



Understanding the Resilience Process of Deaf Individuals Facing Accessibility Barriers: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

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Accessibility barriers remain a major challenge for Deaf Individuals in various aspects of life, including communication, education, public services, and social participation. Limited visual communication support, the lack of sign language interpreters, and low public awareness of Deaf culture often result in discrimination, social exclusion, and psychological distress. This study aims to explore the resilience process of Deaf Individuals in facing accessibility barriers within the Batir Isyarat Banjoemas Community, Banyumas Regency. The research employed a qualitative phenomenological approach involving five Deaf participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed phenomenologically to identify the essence of participants' lived experiences. The findings reveal that resilience develops through a dynamic interaction between personal, relational, and social factors. Participants experienced communication barriers, limited access to information, and social stigma, which affected their emotional and psychological well-being. However, they demonstrated resilience through persistence, resistance, recovery, adaptation, and transformation. The resilience process was reflected in four major themes: experiences of Deafness and social stigma, psychological struggles, the development of coping strategies and resilience resources, and self-transformation toward identity acceptance and advocacy awareness. The Batir Isyarat Banjoemas Community played a significant role in providing social support, strengthening collective identity, and fostering empowerment among Deaf Individuals. These findings highlight that resilience among Deaf Individuals is not merely an individual capacity but a multisystemic process shaped by interactions with supportive environments.

Keywords: *Accessibility, Deaf Community, Deaf Individuals, Resilience.*

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INTRODUCTION

Deaf individuals continue to encounter substantial accessibility barriers across multiple domains of life, including education, public services, employment, and everyday social interactions. These barriers extend beyond limited access to communication and include the

inadequate provision of accessible information, the shortage of qualified sign language interpreters, and the public's limited understanding of the communication needs and cultural identity of Deaf people. As a result, Deaf individuals frequently experience difficulties in obtaining information, participating equally in social life, and accessing services that should be available to all citizens without discrimination. In societies where hearing culture remains the dominant social norm, spoken communication is often regarded as the primary mode of interaction, while the visual communication needs of Deaf individuals are frequently overlooked (Palfreyman, 2018).

The medical model, which conceptualizes deafness primarily as an individual deficit, has also shaped societal attitudes toward Deaf individuals. This perspective tends to overlook the fact that many of the challenges experienced by Deaf people arise from social environments that remain inaccessible and fail to accommodate their communication needs. From a sociocultural perspective, however, deafness is understood not merely as an audiological condition but also as a cultural identity characterized by its own language, values, and shared social experiences. Consequently, the difficulties encountered by Deaf individuals cannot be separated from structural barriers, including restricted communication access, the limited visibility of sign language in public spaces, and persistent social stigma surrounding disability (Palfreyman, 2018).

A growing body of research indicates that accessibility barriers experienced by Deaf individuals have significant implications for their psychological and social well-being. Communication difficulties within their surrounding environment often lead to feelings of isolation, being misunderstood, and having limited control over information relevant to their daily lives (Barker et al., 2025). Experiences of discrimination, negative stereotypes, and the persistent underestimation of Deaf individuals' capabilities may further undermine self-concept and self-confidence. Over time, these experiences can contribute to psychological distress and reduced quality of life. Nevertheless, Deaf individuals do not respond uniformly to such adversities. While some experience profound psychological challenges, others develop effective strategies that enable them to cope, adapt, and continue functioning successfully despite the accessibility barriers they encounter.

The capacity to cope with adversity, adapt to challenging circumstances, and continue developing despite difficulties is commonly conceptualized as resilience. Early conceptualizations of resilience primarily viewed it as an individual characteristic or personal capacity that enables people to withstand adversity. However, advances in resilience research have demonstrated that resilience is not solely determined by individual attributes but is also shaped by the social environments in which individuals live. Masten (2001) described resilience as ordinary magic, emphasizing that adaptive capacity emerges through the normative support systems available within an individual's life. From this perspective, resilience is not an extraordinary quality possessed by only a few individuals but rather a dynamic process that develops through continuous interactions between individuals and supportive environments.

This perspective was subsequently expanded by Michael Ungar (2018, 2021) through the framework of multisystemic resilience. According to Ungar (2021), resilience refers to individuals' capacity to navigate and negotiate access to psychological, social, cultural, economic, and physical resources that sustain their well-being in the face of adversity. Within this framework, resilience is not viewed as an inherent personal trait but as a dynamic and context-dependent process that emerges through ongoing interactions between individuals and the multiple systems surrounding them. Consequently, successful adaptation to adversity depends not

only on personal strengths but also on the availability, accessibility, and responsiveness of environmental resources and opportunities.

