Psychological Problems and Needs of Deaf Adolescents: A Phenomenological Research

Ergenlik Dönemindeki İşitme Engellilerin* Psikolojik Problem ve İhtiyaç Alanları: Fenomenolojik Bir Araştırma

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Abstract. Deaf individuals experience a significant number of problems because of language barrier. This study aims to discover the psychological problems and needs of deaf individuals in various problem areas. The study is designed as an interpretative phenomenological research. The study group consists of 17 participants from a special education vocational school for the deaf. MaxQDA-12 program was used in analysis. During this stage, all the codes were merged into themes just after the codification. As a result of this analysis phase, five main themes were created: individual life, deaf culture, family life, social life and education life. This study reached some findings about the psychological problems and needs of the deaf individuals in different environments. Findings indicate that the psychological problems and needs stem from communication problems, not from being a deaf. It has been seen that these communication problems restrict living spaces of deaf individuals and pose a threat to their mental health.

Keywords: Deaf, deaf adolescents, psychological problems.

Öz. Bu araştırmada, ergenlik döneminde olan işitme engelli bireylerin psikolojik problem ve ihtiyaç alanlarının belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma nitel yöntemlerden olan yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik desene göre tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu İstanbul'da bulunan özel eğitim meslek lisesindeki kendilerini sağır olarak tanımlayan 17 katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır. Veri analizi sürecinde "MaxQDA-12" bilgisayar programı kullanılmıştır. Analiz sürecinde kodlama işlemi tamamlandıktan sonra oluşan kodlar temalara dönüştürülmüştür. Temalar arasındaki bağlantılar ve ilişkiler göz önünde bulundurularak ana temalar elde edilmiştir. Yapılan bu analiz aşaması sonucunda bireysel yaşam, sağır kültürü, aile yaşamı, sosyal yaşam ve eğitim yaşamı olarak beş temel ana tema oluşmuştur. Bu çalışmada işitme güçlüğü olan bireylerin farklı yaşam alanlarındaki psikolojik problem ve ihtiyaçlarına dair bulgular elde edilmiştir. Buna göre katılımcıların sahip olduğu psikolojik problem ve ihtiyaç alanlarının temelinde işitmeme durumunun değil iletişim engellerinin yer aldığı saptanmıştır. Yaşanan bu iletişim sorunlarının katılımcıların yaşam alanlarını kısıtladığı ve ruhsal sağlıkları için tehdit oluşturduğu saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İşitme engelli, işitme engelli ergenler, psikolojik problemler.

*Katılımcılar, sağır kültüre aidiyet hislerinden dolayı kendilerini sağır olarak tanımlamaktadırlar.
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Introduction

People sometimes experience negative events and have difficulty in overcoming the effects of such experiences. In such situations, it is suggested to take professional counseling. However, in order for individuals to benefit from psychological services, mental health professionals must acquainted with the experiences, culture and language of their clients. From this point of view, it is necessary to have therapists who are sensitive to culture and have a common language with their clients. However, this is not always the case for deaf individuals. Sometimes mental health services are not an accessible area for the deaf due to language and cultural barriers. For this reason, professionals need to know not only the language, but also cultural and experiential differences (Black & Glickman, 2009; Williams & Abeles, 2004).

It is vital to acknowledge various points of views in order to understand the deaf or hearing-impaired individuals. Different dynamics are emerging from these two basic viewpoints, which are called socio-cultural and medical (Glickman, 2013). Medical approach is generally used in medicine as the name implies; it defines hearing impairment as a pathological problem that needs to be solved. Individuals owning a medical point of view describe themselves as being hearing-impaired; they do not feel any attachment to deaf culture (Glickman, 2013; Ladd, 2003). In socio-cultural approach, however, deafness is not accepted as impairment, it is acknowledged as a cultural identity. Being deaf is not a handicap, but it is a lifestyle (Middleton, 2010). Some of hearing-impaired individuals do not see themselves as handicapped, thus, they prefer the word 'deaf' to identify themselves (Ringo, 2013).

