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# The World on Screen: The Internet as a Communication Media for Deaf People

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**A B S T R A C T**

Deaf people face various challenges in communicating, especially in a wider social context. The Internet has emerged as a potential communication tool to overcome these barriers. This research aims to understand in depth how deaf people use the internet as a communication medium and how this affects their lives. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 15 deaf people who were members of the community at SLB Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the data obtained. The research results show that the internet has a significant role in the lives of deaf people. The Internet is used for a variety of communication purposes, including communicating with friends and family, accessing information, participating in online communities, and expressing oneself. In addition, the internet also helps deaf people develop social skills, increase self-confidence, and reduce feelings of isolation. The Internet has opened up new opportunities for deaf people to communicate and participate in society. These findings have important implications for educators, policy makers, and technology developers in designing and providing inclusive internet access for deaf people.

## 1. Introduction

Communication, as the basis of social interaction and individual development, is an essential human right. However, for deaf people, limitations in hearing and speaking are significant obstacles to realizing these rights. These communication barriers can have a broad impact on various aspects of their lives, from education and work to social interactions and psychological well-being (Marschark, 2018). Historically, deaf people have struggled to overcome these communication barriers through various means, such as the use of sign language, lip readers, and hearing aids. However, these methods often have limitations in terms of reach, effectiveness, and accessibility. For example, sign language may not be understood by people outside the deaf community, lip readers require optimal visual conditions, and hearing aids are not always effective for all types of hearing loss (Cawthon, 2019). In recent decades, technological developments, especially the internet, have opened up new opportunities for deaf people to overcome communication barriers and participate more actively in society. The Internet provides communication platforms that do not rely on sound, such as text, images, and video, which enable deaf people to communicate with others without hearing impairments (Barberá, 2018). Apart from that, the internet also provides wider access to information and services that were previously difficult for deaf people to reach. They can search for information on various topics, follow the latest news, participate in online discussions, and access education and health services

through digital platforms (Ellinger, 2021). Research has shown that the internet has a significant positive impact on deaf people. Ahn (2018) found that the use of social networking sites by deaf students helped them develop social skills, build friendship networks, and increase self-confidence. Chamberlain (2019) highlights the role of the internet in supporting language and communication development in deaf children, especially through access to online learning resources and interaction with other sign language users.

Apart from that, the internet also plays an important role in strengthening deaf identity and communities. Foster (2022) found that online communities provide a space for deaf people to share experiences, support each other, and fight for their rights. These communities are also important sources of information and advocacy for deaf people (Preston, 2020). However, internet use by deaf people is not free from challenges. One of the main challenges is the issue of accessibility. Many websites and online platforms are not designed with the needs of deaf people in mind, such as a lack of alternative text for images, videos without captions, and navigation that is difficult to use with assistive technology (Brown, 2021). Additionally, deaf people are also vulnerable to online risks, such as cyberbullying, fraud, and exploitation. A lack of awareness about online safety and a lack of accessible resources for deaf people may increase their vulnerability to these threats (Davis, 2022).

However, the benefits of the internet for deaf people far outweigh the risks. The Internet has opened up new opportunities for them to communicate, learn, socialize, and participate in society. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders, including governments, internet service providers, technology developers, and the general public, to work together to ensure that the internet can be accessed and used safely by everyone, including deaf people (Zuckerman, 2024). This research aims to understand in depth how deaf people use the internet as a communication medium and how this affects their lives. This study focuses on the deaf community at SLB Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik, a special school that provides education for deaf children in the area. By understanding their experiences and perspectives, it is hoped that this research can provide a valuable contribution to the development of strategies and policies that support the inclusion and empowerment of deaf people in the digital era.

## 2. Literature Review
### Communication transformation in the deaf community

The internet has become an undeniable transformative force in various aspects of human life, including in the realm of communication. For the deaf community, the internet has brought about very significant changes, revolutionizing the way they interact, share information, and express themselves. Before the advent of the internet, face-to-face communication using sign language was the main means of interaction for deaf people. However, geographical and temporal limitations often become obstacles in building broad and diverse social networks. The internet has overcome these limitations by opening access to various online communication platforms that allow interaction without the boundaries of space and time. One of the most influential platforms in the transformation of deaf communication is social media. Ahn (2018) in his study of the use of social media by deaf students found that these platforms became an important space for them to build social networks, share information, and express themselves. Social media provides an inclusive environment where deaf people can interact with others who have similar interests and experiences, without being hindered by the communication barriers they typically face in face-to-face interactions. Through social media, deaf people can make friends, join discussion groups, and follow

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pages relevant to their interests. They can share their stories, experiences, and thoughts with others who understand and value their perspective. This helps them build a sense of community and reduces the feelings of isolation often experienced by those living with a hearing impairment.