Furthermore, Ungar (2021) explains that resilience can be expressed through multiple adaptive responses to adversity. These responses include persistence, the capacity to continue pursuing daily activities despite obstacles; resistance, the ability to withstand the negative effects of adversity; recovery, the process of regaining psychological and functional well-being following hardship or crisis; adaptation, the ability to adjust effectively to changing circumstances; and transformation, a fundamental process of positive change that reshapes one's worldview, identity, or life circumstances. Together, these five interconnected processes illustrate that resilience extends beyond mere survival, encompassing individuals' capacity to grow, adapt, and flourish through challenging life experiences. The multisystemic resilience framework is particularly relevant for understanding the lived experiences of Deaf individuals because the challenges they encounter arise not only from individual circumstances but also from environmental conditions that influence their opportunities for social participation. Within this perspective, family members, peers, Deaf communities, educational institutions, public services, and the broader society constitute interconnected systems that may either facilitate or hinder the resilience process. Supporting this perspective, Eichengreen et al. (2022) found that resilience among Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals educated in mainstream schools develops progressively through family support, social relationships, and accumulated life experiences across different developmental stages. When social environments provide meaningful social support, accessible communication, and equitable opportunities for participation, Deaf individuals are more likely to strengthen their resilience and achieve greater psychological well-being (Masten, 2001).

Research on Deaf individuals in Indonesia has predominantly focused on issues related to accessibility, inclusive education, sign language, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Several studies have also examined coping strategies, adaptive capacities, and the psychological well-being of Deaf individuals within specific contexts, particularly education and healthcare. For example, Handayani et al. (2024) reported that limited communication accessibility remains a major barrier preventing Deaf individuals from obtaining equitable public services. Similarly, research on family communication among Deaf adolescents demonstrated that communication barriers within the social environment significantly influence their social interactions and adjustment processes (El-fikri et al., 2024). Desmet et al. (2025) further found that accessibility barriers affect not only social participation but also the psychological well-being and quality of life of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Likewise, Barker et al. (2025) highlighted that communication difficulties, coupled with the public's limited understanding of visual communication needs, contribute to feelings of social isolation and hinder meaningful social participation among Deaf individuals.

Despite these advances, studies that specifically explore the resilience process of Deaf individuals from the perspective of their lived experiences remain scarce. Understanding resilience from this perspective is essential for explaining how Deaf individuals interpret accessibility barriers, develop coping strategies, and construct their identities and personal agency in everyday life. Chapman (2021) demonstrated that experiences of marginalization and the medicalization of deafness can foster the development of a more positive Deaf cultural identity. Through this process, individuals not only come to accept themselves as members of the Deaf community but also develop critical awareness of their rights and actively engage in resisting social stigma.

Nevertheless, much of the existing literature continues to position Deaf individuals primarily as subjects of accessibility research or focuses on specific institutional contexts, leaving their subjective experiences and resilience processes in everyday life insufficiently explored. According to Ungar (2021), resilience is a multisystemic process through which individuals navigate and negotiate access to resources that promote well-being under conditions of adversity. This perspective underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Deaf individuals, particularly how they make meaning of accessibility barriers, develop adaptive strategies, and construct a positive sense of identity within social environments that remain only partially inclusive.

Based on the existing body of literature, the present study conceptualizes resilience as a multisystemic process that emerges through continuous interactions between individuals and their social environments, as proposed by Ungar (2021) and Ungar & Theron (2020). This perspective suggests that the experience of being Deaf does not inevitably lead to vulnerability; rather, it can serve as a foundation for developing identity, meaning, psychological strength, and positive adaptation. However, resilience is inherently context-dependent, with its development shaped by the unique social, cultural, and environmental conditions surrounding each individual. Consequently, a deeper understanding of Deaf individuals' lived experiences is needed to explain how resilience evolves within the context of everyday accessibility barriers. A phenomenological approach is particularly appropriate for this purpose because it enables researchers to explore participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attribute to adversity, social support, and personal transformation (Desmet et al., 2025).

The Batir Isyarat Banjoemas (BIB) Community was established in September 2022 as a continuation of the "Sahabat Dengar" initiative that had been initiated in 2018. The community currently consists of approximately 17 active Deaf and hearing members who collaborate to promote social inclusion and communication accessibility. BIB regularly organizes Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) classes, Deaf culture awareness campaigns, public education programs, advocacy for accessibility rights, and peer support activities. Through these initiatives, the community has become an important social environment that strengthens Deaf identity, facilitates mutual support, and encourages active participation of Deaf individuals in society.