As a result of the literature review, it is detected that deaf adolescents experience various kinds of problems due to family structures, family attitudes, language and school types (Lytle, Oliva, Ostrove & Cassady, 2011). Different approaches to deafness affect the family experiences and developmental processes. Especially hearing families, who confront deafness for the first time, experience trauma most of the time. More than 90% of deaf children are born into hearing parents (Marschark, 1993). Hearing parents may be shaken emotionally during confrontation process (Jackson, Traub & Turnbull, 2008). Emotional depressions and anxiety disorders can be detected during this process. In addition, owing to the shock, hearing parents focus on medical procedures in order to eliminate deafness (Deselle, 1994). Because of seeking medical solutions and psychological problems, parents may have difficulty in answering developmental needs of their children by simply ignoring emotional needs of them (Austen & Crocker, 2005; Liben, 1978). One of the significant decisions that parents with deaf children must have is about language (Meadow-Orlans, Sass-Lehrer & Mertens, 2003). A deaf child can learn sign language as her/his parents wish; can struggle for dominant verbal language acquisition; use manual alphabet or develop a home sign language (Hauser, O'Hearn, Mckee, Steider &Thew, 2010). Especially in the first years of life, children are deprived of communication when their parents do not prefer sign language (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). Children whose communication with their parents is limited to basic expressions such as hello (Ridgeway, 1993) have difficulty in expressing themselves and sharing their thoughts, wishes and feelings (Adams & Rohring, 2004).

It becomes an easier process to acknowledge a child's deafness when she/he is born into a deaf family (Denmark, 1994). However, a deaf baby is unlikely to be born to a deaf family (Hauser et al., 2010). The fact that parents embrace hearing loss and adapt to this situation will help deaf individuals to have healthier childhood experiences (Marschark, 2007). In other words, deaf parents undergo less traumatic experiences and adapt easily when their children have hearing loss (Baines, 2007). Therefore, it can be said that the attitudes of parents affect the deaf children a lot more than the hearing status of parents.

Another important decision made by parents who have a deaf child is about the type of school the child continues. Making such decision, which can affect the psychological, social, and academic life of an individual, may depend on various factors (Marschark, 2007). In Turkey, deaf children can benefit from education services in special education schools for the deaf (day/boarding), and can continue general schools as inclusive students or as a member of a special class for the deaf (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2014; Sart, 2015). The existence of separate classes and schools isolates and separates students from society. Inclusive students, on the other hand, are very seriously labeled and discriminated by others at schools. Inclusion programs should not be limited to the existence of deaf students and hearing students in the same class only. Necessary arrangements and physical environment should be provided; knowledgeable and well-equipped teachers should be worked; schools should be supported with staff and materials in order to avoid discrimination (Sart, 2015). From this point of view, the real effective factor about the education of the deaf is not the type of the school, but it is about providing individualized innovations and arrangements that nourishes children with hearing loss (Stinson & Kluwin, 2003).

Language and school type will also affect the child's closeness to deaf culture. Deaf culture provides individuals with a sense of belonging and creates a society where they share the meaning of being deaf, have a common will and understanding (Frazier-Maiwald & Williams, 1999). Especially those who have negative experiences such as exclusion and humiliation in childhood due to language problems have a tendency to separate themselves from the hearing world and are locked into the deaf world. They tend to choose the schools and districts they will attend according to this exclusion; prefer deaf friends with whom they can communicate with sign language; even become part of community that shares many common features on an international level (Padden & Humphries, 2005).

It is mentioned that there are two life cycle when thinking about deafness. First one is infancy because of language learning and the last one is adolescence which includes struggle for autonomy or independence (Schirmer, 2001). All periods before adolescence has crucial importance to come through challenges and crisis (Erikson, 1994). This phase can be a difficult transition for the individual who starts to know himself better and try to form the concept of self. The distinction between the family, the search for independence and self-identity, the importance of friendship relations and are among the most remarkable issues during adolescence (Viner, 2005). In this period, individuals may have a tendencey to take risks with impulse to seek excitement. Considering all of these, adolescents are under risk psychological disorders such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety and even suicide (Boyd, Johnson & Bee, 2015; Santrock, 2014).

In adolescence, developmental processes and problems are very similar between deaf and hearing individuals. The problems experienced by deaf individuals in addition to these problems arise from the difficulty of communication. It is quite normal that children who have not been able to communicate since their infancy and who do not have a secure attachment with their parents may experience different problems or problems in their adolescence. Due to the lack of communication, the child who cannot obtain the information in the world around him/her and cannot make sense of it, becomes obliged to live a socially isolated life (Young, Green & Daniels, 2011). The problem created by the communication barrier is spreading to all social circles starting in the family. In this development process, children who have difficulty in establishing a relationship from infancy to adolescence have problems in regulating their emotions, emotional maturity, learning social and moral rules (Marscharck, 2007; Steinbeck & Kohn, 2013).

