-esteem emphasises human needs, particularly the demand for self-evaluation, which is positively oriented (Neff, 2012). Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to exhibit self-acceptance and identity formation, and as a result, they are more likely to be accepted by others (Trzesniewski et al., 2013). Self-esteem connotes "self-respect". The "self" part of self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of their own identity and personality. It relates to the values and characters that influence one, while 'esteem' symbolises 'regard' and how one values oneself (Theunissen et al., 2014).

Additionally, self-esteem is paramount; hence, its absence might render an individual valueless.

Emotional intelligence, on the other hand (EI), refers to the ability to perceive, comprehend, manage, and utilise emotions successfully in oneself and other people (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Individuals with hearing impairments can face challenges in developing and applying emotional intelligence. Thus, students with hearing impairments need to develop high self-esteem and substantial emotional intelligence to adjust socially among their peers and within society. Self-esteem and emotional intelligence are crucial for solving problems, overcoming difficulties, adapting to new social environments, and developing practical compensatory skills to address hearing impairment. Consequently, students with hearing impairments and the psychological challenges they encounter require further exploration. There is a need to research the psychological correlates of social adjustment among students with hearing impairments in a college of education that caters to individuals with special needs, specifically those with hearing impairments.

### ***Emotional intelligence***

Daniel Goleman popularised emotional intelligence in 1995, but the concept has roots in earlier theories. Salovey and Mayer (1990) were among the first to comprehensively define emotional intelligence, describing it as a set of skills related to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotions, the regulation of emotions, and the use of feelings to motivate, plan, and achieve. Furthermore, Salovey and Mayer (1990) suggested that emotional

intelligence is a construct essential for all facets of life. Academic credentials, distinctions, high test scores, classwork, and homework are not considered indicators of emotional intelligence. Still, they are indicators that reflect our level of understanding in academics. The adaptability and how human beings handle life challenges, which require a distinctive kind of intelligence across the board, have been discussed (Mayer et al., 2015). The emotional intelligence of deaf students and students with hearing impairment is impaired and distorted as a result of the challenges they are exposed to. Szymanski, Brice, Lam, and Hotto (2012) bolstered that emotional intelligence in students with hearing impairment is the primary reason for their deprivation, which repeatedly made them incapable of intermingling with peers as well as contemporaries, and their emotional adjustment and social skills are difficult. Evidence from the literature (Schutte et al., 2002) suggests that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a critical predictor of various outcomes, including workplace performance (Cherniss, 2001), mental health, and academic achievement.

The importance of emotional intelligence in society cannot be overstated, as it is relevant to all aspects of life. Wijayati, Kautsar and Karwanto (2020) reported that emotional intelligence is vital in personal dedication to work and academic efficacy. Its significance in social adjustment is inevitable, especially from the perspective of students with hearing impairment who cannot relate to peers. The barriers faced by deaf students and students with hearing impairment contributed to unfavourable consequences on social adjustment and psychological development. Therefore, this contributes to adverse effects on emotional and psychological development. Jacks, Marsh, and Massey (2000) noted that students with impairments face difficulties adjusting and struggle to understand social communication. This has implications for social adjustment and the emotional and cognitive development of individuals with hearing impairments. McAbee, Drasgow, and Lowrey (2017) indicated that the social adjustment and quality of life of deaf students and those with hearing impairments tend to be lower than those of students with normal hearing. This suggests that emotional intelligence is indispensable for the social adjustment of individuals, including students and people with hearing impairments.

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

Self-esteem is an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. It reflects how much a person appreciates and respects themselves. It is the extent to which individuals value and appreciate their abilities (Bowker, 2006). Coopersmith, cited by Acak (2012), considered self-esteem as an

individual's evaluation of their attitudes towards themselves, their personality traits, their behaviour, and the self-assessment and attitudes they hold towards themselves and the people around them. A person with a positive sense of self has an uplifting outlook on occasion, acknowledges themselves as they are, has an objective point of view, and has reasonable self-evaluations. Conversely, a person with a pessimistic self-perception tends to worry about societal dissatisfaction, scrutiny, and disagreement. Similarly, such an individual might struggle to find success in clarifying the negative implications of low self-esteem. (Ozkan cited by Acak, 2012).