The Batir Isyarat Banjoemas (BIB) Community provides a meaningful context for investigating these experiences. As a community that brings together Deaf individuals and hearing allies, BIB promotes a more inclusive environment through sign language use, public education, accessibility advocacy, and peer support. Beyond serving as a space for social interaction, the community fosters the development of Deaf cultural identity, personal empowerment, and collective solidarity among its members. Examining the lived experiences of Deaf individuals within this community offers valuable insights into how social relationships and community resources facilitate resilience in the face of persistent accessibility barriers.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the resilience process of Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers through a phenomenological approach among members of the Batir Isyarat Banjoemas (BIB) Community. By adopting Ungar's multisystemic resilience framework, this study seeks to contribute to the growing literature on resilience among persons with disabilities, particularly within Deaf communities, by providing an in-depth understanding of how resilience is constructed through interactions between individuals and their surrounding social systems. In addition, the findings are expected to enrich the field of inclusive guidance and counseling by providing empirical evidence that may inform culturally responsive counseling

practices and psychosocial interventions designed to promote the well-being, empowerment, and social inclusion of Deaf individuals.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers. A phenomenological approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of how participants perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their experiences within social environments that remain only partially inclusive. Through this approach, the study sought to uncover the essence of participants' subjective experiences and to understand how they construct resilience in response to the accessibility barriers encountered in their everyday lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994)

The study was conducted in the Batir Isyarat Banjoemas (BIB) Community, located in Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This community was selected because of its active involvement in promoting sign language, raising public awareness of Deaf culture, and advocating for accessibility rights for Deaf individuals. In addition to serving as a space for social interaction, the community provides an important source of social support for its members, making it a relevant setting for exploring the resilience process among Deaf individuals. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, a technique that involves selecting individuals who possess characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2022). The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation commonly applied in phenomenological research rather than on statistical representativeness. Data collection was continued until no substantially new meanings, themes, or experiential descriptions emerged from subsequent interviews. After the fifth participant, the narratives consistently reflected similar patterns regarding accessibility barriers, psychological struggles, coping strategies, and resilience processes. Therefore, the researchers concluded that thematic saturation had been achieved and that additional interviews were unlikely to provide meaningful new insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) be active members of the Batir Isyarat Banjoemas (BIB) Community, (2) have experienced accessibility barriers in their everyday lives, and (3) be willing to participate in the study. Based on these criteria, five Deaf individuals were recruited, representing diverse backgrounds in terms of age, educational attainment, occupation, and hearing status. Some participants had prelingual deafness (i.e., deafness from birth), whereas others experienced hearing loss during childhood or adolescence. Despite these differences, all participants shared comparable experiences of encountering accessibility barriers across various domains of daily life. The diversity of participants' backgrounds enriched the data by capturing a wide range of lived experiences and resilience processes in response to accessibility barriers.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observation, whereas secondary data were gathered from community documents, organizational archives, and relevant scholarly literature. Semi-structured interviews were employed to provide participants with the flexibility to describe their lived experiences of accessibility barriers, social support, and the resilience processes they developed in response to these challenges. Participant observation was conducted during community activities to gain a deeper understanding of the social context and interpersonal dynamics among community members. Documentary sources were used to complement and

corroborate the findings derived from interviews and observations, thereby enhancing the richness and credibility of the data (Sugiyono, 2022).

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

No	Participant	Age (years)	Hearing status
1.	Rina	24 tahun	Prelingual Deaf (deaf since birth)
2.	Icha	25 tahun	Postlingual Deaf (hearing loss at age 9)
3.	Bella	27 tahun	Prelingual Deaf (deaf since birth)
4.	Riris	23 tahun	Postlingual Deaf (hearing loss during junior high school)
5.	Nisa	20 tahun	Hard of Hearing (residual hearing loss since early childhood)