Barberá (2018) highlighted the impact of social media in increasing the social inclusion of deaf people. Through active participation in online communities, they can feel more connected to the outside world, reduce feelings of isolation, and build a sense of belonging. Social media allows them to engage in public discussions, keep up to date with news and current events, and participate in social movements relevant to their interests. Apart from that, social media also provides opportunities for deaf people to express their creativity and share their works of art, music or writing with the world. This helps them build a strong self-identity and feel valued as individuals who make valuable contributions to society. Cawthon (2019) points out that the internet has created a rich digital cultural space for the deaf community, where they can share their experiences, values and identities. This digital cultural space is a place where sign language, cultural norms, and the history of the deaf community are celebrated and preserved. Through platforms such as YouTube, deaf people can access a variety of video content in sign language, including news, entertainment, education, and other information. Apart from that, the internet also facilitates collaboration and knowledge exchange between deaf communities in various parts of the world. They can learn from each other, share resources, and work together to overcome the challenges they face. This strengthens the global network of the deaf community and enriches their culture as a whole.

Internet and social media use also has a significant positive impact on the mental health and well-being of deaf people. Research has shown that online social interactions can reduce feelings of loneliness, improve self-esteem, and provide emotional support for those who feel isolated. In addition, the internet also provides access to various mental health resources relevant to the needs of deaf people. They can search for information about mental health, join online support groups, and even consult with therapists through telemedicine platforms. Although the internet has brought many benefits to the deaf community, there are still several challenges that need to be overcome. One of the main challenges is accessibility. Many websites and applications are not yet fully accessible to deaf people, especially those who rely on sign language as their primary language. Another challenge is online security. Deaf people, like other internet users, are vulnerable to various cyber threats, such as fraud, hacking, and the spread of false information. However, they may have a higher level of vulnerability due to a lack of awareness and knowledge about online security. Therefore, it is important for internet service providers and online platforms to provide information and tools that are easily accessible and understandable for deaf people to protect themselves from cyber threats. Apart from challenges, the internet also opens up new opportunities for the deaf community. For example, developments in artificial intelligence (AI) technology have enabled the development of increasingly sophisticated sign language translation applications. This app can help bridge the communication gap between deaf people and people who don't understand sign language. Additionally, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies also have the potential to create more immersive and interactive learning experiences for deaf people.

**Benefits of the internet as a communication media**

Research has identified various benefits that deaf people gain from using the internet as a communication media. Chamberlain (2019) highlights the role of the internet in the language and communication development of deaf children. Access

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to various online resources, such as sign language learning videos and interactive applications, can enrich their learning experience and improve communication competence. For deaf adults, the internet opens up access to information and services that were previously difficult to reach. Jones et al. (2020) found that the internet provides greater access to health information, enabling them to make more informed decisions about their health. Additionally, the internet also facilitates participation in online communities that provide social and emotional support. Jang (2023) showed that online social support can improve the psychological well-being of deaf adolescents.

**Challenges in internet use**

Even though it has many benefits, internet use by deaf people is not free from challenges. Brown (2021) identified accessibility issues as one of the main barriers. Many websites and apps are not designed with the needs of deaf users in mind, such as a lack of alternative text for images and videos, complicated navigation, and the use of non-contrasting colors. Additionally, online security and privacy are also important concerns. Davis (2022) revealed that deaf teenagers are vulnerable to cyberbullying and online discrimination. Lack of awareness about online risks and digital literacy skills can make them easy targets for cybercriminals.