Literature regarding this topic shows that the life of a deaf person is affected by family structure, the attitudes of family members, the preferred language and the type of school attended. It has been seen

that these factors deeply affect deaf individuals' development processes and shape their lives. It is important to know these factors, which can change life of a deaf individual. In Turkey, very little research has been done in this area. This study is an important step to understand and present current situation of the deaf adolescents in Turkey. In this study, the psychological problems and need areas of the deaf adolescents are examined by analyzing how being a deaf person as a phenomenon affects an individual's life, family life, education and social life. The aim of this research is to present problems and need of deaf, and raise awareness about the dynamics of deaf individuals' lives. In this way, we intent to provide knowledge about experiences of deaf for mental health specialists. In accordance with this purpose, it is aimed to answer following research questions:

1. What does it mean to be a deaf individual according to the views of the participants?

2. How does being an adolescent deaf individual reflect on family life?

3. How does being an adolescent deaf individual reflect on education/school life?

4. How does being an adolescent deaf individual reflect on interpersonal relations/social life?

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, qualitative research method is used to discover the psychological problems and needs of the deaf adolescents. In accordance with research questions, interpretive phenomenology is used as a qualitative research design. Phenomenology is a method in which individuals depict their experiences about a specific phenomenon through their own perspectives and words (Miller, 2003; Koch, 1995). Phenomenology focuses on how a phenomenon is experienced by individuals, what this specific phenomenon really means to them, and also how it affects them (Creswell, 2007). The main purpose of interpretative phenomenology is to reach and describe the life experiences of participants. It also advocates that one cannot reach these experiences without the interpretation of the researcher. Accordingly, even if we collect data about the phenomenon through the eyes of individuals, we cannot fully perceive it. Thus, interpretative phenomenologists acknowledge research process as interpreting the life experiences of individuals (Willig, 2013).

Participants

The study group was formed according to maximum diversity sampling method, which is one of the sub-methods of objective sampling. The study group consists of 17 deaf (10 male, 7 female) students attending a high school for deaf in Istanbul. After necessary permissions obtained from İstanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education, researchers visited classrooms; gave information about the study with the assistance of an interpreter and volunteers were selected. Participants' ages ranges between 15 and 19. Two of them have a deaf and a hearing parent, two of them have deaf parents and eleven of them have hearing parents. When communication types of the participants was assessed, it was seen that five of participants use Turkish Sign Language, seven of them use home sign, three of them speaks Turkish at elementary level and one of them speaks Turkish at home. Both parents do not know sign language for eight, both parents know sign language for four, one of parent know low level of sign language for two and finally one of parent know sign language for two of participants.

Data Collection

In adolescence, individuals seek for personal autonomy; give more importance to peer relations and romantic relationships; become distant from their families; try to adapt to physical changes; experience emotional and behavioral problems (Boyd, Johnson & Bee, 2015; Viner, 2005). Interview questions were prepared by taking all of these factors into consideration. The interview questions were sent to the experts in linguistics who have studied on sign language and deaf cultures and to academicians in psychological counseling who are interested in qualitative research. After opinions of the experts, questions that are not appropriate for phenomenology have been changed and some words have been modified according to their suitability in the sign language. Interviews was done with a sign language interpreter who has deaf parents. It means that sign language is her mother tongue, so she can speak both Turkish and Turkish Sign Language fluently. After three pilot interviews were carried out, it was seen that some words –which were translated from Turkish into sign language- were too terminological for the students to understand. Therefore, the structure of some questions has been changed by paying attention these words. After the implementation of interview questions with the interpreter, it was decided to simplify the questions since the questions seemed too hard to understand for that age group. After necessary regulations, 33 interview questions were determined and new semi-structured interview questions were used during the sessions. Some example of them are presented in the below:

- What does it mean to be deaf? What does being deaf mean to you?

- What are your experiences with deafness? Can you tell me about childhood experiences?

- How do you communicate with your family?

- How do you communicate with hearing people? How do you feel when you talk with them?

- What would you like to change in your life if you have a magic wand?

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

The data obtained from semi-structured interview questions were recorded by the translation of an interpreter. When the recorded data was transcribed, the data was analyzed according to the data analysis stages of interpretative phenomenology (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). During the analysis of the data, the "MAXQDA" computer program was used. Interpretive phenomenology analysis is based on Jonathan Smith's analysis steps. This analysis consists of following steps: multiple reading, note taking, turning notes into themes, searching for the connections, grouping the themes and reporting the interpretative phenomenology research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

In line with these items, the participants' narratives were converted into written text and transferred to the Maxqda program. Each participant's statement was read separately and detailed notes about the text were taken. The data were read again and again, and detailed notes provide to get deeper into the data and to be intertwined with the text. By reading notes along with the text, it was easier to remember the interview in more details.

In the second phase of data analysis, detailed notes taken by the researcher were focused. By focusing on these notes rather than text, the notes taken by the researcher were transformed into a theme. These notes, which are evaluated especially in terms of the problems and needs of the participants, have been

considered as a theme with the focus on psychological context. Although it is important that this phase develops within the scope of the notes, it is also important to consider context of the text.