Data were analyzed using the transcendental phenomenological approach developed by Moustakas (1994). The analysis began with epoche (bracketing), a process through which the researcher consciously set aside personal assumptions, prior knowledge, and subjective experiences in order to approach the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. The next stage involved horizontalization, in which significant statements related to participants' lived experiences were identified and treated with equal value. These statements were subsequently grouped into meaning units and essential themes. Following thematic development, the researcher constructed textural descriptions (what was experienced) and structural descriptions (how it was experienced) to capture the essence of Deaf individuals' resilience experiences in navigating accessibility barriers (Subandi, 2009). The final step involved synthesizing the textural and structural descriptions into a composite description that represented the shared essence of the phenomenon across participants.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, both source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed by comparing data obtained from interviews, participant observations, and documentary materials. In addition, member checking was conducted by reviewing the researcher's interpretations with participants to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their lived experiences. These procedures were undertaken to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phenomenological analysis of the interview, participant observation, and documentary data yielded four interconnected themes that describe the resilience process of Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers. These themes emerged through the identification of significant statements (horizontalization), the clustering of meaning units, and the synthesis of participants' lived experiences into essential thematic structures. To enhance the credibility of the findings, each theme was subsequently verified through methodological triangulation by comparing evidence across interviews, observations, and documentary sources.

The four themes collectively portray the dynamic process through which participants experienced, interpreted, and responded to accessibility barriers. Rather than representing isolated experiences, the themes illustrate an interconnected journey beginning with participants' experiences of deafness, accessibility barriers, and social stigma, followed by psychological struggles, the development of coping strategies and resilience resources, and culminating in self-transformation characterized by the acceptance of Deaf identity and advocacy awareness. Together, these themes demonstrate that resilience is not a fixed personal attribute but a dynamic,

multisystemic process that develops through continuous interactions between individuals and their social environments.

Table 2. Major Themes and Subthemes Identified Through Phenomenological Analysis

No	Main Theme	Subthemes
1.	Experiences of Being Deaf: Accessibility Barriers and Social Stigma	1a. Limited Accessibility; 1b. Feelings of Social Isolation; 1c. Negative Stereotypes
2.	Psychological Struggles: Emotional Distress and Identity Crisis	2a. Emotional Distress; 2b. Identity Crisis; 2c. Experiences of Psychological Wounds
3.	Development of Coping Strategies and Resilience Resources	3a. Positive Responses; 3b. Practical Coping Strategies; 3c. Navigation and Negotiation of Resources
4.	Self-Transformation toward Deaf Identity Acceptance and Advocacy Awareness	4a. Self-Acceptance; 4b. Meaning Reconstruction; 4c. Identity Development

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by comparing data obtained from in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentary materials. Triangulation was conducted for each emergent theme identified through the phenomenological analysis to ensure that the meanings derived from participants' narratives were consistently supported by observational evidence and relevant documentation. The convergence of evidence across these three data sources demonstrated a high degree of consistency, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the thematic interpretations and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the resilience experiences of Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers.

Table 3. Verification of Findings Through Methodological Triangulation

Themes	Interview	Observation	Documentary	Triangulation
Experiences of Being Deaf: Accessibility Barriers and Social Stigma	Participants described communication barriers, discrimination, and stigma encountered within their families, educational settings, workplaces, and public services.	Community members were observed relying on sign language, written communication, and assistance from hearing allies when interacting in public settings and community activities.	Community documents demonstrated ongoing sign language education, Deaf culture awareness programs, and accessibility advocacy initiatives.	Evidence from all three data sources consistently indicated that inaccessible environments were the primary source of participants' experiences of stigma and social isolation.
Psychological Dynamics: Emotional	Participants recounted experiences of	Participants appeared more confident and	Community records showed that the	The findings consistently demonstrated

Distress and Internal Struggles	sadness, disappointment, diminished self-confidence, and questioning their self-worth following discrimination and bullying.	expressive within the community than when describing experiences outside the community.	organization provided a safe environment for emotional support and shared experiences.	that accessibility barriers negatively affected psychological well-being, whereas community support mitigated these adverse experiences.
Developing Coping Strategies and Resilience Resources	Participants described using strategies such as speechreading, requesting clarification, utilizing communication technologies (e.g., Live Transcribe and smartphone Notes), and seeking support from family and peers.	Participants were observed actively using sign language, digital communication tools, and mutual assistance to overcome communication barriers.	Documentation highlighted sign language training, peer discussions, and community activities that strengthened social support networks.	Across all data sources, resilience emerged through the interaction of personal coping strategies, supportive relationships, and environmental resources, consistent with the multisystemic resilience framework.
Self-Transformation Toward Acceptance of Deaf Identity and Advocacy Awareness	Participants reported greater acceptance of their Deaf identity, increased self-confidence, and a stronger commitment to promoting Deaf culture and accessibility.	Participants actively engaged in community activities, discussions, and public education initiatives.	Documentary evidence showed members' participation in sign language campaigns, seminars, and celebrations of the International Day of Sign Languages.	The triangulated findings demonstrated that resilience evolved toward self-transformation, reflected in identity acceptance, personal empowerment, and advocacy awareness.