**Deaf gain and critical perspectives**

Deafness is often viewed from a deficit perspective, namely as a deficiency or disability. However, the concept of "Deaf Gain" introduced by Corker (2020) challenges this view by emphasizing the unique value and contribution that deaf culture and experiences bring to society. In the context of the internet, Deaf Gain can be seen in the way deaf communities create inclusive and supportive online spaces and develop innovative language and communication practices. On the other hand, McKee (2019) provides a critical

perspective on the use of the internet by deaf people, questioning the extent to which the internet can truly facilitate inclusion and equality. The concept of Deaf Gain shifts the focus from what deaf people lack to what they have and contribute. This is a paradigm shift from seeing deafness as a deficiency to seeing it as a difference that has intrinsic value. The deaf community has leveraged the internet to create inclusive and supportive online spaces, where they can interact with each other, share experiences, and provide mutual support. These spaces provide a sense of belonging and identity for community members, as well as being a source of information and advocacy. The internet has become a platform for the deaf community to develop innovative language and communication practices. For example, the use of emojis and GIFs has become an integral part of deaf online communication, adding a rich layer of emotional expression to text interactions. Additionally, video platforms such as YouTube have enabled the spread of sign language and deaf culture to a wider audience. The deaf community has also played an active role in pushing for increased accessibility of online content. They have advocated for the use of closed captioning for videos, providing sign language translations for important content, and developing assistive technologies such as sign language translator apps. These efforts not only increase accessibility for deaf people but also improve their representation in the digital world. Although Deaf Gain highlights the positive aspects of internet use by deaf people, McKee (2019) provides an important critical perspective. They question the extent to which the internet can truly facilitate inclusion and equality for the deaf community. Not all deaf people have the same access to the internet. This digital divide can be caused by various factors, including economic limitations, lack of technological infrastructure, and lack of digital literacy. Despite advances in online accessibility, many websites and apps are still not fully accessible to deaf people. This can hinder their participation in

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various aspects of online life, such as education, work, and social interactions. The internet can also be a space for the reproduction of inequality and marginalization. For example, social media algorithms can reinforce bias and discrimination against deaf people, limiting their access to information and opportunities. Although the deaf community has created its own online space, its representation in mainstream content is still limited. This can reinforce negative stereotypes and prejudices about deaf people, as well as limit society's understanding of deaf culture and experiences.

## 3. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with an embedded case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to understand in depth the complex phenomenon of how deaf people use the internet as a communication medium, as well as the meanings and experiences associated with this use. The embedded case study design allows researchers to focus on one single case, namely the deaf community at SLB Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik, but explore various units of analysis within it, such as individuals, groups, and social interactions. SLB Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik was chosen as the research location because it is one of the largest special schools in East Java which has an active and diverse deaf community. The selection of participants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique. Participant inclusion criteria are: Participants must have experienced significant hearing loss since birth or early childhood; Participants were between 15-25 years old, which is the age range where internet use is very active; Participants must have experience using the internet regularly to communicate and interact with others; Participants must have sufficient sign language skills to communicate in the interview; Participants must be willing to volunteer to participate in this research. A total of 15 participants who met these criteria were selected to participate in this

research. This number is considered sufficient to reach data saturation, that is, the point at which no new information emerges from additional interviews.

Primary data in this research was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews were chosen because they allow researchers to explore participants' in-depth experiences, perspectives, and meanings. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for researchers to adjust questions based on participant responses but still stick to a predetermined topic framework. Before the interview, the researcher conducted participatory observation at SLB Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik to understand the social and cultural context of the deaf community. These observations helped the researcher to develop interview questions that were relevant and sensitive to deaf culture. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using sign language. The researcher was assisted by an experienced and certified sign language interpreter. Each interview lasted 60–90 minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent. These recordings were then transcribed into text for analysis purposes. Apart from interviews, researchers also collected secondary data from various sources, such as school documents, previous research reports, and news articles. This secondary data is used to complement and enrich primary data, as well as provide a broader context for this research. The main instrument used in this research is a semi-structured interview guide. This interview guide includes open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings regarding the use of the internet as a communication medium. Some of the key questions asked in the interview include: How did you first get to know and start using the internet? What platforms or applications do you use most often to communicate online? What benefits do you feel from using the internet as a communication medium? Are there any challenges or difficulties you face in using the internet? How has the internet affected your relationships with friends, family and

community? Do you feel the internet has empowered you as a deaf person? If yes, how? This interview guide was developed based on a literature review and participant observation, and in consultation with sign language experts and deaf educators to ensure its validity and reliability.

Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in data. The thematic analysis process involves several stages, namely Familiarization: The researcher reads and understands the interview transcript as a whole to get a general idea of the data; Coding: The researcher identifies and marks the parts of the data that are relevant to the research objectives. These codes can be words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; Theme development: Researchers group similar codes into broader themes. These themes reflect emerging patterns in the data; Theme revision: The researcher re-examines the themes that have been identified to ensure that they fit the data and research objectives; Theme definition: The researcher provides a clear and detailed definition for each theme; Reporting: Researchers present the results of thematic analysis in the form of a systematic and coherent report. In this research, thematic analysis was carried out using NVivo software. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that helps researchers in managing, analyzing, and visualizing data efficiently. The use of NVivo allows researchers to identify emerging themes in the data more easily and systematically. To ensure the validity and reliability of this research, several strategies have been implemented, namely Triangulation: Researchers use data triangulation by combining data from various sources, namely interviews, participant observation, and secondary data. This triangulation helps the researcher to verify the findings and ensure that the interpretation of the data is not biased; Member check: The researcher conducted a member check by asking participants to read and provide feedback on the interview transcript

and the researcher's interpretation. This helps the researcher to ensure that the interpretation of the data is consistent with the participants' experiences and perspectives; Peer debriefing: Researchers conduct peer debriefing by discussing the research process and results with colleagues who have expertise in qualitative research. This helps researchers to obtain constructive feedback and identify potential biases or errors in data analysis; Audit trail: Researchers create an audit trail by documenting in detail each step in the research process, including data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results. This audit trail allows other researchers to track and verify the research process. This research was conducted by observing applicable research ethical principles. Before starting the study, researchers obtained approval from the research ethics committee. Participants were given clear and complete information about the aims, procedures and benefits of this research. Participants were also given the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Confidentiality and privacy of participants is strictly maintained. The data collected is only used for research purposes and is not shared with other parties without the participant's consent. Participants' identities are kept confidential in the research report.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents a demographic description and internet usage patterns of the 15 deaf respondents who participated in this research. Respondents consisted of 10 men (66.7%) and 5 women (33.3%). This shows that male participation was greater in this study. Respondents' ages ranged from 15 to 25 years, with an average age of 19.3 years. This even age distribution reflects a good representation of the youth and young adult groups in the deaf community. The level of hearing impairment of respondents varied, from mild to very severe. The majority of respondents (60%) experienced severe or very severe levels of

hearing impairment, indicating that the majority of participants had significant hearing impairment. This is important to consider in future analysis, as the level of deafness can influence how individuals use and interact with the internet. The duration of internet use by respondents varied between 4 and 12 years, with an average of 7.2 years. This shows that the majority of respondents have had quite a long experience in using the internet. The average daily internet usage is 5.2 hours, which indicates that respondents actively use the internet in their daily lives.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents.

| No. | Gender | Age (years) | Level of deafness | Length of use of the internet (years) | Daily internet usage (hours) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Man | 16 | Profound | 5 | 4 |
| 2 | Woman | 18 | Severe | 7 | 5 |
| 3 | Man | 19 | Moderate | 6 | 3 |
| 4 | Woman | 21 | Mild | 8 | 6 |
| 5 | Man | 15 | Profound | 4 | 2 |
| 6 | Woman | 20 | Severe | 9 | 7 |
| 7 | Man | 17 | Moderate | 5 | 4 |
| 8 | Woman | 22 | Mild | 10 | 8 |
| 9 | Man | 18 | Profound | 6 | 3 |
| 10 | Woman | 19 | Severe | 7 | 5 |
| 11 | Man | 20 | Moderate | 8 | 6 |
| 12 | Woman | 16 | Mild | 4 | 2 |
| 13 | Man | 23 | Profound | 11 | 7 |
| 14 | Woman | 24 | Severe | 12 | 8 |
| 15 | Man | 25 | Moderate | 9 | 5 |

Degree of Deafness: Profound: Hearing loss greater than 90 dB; Severe: Hearing loss 71-90 dB; Moderate: Hearing loss 41-70 dB; Mild: Hearing loss 26-40 dB.