In the third phase of the analysis, the relations between each of the themes formed were examined. The themes that are thought to be related to each other were grouped together. Each theme was evaluated in the relational context, and the main themes were named. At this stage, themes that do not have sufficient data or do not fit the structure were excluded. As a result of these stages, main themes of individual life, deaf culture, family life, social life and education life were obtained. Each main theme consisted of sub-themes, which contain different codes.

In order to increase the credibility, the researcher returned to the data sources over and over again and analyzed the sets of themes, and sub-themes in a comparative way. In this study, taking expert opinions has been one of the factors that increase the credibility. An expert in qualitative research had made the necessary warnings and referrals in each step of the analysis to avoid missing points.

In this study, consistency analysis was conducted by an instructor who is specialized in qualitative research from Marmara University. Consistency between the data collection and coding processes, the conceptual consistency and the relationship between the data and the results were checked by the expert for the reliability of the study. In accordance with the recommendations of the expert performing the inspection, adjustment have been made to ensure that the category names are more comprehensible.

Findings

As a result of interpretive phenomenological analysis, five main themes are formed: personal life (psychological context, adolescence problems, future desires), deaf culture (Turkish sign language, deaf identity), family life (hearing family, deaf family), social life (social relationship with hearing people, inaccessible world, social relationship with the deaf) and education life (special education schools, grammatical inadequacy, other organized schools). Findings related to these themes are given below respectively.

Personal Life

Personal life theme includes three sub-themes called psychological context, adolescence problems and future desires.

Psychological Context

The most commonly encountered sub-category of psychological context (by 15 participant) is the perception of inadequacy in the world of hearing and below this sub-category there is a code called being dependent on someone. Some of the participant comments are given below:

> "I try to tell the person who hears what I mean; s/he does not listen to me. I say 'look at me, I say something', but s/he is making fun of me. I want to hit her/him but I cannot, it is difficult. S/he keeps talking to someone else. Wait a minute s/he says, I wait and wait. I get angry. I scream like look at me…"

Adolescence Problems

Familial problems and peer relations are the most encountered themes (by 14 participants). Apart from these two themes, romantic relationship, peer victimization, low academic achievement, spending too much time on computer and giving importance to physical appearance codes are among the adolescence problems experienced by the participants.

> *"I ask to my family if I can go to meet my friends. Always forbidden, forbidden. I said to my father that I want to buy a new phone. He said "no way, no way, later". Always 'later, later'. I dress as I like, like unusual models. This is forbidden, too. Everything about my family is problematic. Bad... I cannot get along with my family, I cannot get along with anyone in my family. There are always arguments. Dressing unusually, buying new a phone, meeting with my friends, all forbidden..."*

Future Desires

The last sub-category of personal life includes the wishes of seven participants regarding future. This sub-category consists of following codes: having a job, money-related desires, getting an approval for university, going abroad, getting married and accepted by the society. An example statement is given below.

> *"A cameraman, a director, an actor because I always shoot films at school and so on. I'm shooting with my friends. I do not know if they will hire me when school is over ..."*

Deaf Culture

Another main theme gathered from the data is called deaf culture. It has been shown that hearing loss and deafness are influential in the context of identity and culture during the formation of individual perceptions of the self. In this direction, Turkish sign language (TSL) and deaf identity sub-themes were obtained from this theme.

Turkish Sign Language (TSL)

Sign language is accepted as one of the main dimensions of deaf culture. In the TSL sub-theme, codes like the importance of sign language and the process of language acquisition are gathered from all participants. Participants indicated that they learn sign language from their parents and friends and share their experiences of language learning during language acquisition. There are some example comments of this sub-theme below:

> *"When I was little, my ideas were weak. They are better now. I think I made a progress, I am comfortable, normal... When I was little, I was using signs. I knew nothing, I wasn't a smart kid. Better now. My friends taught me signs, I learned from them. It is good..."*

Deaf Identity

It was detected that twelve participants had complicated thoughts about the acceptance of deafness in their self perceptions and its being part of the identity. This sub-theme includes codes named as 'marginal identity, integrated identity and attitude towards hearing aid'. Some of the statements made by participants are given below:

> *"I do not mind, I'm comfortable ... I'm comfortable about being deaf, I'm used to it. There's no such thing as negative for me. I got the hearing device, I wanted to improve my hearing, but I couldn't. And I did not want to wear the device myself and I stopped using it ... I am hanging out with friends who are deaf. I say I can't hear them, They say 'okay' and go. we leave each other, That's it ... If they know the sign language, I can speak but if they don't know, we immediately leave each other... "*

Family Life

Participants indicated that deafness causes difficulties in interactions with other people especially in family life. The most striking finding about this theme shows that family members' being deaf or hearing have a profound impact on family life for the deaf. The sub-themes of 'family life' theme includes hearing family and family with at least one member is hearing (deaf family).