The results of the methodological triangulation demonstrated that all themes identified through the interview data were consistently supported by evidence from participant observations and documentary materials. No substantial discrepancies were found across the three data collection methods. Minor variations reflected differences in participants' individual backgrounds and life experiences rather than inconsistencies in the findings. These converging sources of evidence strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the thematic interpretations, indicating that the identified themes provide a robust representation of the resilience process experienced by Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers within the Batir Isyarat Banjoemas (BIB) Community.

Drawing on the phenomenological analysis and the verification of findings through methodological triangulation, four major themes emerged to describe the resilience process of Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers. These interconnected themes represent a dynamic progression of participants' lived experiences, beginning with encounters with accessibility barriers and social stigma, followed by psychological struggles, the development of coping strategies through the mobilization of resilience resources, and culminating in self-transformation characterized by the acceptance of Deaf identity and the emergence of advocacy awareness. Each theme is presented in the following sections and interpreted within the framework of multisystemic resilience.

Theme 1: Experiences of Being Deaf: Accessibility Barriers and Social Stigma

For the participants, being Deaf profoundly shaped their everyday social experiences. Communication barriers extended beyond hearing loss itself, affecting their ability to understand spoken interactions, access information, and participate fully in daily activities. These challenges became more pronounced in social environments that lacked accessible communication. Participants consistently described encountering accessibility barriers across various aspects of their lives, with the most significant challenges arising in educational settings and public services.

One participant described that healthcare settings posed the greatest accessibility challenge due to the absence of effective communication support.

"The biggest barrier for me is at the hospital. In other public places, I can usually find ways to manage, but at the hospital I always need someone to accompany me. It's even more difficult when healthcare staff wear face masks because I can't read their lips or fully understand what they're saying." (Riris, Interview, April 7, 2026)

This account illustrates that the barriers experienced by participants were not solely attributable to hearing loss itself but were largely shaped by environments that failed to provide equitable communication access (Kurniadi et al., 2025). Beyond communication barriers, participants also described experiencing various forms of social stigma, discrimination, and differential treatment that led them to feel marginalized and less accepted within their social environments.

Participants also described experiencing stigma and discrimination within both their families and the broader community.

"My family believed that because I am Deaf, I couldn't go to university. They thought it would be better for me to learn sewing instead of pursuing higher education, or simply get married. In the community, people were also reluctant to interact with me; most of them kept their distance." (Icha, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Similarly, another participant described unequal treatment in academic settings, where assumptions about her abilities limited her opportunities to contribute.

"During group assignments, I was not given responsibilities equal to those of my classmates. While others were assigned more challenging tasks, I wasn't, even though I knew I was capable of doing them. They assumed that I wouldn't be able to handle more difficult work." (Rina, Interview, April 7, 2026)

These narratives reveal that participants encountered multiple forms of social stigma, including verbal bullying, stereotypes questioning their ability to pursue higher education or employment, unequal opportunities in educational settings, and social exclusion. Such experiences reinforced feelings of marginalization and reflected how negative societal attitudes, rather than deafness itself, became significant barriers to their participation in everyday life.

Theme 2: Psychological Dynamics: Emotional Distress and Internal Struggles

The accessibility barriers encountered by participants affected not only their social participation but also their psychological well-being. Participants described experiencing a range of emotional responses, including sadness, disappointment, anger, frustration, diminished self-confidence, and persistent self-doubt when confronted with discrimination or communication failures in their everyday interactions.

One participant reflected on how repeated experiences of social rejection led her to question her own worth.

"When I experienced social rejection, I blamed my condition and even questioned myself: 'Am I not worthy?' and 'Is something wrong with me?'" (Icha, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Participants' psychological distress was not triggered by a single incident but rather accumulated through repeated everyday experiences of exclusion. Being misunderstood, constantly having to adapt to hearing environments, feeling left behind, receiving unequal treatment, and repeatedly encountering stigma gradually contributed to emotional burdens and internal psychological wounds (Campelo & Silva, 2025).

Another participant described how prolonged bullying during her school years profoundly affected her emotional well-being.

"There was a time when I reached my lowest point because I was bullied by my classmates from elementary through junior high school. They constantly bullied me verbally, and sometimes I even experienced physical violence. Every day at school, I was bullied because of my deafness. I often blamed myself, asking, 'Why do I have to be like this?' and 'Why can't I hear?' I cried over it for days." (Nisa, Interview, April 7, 2026)

At this stage, participants experienced intense internal struggles as they attempted to come to terms with their deafness. Their narratives revealed an ongoing process of negotiating feelings of difference, rejection, and self-worth while living in environments that frequently reinforced the perception that they were different from others.