Oduola and Adediran (2023) noted that self-esteem is a significant concept in psychology and a key aspect of social psychology. An individual with low self-esteem tends to suffer from self-doubt and a lack of self-confidence. Self-esteem is a crucial psychological factor that influences various aspects of an individual's life. In individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, self-esteem plays a crucial role in their social, emotional, and cognitive development. Leary and MacDonald (2003) posited that self-esteem is a significant construct associated with various positive psychological outcomes, including psychological adjustment, positive attitudes, and prosocial behaviour.

### ***Self-Esteem and Social Adjustment***

Deaf students with hearing impairments tend to have lower self-esteem due to differences in the audience regarding social development, physical appearance, and relational abilities (Sulaiman et al.; Lee, 2020). Self-esteem is a significant tool in promoting adjustment and self-development. Consequently, the self-esteem of deaf students needs to be enhanced to enable them to function effectively in society. Fruitful communication skills are not generally combined with excellent living standards. Thus, teachers, experts, and clinicians working with students with hearing impairments need recognition, mentoring, and external counselling for these students to thrive and develop a robust sense of esteem (Warner-Czyz et al., 2015). Specific strategies such as positive reinforcement, peer support groups, and individual counselling can be effective in enhancing self-esteem and emotional intelligence in deaf students.

High self-esteem enhances social adjustment in individuals. A study by Orth, Robins, and Widaman (2012) supported the notion that high self-esteem is related to improved social relationships, which in turn strengthens self-esteem, implying a reciprocal relationship. Leary (1999) explored the relationship between self-esteem and stable social adjustment, finding that self-esteem helps mitigate the adverse effects of social exclusion. Self-

esteem emphasises how much you value yourself; therefore, deaf students and students with hearing impairment need self-esteem to navigate the hurdles of impairment (Carter & Mireles, 2016). Studies have reported that hearing aids, family communication, and group identification can reinforce the self-confidence of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals (Acak & Kaya, 2016). Research has shown that self-esteem can be lowered in individuals with hearing conditions who are hard of hearing as they begin to make social comparisons and realise that what makes an "ordinary individual" differs from their abilities (Jerome et al., 2002).

Research on poor self-esteem suggests that individuals with poor self-esteem may struggle to adjust well in society or perform complex tasks, such as examinations and peer relationships (Anierobi et al., 2018). However, the self-esteem of students with hearing impairment and their hearing peers does not align with this position. Hintermair (2008) also studied the social-emotional issues of deaf students with hearing impairments, as well as the insights of young people and their parents. The findings demonstrated that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals experience more significant levels of social and emotional adjustment compared to their hearing contemporaries. Self-esteem and social adjustment have been found to evolve across the lifespan. At adolescence, self-esteem is crucial for future social and emotional well-being. Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, and Caspi (2006) buttressed the notion that adolescent self-esteem strongly predicts social and emotional adjustment in adulthood.

### ***Emotional Intelligence and Social Adjustment***

Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and express emotions in oneself and others. The skills embedded in EI are emotional awareness, the ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, and the ability to manage emotions in oneself and one's relationships. Emotional intelligence is essential and considered crucial. These are self-management (the capability to control one's feelings, as well as regulating impulses, inspiring oneself, setting and prioritising goals) and self-awareness (the ability to spot one's emotions to have a sense of self-confidence). Others are self-efficacy (the level of belief of an individual in their ability to perform a duty or face a challenge), and social awareness, which is showing compassion and appreciating others' viewpoints, as well as showing courtesy to others (Conners-Burrow et al., 2017).