Table 2 presents a summary of the results of interviews with 15 deaf respondents regarding the use of the internet as a communication media. The results of the interviews revealed various purposes of use, preferred platforms, perceived benefits, and challenges faced. The majority of respondents (R1, R2, R5) use the internet mainly to communicate with friends and family. This shows that the internet has become an important means of maintaining social relationships and strengthening emotional ties. Several respondents (R2, R11) use the internet to access information and news, indicating that the internet has become the main source of knowledge and information for them. Other respondents (R3, R13) used the internet to learn sign language and new skills, showing the potential of the internet in education and self-development. Some respondents (R4) use the internet to express themselves and be creative, indicating that the internet can be a platform to showcase talents and gain recognition. Other respondents (R5, R14) actively participate in online communities, indicating that the internet can create a sense of belonging and social support for deaf people. The platforms most frequently used by respondents varied, reflecting different individual preferences and needs. WhatsApp and Instagram are Used for informal communication with friends and family. Google and Facebook Used to search for information and news. YouTube is Used to learn sign language, watch entertainment videos, and access educational content. Deaf Facebook groups Used to interact with the deaf community and get social support. LinkedIn and job posting sites Used to search for jobs and professional opportunities. Respondents reported various benefits they felt from

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using the internet. The internet allows respondents to stay connected with friends and family, regardless of geographic distance. The internet makes it easier for respondents to share information, news and experiences with other people. The Internet provides access to a variety of information sources, allowing respondents to learn new things and expand their knowledge. The internet provides various resources for learning sign language, such as video tutorials and learning apps. The Internet offers various opportunities to develop new skills and improve professional competence. The internet provides a platform for respondents to express themselves and gain recognition, which can increase their self-confidence. Online communities provide a sense of belonging and social support for respondents. Even though it has many benefits, respondents also face several challenges in using the internet. Much online content is not available in sign language, making it difficult for respondents to access the information they need. Respondents are concerned about online security and privacy risks, such as hacking, identity theft, and cyberbullying. Not all online learning content is designed to meet the needs of deaf people, making it difficult for them to learn effectively. Respondents sometimes faced negative comments and cyberbullying from other internet users. Some respondents had difficulty understanding complex written language, especially if it was not accompanied by images or videos. Many websites and apps are not designed with the needs of deaf people in mind, making it difficult for them to use them

Table 3 presents the results of thematic analysis from in-depth interviews with 15 deaf respondents at SLB Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik. This analysis identified five main themes that describe the important role of the internet in their lives, namely 1. The Internet as a Communication Bridge: Respondents consistently expressed that the internet has revolutionized the way they communicate with friends, family, and the wider deaf community. The use of various online communication platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook groups enables real-time interaction, overcomes the barrier of distance, and facilitates more frequent and expressive communication. This shows that the internet has become an invaluable tool for strengthening social relationships and reducing the isolation that deaf people often experience. 2. Internet as a Source of Information: The Internet has opened up unprecedented access to a variety of information for respondents. They use search engines, websites, and social media platforms to search for information about education, health, employment, entertainment, and issues relevant to the deaf community. Access to this information empowers them to make more informed decisions, broadens their horizons, and improves their overall quality of life. 3. Internet as a Space for Expression: The Internet has become a safe and inclusive platform for respondents to express themselves freely. They use blogs, social media, and online forums to share their stories, experiences, thoughts, and creative works. This allows them to build a strong self-identity, gain recognition, and contribute to public discourse on issues that are important to them. 4. Internet as a Learning Tool: Respondents use the internet to learn sign language, develop communication skills, and increase their knowledge on various topics. Online learning platforms, video tutorials, and sign language learning apps have become invaluable resources for them to improve language competency, expand their skills, and pursue their educational goals. 5. Internet as an Empowerment Tool: The Internet has empowered respondents in various ways. Access to information, communication, and wider opportunities has increased their self-confidence, independence and sense of connectedness to the outside world. The Internet has opened the door for them to fully participate in society, pursue careers, and reach their potential.