Theme 3: Developing Coping Strategies and Resilience Resources

Following experiences of stigma, social barriers, and psychological distress, participants did not remain defined by these adversities. Instead, they gradually developed various coping strategies that enabled them to continue functioning and navigating their everyday lives. Rather than passively accepting their circumstances, they actively sought ways to overcome communication barriers and adapt to environments that were not fully accessible (Ungar, 2021).

One participant explained that she had learned to anticipate communication challenges by preparing multiple strategies before entering hearing environments.

"Since the beginning, I've faced many challenges, so I developed my own survival strategies. Before entering hearing environments where people don't understand Deaf culture, I always think about how to survive and avoid miscommunication. I prepare Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, and even more strategies so that I'm ready for whatever challenges I might encounter." (Bella, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Another participant described relying on interpersonal communication strategies to reduce misunderstandings in daily interactions.

"I usually ask my friends to repeat what was said so I can understand the conversation. When communicating verbally, I speak slowly because I still have some residual hearing and can adjust the volume of my voice." (Nisa, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Participants also described using assistive technologies to compensate for communication barriers in public settings.

"I usually use the Live Transcribe application when someone is speaking. If my voice isn't heard clearly when ordering food or drinks in public, I use the Notes application on my phone to communicate by typing." (Rina, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Across participants, three broad categories of coping strategies emerged: personal strategies, relational strategies, and the utilization of external resources. At the personal level, participants developed practical ways to adapt to everyday situations, including speechreading, choosing seats at the front of classrooms, positioning themselves to maintain visual contact with speakers, requesting clarification, using communication technologies, regulating their speaking pace, and preparing themselves before entering public environments (Masten, 2001). Relational resources also played an important role in sustaining participants' resilience. Family members, friends, and the Deaf community provided emotional encouragement, practical assistance, and reassurance that enabled participants to cope with everyday challenges.

One participant reflected on the importance of family support in maintaining hope despite repeated obstacles.

"One thing I always tell myself is, 'Life keeps moving forward.' My parents have always supported me. Even though I faced many challenges at school because I was the only Deaf student, and even though there were many obstacles along the way, I kept moving forward, no matter how difficult the journey became." (Icha, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Beyond helping participants cope with adversity, these strategies gradually contributed to positive psychological growth. Several participants described developing more adaptive ways of thinking by accepting that life must continue, viewing setbacks as opportunities for learning, and transforming painful experiences into motivation for personal growth (Fuad & Faishol, 2022).

These findings reflect two key resilience processes within Michael Ungar's (2021) multisystemic resilience framework. First, participants demonstrated persistence by continuing to pursue their education, employment, and social participation despite persistent accessibility barriers. Second, they exhibited adaptation by continuously modifying their communication strategies and everyday behaviors to function effectively within environments that remained only partially inclusive. These findings suggest that resilience was expressed not only through perseverance but also through participants' capacity to actively navigate available resources and adjust their interactions in response to environmental demands.

Theme 4: Self-Transformation Toward Acceptance of Deaf Identity and Advocacy Awareness