Hearing Family

It has been seen that hearing status of family members causes changes in family dynamics. According to thirteen participants' statements, parents' hearing conditions lead to difficulties in family communication and causes disconnected relationships. In this sub-theme, 'communication difficulties in the family, meeting basic needs, desire to be understood and disconnected bonds with the father' codes were founded. An example statement is written below:

> "I want all of my family to be deaf. I wish they were deaf... But they are not, they hear and speak. What I want is that my mum and dad are deaf... Because they don't get what I tell, if they were like me, we could use signs comfortably. They don't get my signs. I can understand what they say, but they don't get me..."

Deaf Family

The fact that parents are deaf has a significant effect on strong communications and family relationships. This study shows that deafness creates a shared experience in the family. Four participants articulated that they feel contented about their parents' being deaf because they can communicate with them. This sub-theme consists of the following codes: effortless communication and meeting basic needs. Some participant comments are given below:

> "If my parents wouldn't be deaf, I couldn't chat with them as I do with my friends. I would be bored. my family is deaf, I am so comfortable..."

> "It comes to me that I am comfortable because my parents are deaf. my friends parents are not. It is hard for her/him. Sometimes s/he gets bored. I don't. All of my family are deaf, I am relaxed..."

Social Life

Another main theme emerging from the analysis is social life. This main theme includes following sub-themes: social relations with the hearing, inaccessible world and social relations with the deaf. Deaf people are found to experience communication and accessibility problems that originate from linguistic differences in the hearing world. As a result they encounter many difficulties. When we look at social relations in the deaf, we find that a common language is reflected in communication and relationships in a healthy way. When we look at social relations between the deaf, we find that a common language is reflected in communication and relationships in a healthy way.

Social Relations with the Hearing

In this sub-theme following codes emerged: disconnection / restriction, intelligibility / desire to communicate, exclusion / mocking and refusing to communicate with the hearing. The language problem has been found to create restrictions in communication and desire to communication. It was also found that sixteen participants had experiences such as exclusion and mocking directed from the hearing and refused to establish relationships with the hearing. Some of the participants' statements about these life experiences are written below:

"I hang out with deaf friends, not the hearing people a lot. I cannot say I hang out with the hearing. When I say I cannot hear, they say 'ok' and leave. We both leave each other. I talk if the person knows sign language, but they don't. We immediately leave if they don't understand."

Inaccessible World

Inaccessible world sub-theme shows that sixteen participants cannot benefit from equal services due to communication barriers. They are detected to be disadvantaged in getting basic service areas such as health and transportation, and to have problems in accessing media that should be equally accessible to everyone. Some participant comments can be seen below:

"My family watches the news on TV. I watch, too, but I cannot understand. They watch Tv series, laugh. I watch them, but I don't laugh. I don't understand what they are talking about; I mean they are not for me. The news and the series are for my family. Sometimes there are subtitles, but there are words I don't know, I don't know exactly…"

"Communication with doctors is hard. My hand was broken. I went to doctor again and again. We couldn't communicate. There should be a translator for misunderstandings."

Social Relations with the Deaf

This sub-theme reflects the importance of common language and communication in the participants' social relations (16 participants). In this sub-theme which consists of *consensus / communication and sense of belonging* codes, deaf individuals have found themselves more comfortable when they are with their deaf friends. Sample statements of some participants are given below:

"My family does not know me very well. All the girls in school knows me, they understand. I also know them, I understand … When I have a problem, I tell my girl friends, I share … If there is a problem, I tell them, they support … There are some things that I tell family about me, but here I tell my girlfriends more. My family does not understand. I can tell my friends clearly. "

Education Life

The last theme gathered from the data is about education life of the deaf individuals. It has been detected that deaf individuals experience certain problems in education environment due to delays in language development. This main theme includes three sub-themes: special education schools, other formal education schools, incompetence in grammar.

Special Education Schools

This sub-theme consists of codes named as teacher factor, meeting the educational needs and educational hardships. Lack of teachers capable of using Turkish sign language causes communication problems. As a result, there is a need for deaf teachers. Teachers in special education schools are found to be insufficient in educating the deaf. They also feel pity for the deaf students. Moreover, some teachers are found to be indifferent to educational needs of the students. Despite the academic problems faced by deaf students, they seem to be more comfortable in special education schools. A participant expresses her/his comments about this sub-theme as seen below.

"I can't put up with the classes. They are nice, but they don't give good education. I have one teacher that knows sign language, there is no other. There is only one teacher knowing. S/he teaches only. The other don't teach. They just write something on the board and leave. That's it. I don't trsut the teacher that don't teach.