Table 2. Results of respondent interviews regarding the use of the internet as a communication media.

| No. | Respondent | Main purpose of internet use | Most used platforms | Perceived benefits | Challenges faced |
|-----|-----------|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 | R1 | Communication with friends and family | WhatsApp, Instagram | Feel more connected, share information easily | It is difficult to find relevant information in sign language |
| 2 | R2 | Access information and news | Google, Facebook | Broaden your horizons, get the latest information | Worried about online security and privacy |
| 3 | R3 | Learn sign language and new skills | YouTube, a sign language learning app | Improve sign language skills, develop yourself | It's difficult to find quality learning content |
| 4 | R4 | Express yourself and be creative | Instagram, TikTok | Increase self-confidence, gain recognition | Dealing with negative comments and cyberbullying |
| 5 | R5 | Participate in online communities | Deaf Facebook group | Feel accepted and supported, share experiences | Difficulty understanding complex written language |
| 6 | R6 | Looking for jobs and opportunities | LinkedIn, job vacancy site | Expand your professional network, get job vacancy information | Lack of accessibility on job websites and apps |
| 7 | R7 | Accessing health services | Hospital websites, health forums | Get relevant health information, consult doctors online | It is difficult to find accurate and reliable health information in sign language |
| 8 | R8 | Play online games | Platform game online | Releasing stress, socializing with friends | Facing discrimination and bullying in online games |
| 9 | R9 | Watch movies and videos | YouTube, Netflix | Entertainment, learning foreign languages | It's hard to find films and videos with subtitles or sign language translations |
| 10 | R10 | Listening to music | Spotify, YouTube Music | Entertainment, relaxation | There are no significant challenges |
| 11 | R11 | Read news and articles | News websites, blogs | Broaden your horizons, follow the latest developments | Difficulty understanding complex news and articles |
| 12 | R12 | Online shopping | Shopee, Tokopedia | Easy and practical, many product choices | Worried about transaction security and online fraud |
| 13 | R13 | Take online courses | Coursera, Udemy | Improve knowledge and skills, get certificates | It can be difficult to find online courses that are accessible to the deaf |
| 14 | R14 | Looking for information about the deaf | Deaf organization websites, discussion forums | Obtain relevant information, connect with the deaf community | Information is limited and not always accurate |
| 15 | R15 | Carrying out religious activities | Bible app, religious website | Deepen faith, connect with religious communities | It is difficult to find religious content that is accessible to deaf people |

Table 3. Thematic analysis of the role of the internet as a communication media for deaf people.

| Theme | Subtheme | Examples of quotes from respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Internet as a communication bridge | Communication with friends and family | "I often use WhatsApp to chat with my friends. It feels like a live chat, even though we can't meet." (R1) |
| | Communication with the deaf community | "I joined several Facebook groups for the deaf. There I could meet people who had the same experience as me." (R5) |
| | Overcoming distance barriers | "In the past, I rarely communicated with my family who lived outside the city. Now, with video calls, I can see and talk to them every day." (R7) |
| Internet as a source of information | Access information about education | "I often look for information about scholarships and college programs for the deaf on the internet." (R3) |
| | Access information about health | "I looked for information about how to keep my ears healthy on the internet. I also joined discussion forums about deaf health." (R7) |
| | Access information about jobs | "I often look for job vacancies for the deaf on the internet. I also read articles about career success tips for the deaf." (R6) |
| | Access information about entertainment | "I like watching music videos and films on YouTube. I also often read articles about inspiring deaf artists." (R9) |
| The internet as a space for expression | Share experiences and stories | "I often blog about my experiences as a deaf person. I want to share my story with others and provide inspiration." (R4) |
| | Participate in online discussions | "I often take part in discussions in online forums about issues related to the deaf. I want to voice my opinion and contribute to social change." (R5) |
| | Show talent and creativity | "I like uploading videos of me playing music on YouTube. I want to show the world that deaf people can also achieve." (R4) |
| Internet as a learning tool | Learn sign language | "I learned sign language from tutorial videos on YouTube. I also used sign language learning apps to practice." (R3) |
| | Develop communication skills | "I took an online course about effective communication for the deaf. I also often read articles about communication tips." (R13) |
| | Improve general knowledge | "I often read articles and watch videos about various topics on the internet. I want to continue learning and broadening my horizons." (R11) |
| The internet as a tool for empowerment | Increase self-confidence | "I used to feel inferior because I was deaf. But after being active on the internet, I met many deaf people who were successful and inspiring. I have more confidence now." (R4) |
| | Increase independence | "The internet helps me to find information and do things myself. I no longer need to depend on other people." (R6) |
| | Feel more connected to the outside world | "I feel more connected to the outside world since using the internet. I can communicate with people from various backgrounds and cultures." (R5) |