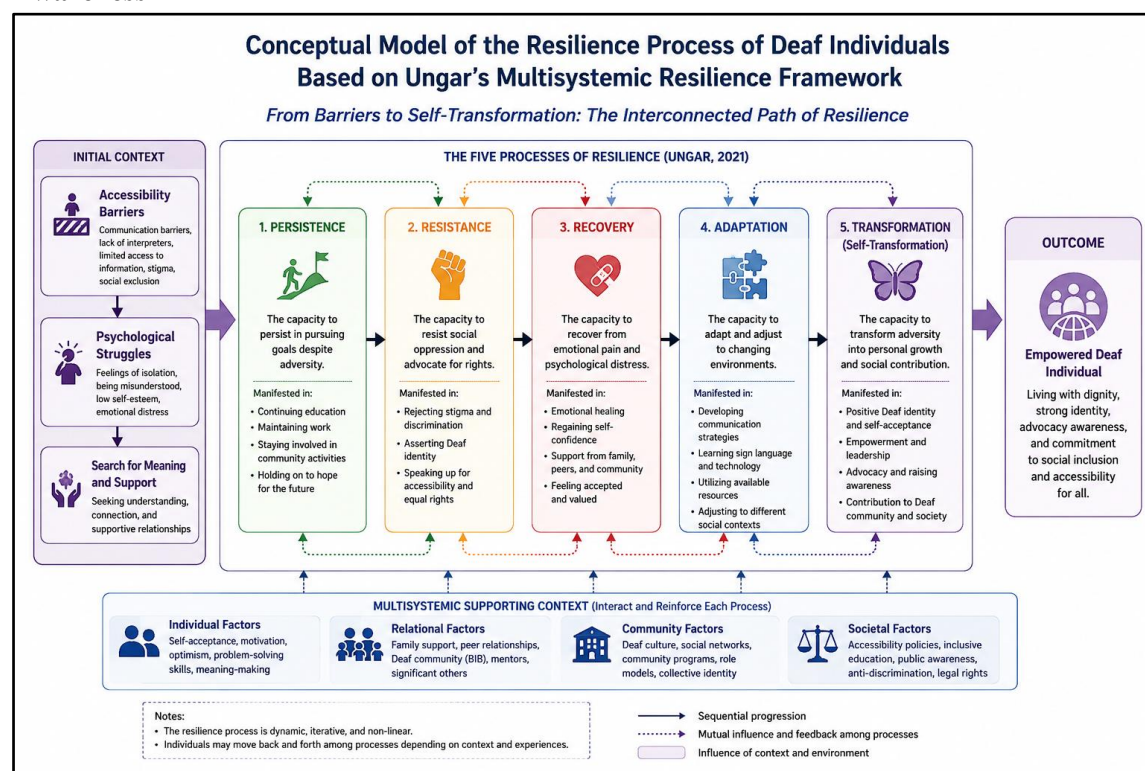


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

At this stage, participants no longer focused solely on adapting to the challenges of their environments. Instead, they began to develop a stronger sense of self, characterized by greater self-awareness, acceptance, and purpose. Their narratives reflected a gradual process of becoming (Parse, 1998). Their narratives reflected a gradual process of becoming, in which experiences that had once been perceived as limitations were reinterpreted as meaningful aspects of their identities.

One participant described how observing her parents' perseverance inspired her to accept her deafness and continue pursuing her aspirations.

"I believe that everyone has their own destiny, strengths, and limitations. Eventually, I learned to make peace with my situation, even though it was incredibly difficult. When I saw how hard my parents worked to give me the same opportunities as other children, without ever giving up, I realized there was no reason for me to lose hope. Even with my hearing limitations, I can still live my life and pursue my dreams, although my path may be different." (Nisa, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Another participant described self-acceptance as a gradual process that transformed the way she perceived herself.

"The process happened little by little. I began learning to accept myself. I focused on what I could do instead of what I couldn't. Gradually, I became more confident and more comfortable with who I am. This is who I am, and I know I can continue moving forward." (Rina, Interview, April 7, 2026)

A prominent aspect of this transformation was the development of self-acceptance. Participants no longer viewed deafness as a deficiency that needed to be concealed but instead

came to recognize it as an integral and valued part of their identity. One participant described family support as the foundation of her determination to persevere.

"My belief keeps me going. I refuse to let my circumstances defeat me because my family has always supported me. If I gave up, they would be the ones who would suffer the most. Their support is the fuel that gives me the strength to keep moving forward every day." (Riris, Interview, April 7, 2026)

Another participant reflected on how her painful experiences ultimately led to a deeper understanding of herself and inspired her commitment to educating others about Deaf culture.

"I realized that the motivation to rise again is not simply about being strong, but about discovering the answer to 'why' behind everything that happens in life. I also learned to accept that being Deaf is part of my identity. I came to understand that communication is not only about hearing with our ears but also about understanding with our hearts. That was the moment when I began transforming my pain into a sense of purpose." (Icha, Interview, April 7, 2026)

These findings indicate a process of self-meaning reconstruction in which participants consciously redefined how they perceived themselves and their lived experiences. Rather than allowing their identities to be shaped primarily by societal stigma, participants gradually developed more authentic self-understandings grounded in their own experiences. This finding is consistent with Charmaz's (1995) perspective that identity can be reconstructed through the reinterpretation of lived experience. From the perspective of Michael Ungar's (2021) multisystemic resilience framework, this transformation reflects a shift in consciousness in which adversity is no longer perceived solely as a burden but as a source of meaning that contributes to identity development. This process involves reinterpreting past experiences, integrating emotional challenges, and constructing a more meaningful future orientation. In this sense, resilience extends beyond the capacity to cope with adversity; it becomes a transformative process through which individuals reconstruct their identities and derive meaning from their experiences. This interpretation is also consistent with Frankl's (1992) theory that meaning can emerge through suffering, enabling individuals to transform painful experiences into sources of purpose, hope, and personal growth.