A study by Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, and Frederickson (2006) reported that high emotional intelligence is associated with better social integration

and reduced social deviance in school settings. This implies that deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals with high emotional intelligence were better at managing their emotions and understanding the emotions of others, which resulted in more positive social interactions and fewer behavioural problems. Studies performed in schools and universities showed that students with high emotional intelligence obtained higher academic achievement than those with a lower level of emotional intelligence (Gatto et al., 2016)

Hearing impairment presents its own set of challenging issues; hence, an individual with low emotional intelligence and impaired hearing may struggle with social adjustment due to the absence of empathy and increased distrust, among other issues. The study by Holman, Hornsby, Bess, and Naylor (2021) suggested that the emotional intelligence of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals was lower compared to their hearing peers in terms of emotional perception and management. It was observed that early intervention and emotional training programmes are needed to boost the emotional intelligence of individuals in this category (Holman et al., 2021).

The research by Zand and Pierce (2021) showed the connection between emotional intelligence and social adjustment and functioning in deaf students. The study found that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence were more effective in social integration and peer relationships. In another study by Batten, Oakes, and Alexander (2021), emotional intelligence was found to be a psychological correlate of academic performance and adjustment among college students with hearing impairments. It is further discussed that students with greater emotional intelligence can grasp academic concepts and maintain higher grades (Battens et al., 2021). These studies highlighted the crucial role of emotional intelligence in various life domains for individuals with hearing impairments, including social interactions, social adjustment, and academic performance. They underscored the importance of supportive environments and targeted interventions to enhance emotional intelligence in the population.

### ***Social Adjustment and Hearing-Impairment***

Social adjustment refers to how individuals adapt to social environments and establish fulfilling social interactions and relationships. Social adjustments of individuals with hearing impairment can be challenging due to social isolation, potential stigmatisation, and communication barriers. Hearing impairment among individuals with a disability may be caused by deafness or being hard of hearing. Studies by Netten, Rieffe, Theunissen, Soede, Briaire, Dirks and Briaire (2015) checked the proper use of parenthetical and



narrative citations. They observed that one of the primary obstacles to social integration and adjustment among deaf and hard-of-hearing adolescents is the communication barrier that hinders conversation and participation in group activities.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals appear to frequently experience social isolation, which in turn affects their adjustment. In this respect, a study by Heintermair (2007) added that difficulties in communication and a lack of understanding among peers trigger social isolation and adjustment, which ultimately leads to mental health issues and low self-esteem. A study on the social adjustment of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and adolescents revealed that these categories of people are less likely to engage and function maximally in social activities because a reasonable number of them do not belong to social organisations (Ostadian et al., 2017).

The study by Bittencourt, Francozo, Monteiro, and Francisco (2011) also emphasised that social relationships with students who have hearing impairments are usually less mature compared to those of normal-hearing students. In this same vein, it affects their social adjustment. However, poor social adjustment in children and adolescents with hearing impairments can be traced to their deficiency in processing information. This set of the populace thus causes disturbance to others as a result of erroneous self-assertion, as well as failure to negotiate and converse with others (Abdollahi et al., 2010). In addition, Abdollahi et al. (2010) noted that poor social adjustment in deaf students and those with hearing impairments often results in misinterpretation and hostility towards others, and that the absence of social skills can lead to low tolerance and frustration, which may hinder their adaptability to the social environment.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

- i) To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among students with hearing impairments at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo.
- ii) To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment among students with hearing impairments at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo.

### ***Hypotheses***

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design. Descriptive research is a widely used method that accurately portrays characteristics, behaviours, and trends within a specific population, phenomenon, or situation. The study examined the relationship between the dependent variable, social adjustment, and the independent variables of emotional intelligence and self-esteem.

### ***Population***

The population of this study consisted of 450 male and female students with hearing impairment at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The population of students with hearing impairments in the college comprises 200 males and 250 females, making a total of 450 students with hearing impairments. Only students with hearing impairment were included in the study, while students with hearing ability were excluded.