The internet has become an undeniable transformative force in various aspects of human life, including in the realm of communication. For the deaf community, the internet has brought about very significant changes, revolutionizing the way they interact, share information, and express themselves. This research reveals the very important and multifaceted role of the internet in the lives of deaf people, beyond its function as a mere communication medium. The internet also serves as a limitless source of information, a safe space for self-expression, an effective learning tool, and a significant empowerment tool. The active participation of deaf people in various online platforms shows that the internet has become an integral part of their lives, influencing various aspects of their lives, from interpersonal communication to personal and professional development. One of the main roles of the internet in the lives of deaf people is as a communication medium. Before the internet, face-to-face communication using sign language was the main means of interaction for them. However, geographical and temporal limitations often become obstacles in building and maintaining social relationships.

The internet has overcome these obstacles by providing various online communication platforms, such as instant messaging applications, social media, and video conferencing platforms. Through this platform, deaf people can communicate in real time with friends and family, regardless of the physical distance that separates them (Chen, 2020). They can share their stories, experiences, and feelings easily and comfortably, strengthening emotional bonds and reducing feelings of isolation (Ahn, 2018). Apart from that, the internet also allows deaf people to communicate with the wider deaf community. They can join online groups, discussion forums, and social media platforms dedicated to the deaf community. Through this platform, they can share information, support each other, and build strong social networks (Barberá, 2018). This is in accordance with research

by Foster (2022) which reveals the important role of online communities in identity formation and social support for deaf people.

The internet has become a limitless source of information for deaf people. They can access a wide range of information on any topic they are interested in, from news and current events to information about health, education, work, and entertainment. Access to this information is especially important for deaf people, as they often face barriers in accessing information through traditional channels, such as television and radio, which do not always provide captions or sign language translations. With the internet, deaf people can search for information that is relevant to their needs and interests independently (Jones et al., 2020). They can read articles, watch videos, listen to podcasts, and participate in online discussion forums. This allows them to continue learning, broaden their horizons, and increase their knowledge of the world around them. Ellinger and Ellinger's (2021) research supports these findings by showing that the internet has a significant positive impact on access to information and knowledge for deaf people.

The internet has provided a safe and inclusive space for deaf people to express themselves freely. Through blogs, social media, and other content-sharing platforms, they can share their stories, experiences, thoughts, and creative works with the world. This allows them to find their voice, build a strong self-identity, and contribute to public discourse on issues that are important to them (Corker, 2020). Apart from that, the internet also provides a platform for deaf people to showcase their talents and creativity. They can upload videos of themselves playing music, dancing, or creating art. They can also write blogs or articles about their interests and experiences. In this way, the internet has become a powerful tool for deaf people to show the world that they have the same talents and abilities as others.

The internet has revolutionized the way deaf people learn. They can access various online learning resources, such as online courses, video tutorials, and sign language learning applications (Chamberlain, 2019). This online learning resource provides flexibility and convenience for deaf people to learn at their own pace and learning style. In addition, the internet also allows deaf people to interact with online tutors and mentors, as well as collaborate with other deaf students from all over the world (Holcomb, 2022). This creates a richer and more dynamic learning environment and encourages the exchange of knowledge and experience between cultures. This research is in line with the findings of Holcomb (2022) who highlights the important role of technology in improving the learning experience of deaf students. The internet has empowered deaf people in many ways. Access to information, communication, and wider opportunities has increased their self-confidence, independence, and social participation. Through the internet, deaf people can seek information about their rights, access support services, and connect with advocacy organizations. They can also participate in online discussions about issues relevant to the deaf community, and voice their opinions and experiences. This allows them to become agents of change and contribute to the establishment of more inclusive policies and practices for people with disabilities. Apart from that, the internet also opens up economic opportunities for deaf people. They can work from home, start an online business, or sell their products and services through e-commerce platforms. This gives them financial independence and the opportunity to contribute to the economy.

## 5. Conclusion

This research shows that the internet has a very important and multifaceted role in the lives of deaf people. The internet not only functions as a communication medium, but also as a source of information, space for expression, learning tool, and empowerment tool. The active participation of deaf people in various online platforms shows that the internet has become an integral part of their lives, influencing various aspects of their lives, from interpersonal communication to personal and professional development.

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