From the perspective of Michael Ungar's (2021) multisystemic resilience framework, this theme illustrates three interconnected resilience processes: resistance, recovery, and transformation. Resistance was reflected in participants' rejection of negative stereotypes and their refusal to define themselves according to societal stigma. Recovery was evident in their gradual psychological healing following experiences of discrimination, bullying, and emotional distress. Transformation emerged as participants reconstructed positive identities, strengthened their sense of personal agency, and became increasingly committed to promoting Deaf culture, accessibility, and social advocacy. These findings demonstrate that resilience extends beyond adaptation, culminating in a process of personal transformation that empowers individuals to create meaning from adversity and contribute to broader social change.

Table 4. Summary of Findings Based on the Multisystemic Resilience Processes

Resilience Process	Research Findings
Persistence	Participants continued pursuing education, employment, and social participation despite experiencing persistent accessibility barriers.
Resistance	Participants rejected negative stereotypes, discrimination, and societal stigma associated with Deaf identity.

Recovery	Participants gradually recovered from experiences of discrimination, social exclusion, bullying, and psychological distress through emotional support and positive coping.
Adaptation	Participants developed diverse communication strategies and utilized personal, relational, and environmental resources to navigate inaccessible environments.
Transformation	Participants reconstructed the meaning of their lived experiences, embraced Deaf identity, strengthened their sense of self, and developed greater awareness of advocacy and social inclusion.

Overall, the findings indicate that resilience among Deaf individuals is a dynamic and multisystemic process. Rather than being determined solely by individual characteristics, resilience emerged through the interaction of personal capacities with supportive family relationships, community networks, and broader social environments that enabled participants to access the resources necessary for positive adaptation and well-being. These findings support Ungar's (2021) perspective that resilience is shaped through continuous interactions between individuals and the multiple systems that influence their lives. Although the phenomenological analysis generated four major themes, these themes collectively reflected the five resilience processes proposed in the multisystemic resilience framework: persistence, resistance, recovery, adaptation, and transformation Ungar (2021). Rather than emerging as discrete or sequential stages, these resilience processes appeared as interconnected and overlapping dimensions throughout participants' lived experiences. This finding suggests that resilience among Deaf individuals is fluid, multidimensional, and continuously constructed through the interaction between personal agency and environmental resources.

The findings further demonstrate that resilience develops as a gradual multisystemic process. Beyond enabling participants to cope with accessibility barriers, resilience contributed to the development of a more positive Deaf identity, strengthened personal empowerment, and fostered a growing commitment to promoting accessibility, social inclusion, and advocacy within the Deaf community.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that resilience among Deaf individuals in navigating accessibility barriers is a dynamic and multisystemic process that develops through continuous interactions between personal, relational, and environmental factors. Resilience was expressed not only through participants' ability to cope with communication barriers, social stigma, and limited access to information, but also through their capacity to adapt, mobilize social resources, and construct a positive Deaf identity. The findings further indicate that family support, peer relationships, and community engagement play essential roles in facilitating the five resilience processes proposed in Michael Ungar's multisystemic resilience framework: persistence, resistance, recovery, adaptation, and transformation.

This study contributes to the resilience literature by demonstrating that accessibility barriers do not inevitably result in psychological vulnerability. Instead, when supported by enabling social systems, these experiences can foster personal empowerment, identity acceptance, meaning-making, and advocacy awareness among Deaf individuals. The findings also extend the application of the multisystemic resilience framework to the lived experiences of Deaf individuals

in the Indonesian context, highlighting the importance of examining resilience as a dynamic interaction between individuals and their social environments.

From a practical perspective, these findings underscore the need to strengthen inclusive environments through equitable communication access, increased availability of sign language interpretation services, community-based support systems, and greater public awareness of Deaf culture. Such efforts may contribute to enhancing the psychological well-being, social participation, and overall quality of life of Deaf individuals. Furthermore, the findings provide important implications for inclusive guidance and counseling practice by emphasizing the value of interventions that build individual strengths while simultaneously fostering supportive family, community, and institutional environments. Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The findings were derived from a relatively small number of participants within a single Deaf community, which may limit their transferability to other contexts. Future research is encouraged to explore the resilience experiences of Deaf individuals across diverse cultural settings and community contexts, as well as to examine how multisystemic resilience develops across different stages of the life course and forms of accessibility support.

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