### ***Sample and Sampling Technique***

The sample for this study was selected using intact sampling across the entire N.C.E. (I, II, and III) students with hearing impairment at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo State. The eventual sample consisted of 402 male and female students with hearing impairment. The sample of college of education students with hearing impairments was selected because the study sought to examine relationships among the variables of interest as they occur among students with hearing impairments. Issues of social adjustment among students with hearing impairment about their emotional intelligence and self-esteem present a challenge. This challenge may impact social integration, academic engagement, and the college's overall academic outcomes, as well as future career aspirations, spousal choices, and other aspects of life. Primary data were collected directly from students with hearing impairments at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo.

## **Research Instruments**

### ***Social Adjustment Scale***

The social adjustment scale-self-report (.714) was adapted to measure the social adjustment of college students with hearing impairment. The scale was initially developed to obtain self-reports regarding social functioning and adjustment (Weissman, 1999). It evaluates how individuals adjust to their

school, family, and friendships. The 20-item self-report assessment used in the measure focuses on common social adaptations. Participants assessed themselves on the items on a five-point scale.

### ***Emotional Intelligence Scale***

The original emotional intelligence model, proposed by Salovey and Mayer, serves as the foundation for the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS), also known as the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test. According to this concept, emotional intelligence involves evaluating one's own and others' emotions, expressing those emotions, controlling one's own and others' emotions, and utilising emotions to help resolve issues (Schutte et al., 1998). In this study, the 33-item self-report survey (.761) focusing on typical emotional intelligence was adopted. Participants ranked themselves on the items on a five-point scale.

### ***Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale***

The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) measures overall self-esteem. Responses are rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "disagree strongly." The RSES uses both positively and negatively phrased items. Items with negative wordings are reverse-coded, and item scores are added to determine the overall score. In this study, the scale ( $\alpha = .789$ ) was adopted to measure the self-esteem of students with hearing impairments.

### ***Method of Data Analysis***

The Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed in data analyses at a 0.05 significance level to test the formulated hypotheses. Questionnaires were administered to the students in the various lecture rooms after their classes. Different days were chosen for different levels of students. Some questionnaires were retrieved on the spot, while others were collected after some hours on the following day. Explanations were given to the students with the assistance of two sign language interpreters, who also served as research assistants. After the administration, viable questionnaires were collated, coded, and analysed.

### **Results**

H<sub>01</sub>: There will be no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment.

**Table 1:** Correlation statistics illustrating the relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment in students with hearing impairments

		Social adjustment	Emotional scale
Social adjustment	Pearson Correlation	1	.838*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	402	402
Emotional scale	Pearson Correlation	.838*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	402	402

\*

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 1 shows a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment in students with hearing impairment ( $P = 0.000$ ), with a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance at an alpha level of 0.05. Hence, it can be inferred that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment in students with hearing impairments. The null hypothesis, which stated that no significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment, is thus rejected.

H<sub>02</sub>: There will be no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment.

**Table 2:** Correlation statistics showing the relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment

		Social adjustment	Self-esteem
Social adjustment	Pearson Correlation	1	.789*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	402	402
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	.789*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	402	402

Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Table 2 reveals a significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of students with hearing impairments ( $P = 0.000$ ), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance at an alpha level of 0.05. Hence, it can be deduced that a relationship exists between self-esteem and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment of students with hearing impairment is rejected.

## Discussion

This study investigated the psychological correlates of social adjustment among students with hearing impairments in the Federal College of

Education, Special, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. The results indicate that the psychological correlates (Emotional intelligence and Self-esteem) are significantly correlated with the criterion variable of social adjustment. Consequently, the first hypothesis, which posited no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among students with hearing impairment, is rejected. A strong correlation was found between emotional intelligence and social adjustment, suggesting that the social adjustment of deaf students and those with hearing impairment can be enhanced if their emotional intelligence is high. The probable reason for this finding is that emotional intelligence is a construct that serves both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, enabling individuals to self-regulate and socially integrate. Emotional intelligence is a continuum of emotional awareness, emotional regulation and higher-order emotional intelligence.