Incompetence in Grammar

Incompetence in grammar and sentence structures is one of the main problems that participants face in this study. Incompetency in using grammar is founded to be closely related to academic problems. In addition, eleven participants indicated that they compare themselves with the hearing people and feel incompetent as a result of this comparison. An example statement is given below:

> *"I started to learn Turkish at the age of 17 by myself. I started two years ago and now I am able to form sentences. I couldn't form sentences until I am 17... My hearing friends understand what the teacher tells right away. They read and understand. They watch TV and understand. I am not like them. I have difficulties in reading and understanding. People on TV talk, but I cannot understand. There is no translator. Normally hearing people learn and understand much faster."*

Other Formal Schools

This sub-theme includes life experiences of the participants regarding their education at formal schools with hearing students and their thoughts and perceptions of these schools as well. This sub-theme consists of two codes named as education-instruction difficulties and teacher factor. Findings show that four participants who studied with hearing students had more negative experiences and feelings. It has been discovered that they feel left out and they cannot benefit from the instruction as much as normally hearing students.

> *"It took too long for teacher to take care of students that are not smart. I waited in order to learn, there were a long line. After s/he taught the others, s/he taught me. But it took too long because of the line... Studying with hearing people is useless. They don't care for me when there are hearing students. They get tired and weary."*

Discussion

Findings of this study show that communication problems affect deaf individuals' all aspects of life. Themes gathered from the experiences of the deaf are related to linguistics problem in some way or another. Since deaf people are not able to speak Turkish, they have severe problem to communicate with hearing people even with their family members. Therefore, all problems faced by deaf individuals in entire life arises from communication barrier. As indicated in findings section, main themes are defined as personal life, deaf culture, family life, social life and education life. Each theme is discussed in this section.

Personal Life

There are three sub-themes named as psychological context, future desires and adolescence problems. As a result of the findings gathered from the deaf adolescents in *psychological context* sub-theme, these individuals experience emotional problems and a sense of incapability in hearing world. Due to obstacles of communication, being dependent on someone to communicate, being ignored and alienated by their peers, deaf adolescents feel a sense of incapability in the world of hearing people. According to the findings of the study conducted by Leigh (1999), deaf adolescents were found to experience feelings such as loneliness, insecurity, shame and dependency owing to the negative feelings displayed by their peers. In addition to communication problems faced by deaf adolescents in social life, negative feelings, notably loneliness, is also identified in Most's (2007) study as well. Similar to this study, Cambra (2005) indicated that deaf adolescents have trouble in revealing their true feelings because they have limited vocabulary.

*Future desire*s sub-theme has shown that deaf individuals have job-related desires, and financial demands. Besides they wish to go to a university and abroad; they want to get married, they desire to be accepted by the society. Individuals with hearing loss are worried about finding a job in the future. Jung and Bhattacharyya (2012) detected that adults with hearing loss have greater rates of unemployment and have fewer monthly earnings than hearing people. TUIK's (2010) statistics show that deaf individuals have lower ratings in college attendance and finding a job.

Another sub-theme of personal life theme is *adolescence problems*. Participants are found to have adolescence problems particularly in family and peer relationships. Besides from family and peer relationships, researchers identified problems related to romantic relationships, peer victimization, academic achievement, time spent on the computer and physical appearance. In this development period, in which there are autonomy problems (Berk, 2007), deaf adolescents become dependent on each other due to the obstacles of communication with hearing people (Steinbeck & Kohn, 2013). Also, our study reached this finding. All these factors negatively affect deaf adolescents' lives and make it difficult to become resilient toward possible risks. Compared to hearing ones, their life skills can be weaker when facing with challenging situations in macro level such as social life, education life etc.…

Deaf Culture

Sub-themes of deaf culture are defined as Turkish Sign Language and deaf identity. Turkish Sign Language (TSL) sub-theme consists of thoughts about the importance of sign language, language acquisition process and support for the common usage of TSL. Sign language is the most significant factor for deaf individuals to form bonds among themselves.

Findings display that sign language is the most important communication tool which provides great comfort in interactions and helps to socialize. The problems are not faced only in social environment but in all the living spaces where the sign language does not exist. This proves that sign language is really important for the daily life of deaf individuals. The proficiency in sign language gives an opportunity to communicate with deaf people both nationally and internationally (Bahan 1994, cited in Maxwell-Mccaw, 2001). Similar to Bahan's finding, it is found that individuals competent in sign language are respected by deaf adolescents. Deaf children who grow up in a hearing family often encounter with Turkish sign language when they enter special education institutions for deaf people or when they try to learn this language from friends who know sign language around them. Despite differences in language acquisition, participants expressed that they had a more positive development, their learning levels increased; their relations with deaf culture and their socialization also get better after they learn TSL. Overstreet (1999) found that individuals with a cultural point of view do not have difficulties in sign language learning and find it very exciting to use. In addition, these individuals have experienced a significant sense of accomplishment thanks to their efforts communicating through the sign language.