Students with hearing impairments may often be more self-absorbed, providing an opportunity for in-depth observation of their emotions and those of others. This may result in a higher level of social adjustment. Furthermore, emotional intelligence can be integrated into their professional training, alongside social adjustment tips, to address their specific challenges. This finding corroborates the work of Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, and Frederickson (2006), who observed that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with high emotional intelligence were better at managing their emotions and understanding the feelings of others, which resulted in more positive social interactions and fewer behavioural problems.

Research by Zand and Pierce (2021) also highlighted the connection between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among deaf students and those with hearing impairment. Furthermore, it was established that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to excel in social integration and peer relationships.

The study by Batten, Oakes, and Alexander (2021) supported these findings, affirming the outcome of this study that emotional intelligence is psychologically correlated with academic performance and adjustment among college students with hearing impairments. Thus, emotional intelligence can significantly influence the social adjustment of deaf students and those with hearing impairment. These findings further support the multidimensional nature of emotional intelligence and its impact on various aspects of students' lives, particularly those with hearing impairments. Emotional intelligence is observed to be linked with self-mastery, social

motivation, creativity, academic prowess and engagement. No doubt, a construct as broad as this will be significantly linked to social adjustment.

The findings related to the second hypothesis indicated a significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment among students with hearing impairment; therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment, is also rejected. The results suggest that the higher the level of self-esteem among students with hearing impairments, the higher their level of social adjustment. This also means that students project their sense of worth and value to their dealings in the social environment. Self-esteem plays a significant role in evaluating an individual on both personal and social levels. Thus, self-perception regarding one's worth could significantly influence social functioning and balance in the social environment.

The probable reason for this finding is that a positive self-evaluation may positively influence a sense of balance, adaptation, and goal achievement, thereby favouring social adjustment. Healthy or high self-esteem would lead to social adaptation and high functioning. When individuals have a strong sense of self-worth, they tend to relate well to themselves and others. Intra and interpersonal relationships thrive when some factors are in place. Thus, self-esteem will be correlated with social adjustment among students with hearing impairment because self-esteem makes people confident and objective.

The finding of the test of the second hypothesis in this study suggests that self-esteem is a predictor of social adjustment in adulthood, as confirmed by Trzesniewski et al. (2006). The finding aligns with the study of Orth, Robins and Widaman (2012), which reported that self-esteem enhances social adjustment in individuals. The implication is that self-esteem plays a crucial role in strengthening social adjustment. Additionally, Leary (1999) supported these findings, indicating that self-esteem helps mitigate the adverse effects of social exclusion, thereby serving as a buffer to social adjustment.

## **Conclusion**

The study examined the psychological correlates, including emotional intelligence and self-esteem, of social adjustment among students with hearing impairments at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study serves as a testament to the fact that the psychological well-being and social adjustment of the deaf and hard-of-hearing are crucial to psychologists. The results indicate that emotional

intelligence and self-esteem significantly contribute to the criterion variable, specifically the social adjustment of students with hearing impairments. This implies that emotional intelligence and self-esteem will significantly contribute to the social adjustment of students with hearing impairment. Additionally, as their emotional intelligence and self-esteem improve, they become more socially adjusted. Any programme targeted at improving the social adjustment of students, especially those with hearing impairments, must consider emotional intelligence and self-esteem, as they are proven protective factors for social adjustment.

### **Recommendations**

It has been established from the study that psychological correlates (emotional intelligence and self-esteem) contribute significantly to the social adjustment of college education students who have a hearing impairment; therefore, based on the study's findings, the following are recommended:

- i) Professional counsellors, psychologists, and special or health educators should develop and implement programs to promote emotional intelligence among deaf students and students with hearing impairments. Programmes should be organised that teach workshop skills such as social awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation.
- ii) Students with hearing impairments should have access to counselling and psychological services that focus on building psychological capital, which will enhance their sense of self-worth.
- iii) Teachers, caregivers, peers, custodians, and family members of individuals with hearing impairments should provide positive reinforcement to boost their morale.
- iv) The government and other key stakeholders in education must develop policies that promote the development and implementation of inclusive education practices, ensuring that students with hearing impairments receive the necessary support.

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