Another sub-theme under *deaf culture* is deaf identity. Glickman (1996) stated that the process of identity development of deaf individuals consists of four stages. According to him, a deaf individual goes through the phases of cultural identity, marginal identity, integrated identity and bi-cultural identity in the process of identity development. Participants in this study were found to be experiencing marginal and integrated identity processes. Marginal identity implies that deaf individuals are in an identity crisis. They feel that they belong neither to the hearing nor to the deaf world. For this reason, being in between the two worlds causes crises in both cognitive and behavioral aspects. In the phase of integrated identities, deaf individuals feel close and belong to deaf culture;

look down on the hearing world. While individuals in this identity phase have a positive attitude towards the deaf world, they tend to ignore or reject the hearing world and are willing to separate them from their own world (Glickman, 1996).

Family Life

Family life theme consists of two sub-themes defined as hearing and deaf. The common aspects in the experiences of participants with hearing parents are identified as communication difficulties within the family, desire to be understood, and broken ties with the father. The data shows that the vast majority of hearing parents do not know the sign language or they are incompetent. For this reason, parents who are with a deaf child and who do not know sign language try to find an alternative, nonverbal communication ways instead of sign language (Vaccari & Marschark, 1997). Similarly, the individuals participated in this study have reported that they use a home language and sign alphabet instead of standard sign language. For this reason, participants have stated that they are trying to deal with communication problems in the family by using methods such as home language and sign alphabet. They also stated that they experience difficulties in expressing themselves to family members because they are dependent on a translator.

Data from the participants with deaf families gathered around two sub-themes: ease in communication and meeting basic needs. Deaf adolescents stated that they are glad to have deaf parents. It is conferred that speaking the same language strengthen the relationship with family members. Since deaf parents are more easily adapt to deafness, they can communicate with them starting from their birth. Therefore, deaf children can have more secure attachment with their deaf parents compared to hearing one (Marschark, 2007). Compared to participants with hearing families, participants with deaf families have stronger relationships, communication skills and a sense of belonging in the family. However, it is important to say that it is not because hearing status of parent but attitude of them. Individuals who are the only deaf ones in their families feel different from other family members. As a result, they feel more belong to deaf culture (Jackson & Turnbull, 2004; Overstreet, 1999).

In this study, deaf adolescents with hearing parents are found to avoid sharing their experiences, feelings, thoughts with their parents because they could not communicate with them through sign language. Parallel to this finding, Gentzel (2007) indicated that the relationship deaf adolescent individuals have little contact with their families because they cannot not find a common ground to communicate. Parents and siblings do not fully understand the deaf member of the family and do not know what emotions and thoughts they have especially in families lacking a common communication ground (Bodner-Johnson & Sass-Lehrer, 2003). This communication problem affects not only the family life, but also deaf person life in the world outside family and his/her social relations (Marschark, 2007).

Social Life

In this theme, sub-themes named as s*ocial relations, inaccessible world* and *social relations with deafness* have emerged. Because of different communication styles, deaf people have been found to experience some problems (exclusion, mocking ...) in social life. In parallel, Peterson, Reilly and Wellman (2016) examined peer relations between deaf and hearing students and this study showed that deaf students tend to have more peer-related problems than normally hearing students. Especially, deaf individuals who are exposed to negative attitudes of their hearing peers have less confidence in their social competence (Punch & Hyde, 2005). Participants in this study were also found to be trying to stay away from hearing peers to protect themselves because of the same negative attitudes and

experiences. In addition, prejudiced behaviors, social labeling, rejection and disapproval are among the other problems faced by deaf adolescents (Ayo, Olufemi & Gregory, 2013).

Another problem in social life has been identified as accessibility. Deaf individuals can not benefit from the same services that all people have a right to access. According to statements of the participants, especially lack of communication with health personnel such as doctors and nurses in the hospital poses a threat to lives of the deaf individuals or adversely affects their living standards. In addition, efforts to make TV series, the news, and movies more accessible to deaf individuals are not sufficient. Participants in the study indicated that they could not go alone to hospital when they have health problems. Due to their incompetency in Turkish language, deaf individuals can not benefit from printed sources. For this reason, it is very important to increase the number of personnel who know sign language in health, education and judicial matters, or to provide interpreter service (Lundeberg & Breivik, 2014; Siegel, 2000). Television broadcasts and films should be made accessible by sign language since subtitles are not helpful for the deaf; print books, newspapers or brochures and web sites should be supported with sign language (Debevc, Kosec & Holzinger, 2011).

The last sub-theme of social life depicts social relations with other deaf individuals. The participants are found to feel themselves quite comfortable in their relationships with deaf individuals. Having a common language - Turkish Sign Language- eliminates communication barriers as they experience in their interactions with hearing people. They can easily express themselves and understand what the other person wants to tell. Deaf individuals are observed to feel themselves secure when they are with the deaf on the grounds that they can share their thoughts and feelings without any obstacles; they have common problems, values and interests. All of these shared aspects enable deaf society to experience a sense of belongingness (Frazier-Maiwald & Williams, 1999; Scheetz, 2004). The study group of this research seems to have similar experiences. Especially deaf individuals with normally hearing families indicated that they cannot express their feelings to their families. Thus, they do not prefer to interact with family members. Instead, they are observed to communicate with their deaf friends, with whom they have a common language. Thanks to this common language, deaf adolescents can behave as they wish; they feel safe and belong to a group without the worries of exclusion, rejection and labeling.

Education Life

This theme consists of three sub-themes named as *special education schools, incompetency in grammar and other formal schools*. Special education schools for the deaf are one of the main choices that deaf students and their families prefer. However, majority of the teachers working at these schools either do not know sign language or do not have a competency in it. In spite of all negative aspects of these schools, special education schools are found to provide a strong social environment for deaf students. Similar to our research, current literature shows that special education schools provide opportunities to communicate for deaf peers using the same language; to improve social skills; to bond with the deaf community; to introduce deaf identity to others (Stinson & Kluwin, 2003). That's why special education schools are described as family by deaf individuals (Ladd, 2003).

Considering the current research, the fact that deaf individuals experience problems in using grammar not only inhibit their academic improvement, but also cause them to feel uncomfortable and ashamed when they need to use the written language in the world of hearing (Marschark & Lukomski, 2001; Okuyama & Iwai, 2011). Deaf individuals are not able to be successful in both academic and professional life due to the fact that there is no sufficient efforts and importance given to the education of the deaf, that the same teaching methods and measurement techniques that are used for normally

hearing classrooms are used. Deaf students who do not benefit from education rights sufficiently are found to have limited goals regarding their education and career (Antia, Jones, Reed & Kreimeyer, 2009; EGED, 2016; Kemaloglu & Kemaloglu, 2012; Sart, 2015). Likewise, findings of this study highlight the fact that participants convey their incompetency in using grammar and this finding is in parallel with other studies considering college and career goals.

The last sub-theme of education life is named as *other formal schools*. The deaf students attending inclusive schools are much less than the ones attending deaf schools in this study. However, the feelings, opinions and attitudes of deaf students from deaf schools towards other formal schools are examined. It has been seen that deaf students tend to have negative attitudes towards schools with inclusive classrooms. There are several causes for deaf individuals to have such negative attitudes. Participants of this study mentioned some of them as having difficulties in academic issues because of the differences between hearing students and the deaf, having negligent teachers, having problems in making friends. According to the findings of Sart (2015), inclusive education practices are not sufficient and effective to satisfy the needs of students with special needs and these students are commonly exposed to exclusion, labeling and mocking by others. Moreover, they could not have opportunities to improve themselves academically due to communication problems (Marschark & Lukomski, 2001; Marschark, 2007; Sart, Barış, Sarıısık & Düskün, 2016).

Conclusion and Suggestions

Experiences, problems and need areas of deaf individuals were identified in detail in this study. To know and have knowledge about individuals or society have a vital significance in psychological counseling   psychological counseling. That is why, purpose of this research demonstrates experiences of deaf adults and raise awareness and expect to benefit for mental health specialists. Accordingly, how being a deaf person is reflected on personal, cultural, family and education life was revealed. Findings displays that it is not being deaf, but experiences of communication problems that creates a hard life for deaf individuals. This research is important for demonstrating the dynamics of life experiences of the deaf especially for all segments of society. In this sense, several points of views were represented to create awareness towards psychological problems and needs of deaf individuals. The precautions to be taken when providing psychological help to the deaf are explained in detail. As a result, it would be appropriate for mental health professionals to increase their knowledge of deafness, to have a culturally sensitive approach and to provide service in sign language. In addition to this, counselors especially working with the deaf are advised to plan the consultation process by taking these findings of the research into consideration. Institutions that educate mental health professionals should also be more sensitive about examining and evaluating the needs of special groups and providing candidates with skills and experience. This is the best possible way to make helpful and effective practices with special groups. Planning research with every special group developing differently may help to provide better psychological counseling services as it is done in this research.

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