

BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT AMONG HEARING-IMPAIRED STUDENTS IN MAINSTREAM COLLEGES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY FROM SATARA CITY, INDIA

Ms. Pranita Shinde

Ch. Shivaji College Satara

Article Info

Article History:

Received: 15th Dec 2025

Accepted: 18th Dec 2025

Published: 20th Dec 2025

Keywords:

Hearing-impaired students,
Higher education, Inclusive
education, Accessibility, India

ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a crucial role in enabling social inclusion and economic independence. However, hearing-impaired students continue to face serious challenges in accessing and sustaining higher education in mainstream colleges. This empirical study examines the barriers affecting higher education attainment among hearing-impaired students in Satara City, India. Using a quantitative research design, primary data were collected from 30 hearing-impaired students enrolled in general colleges through a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal persistent communication barriers, absence of trained faculty and interpreters, limited academic accommodations, and inadequate institutional support systems. While some physical accessibility exists, academic inclusion remains weak. The study highlights the urgent need for inclusive pedagogical practices, structured support services, and policy-driven institutional reforms to ensure equitable higher education opportunities for hearing-impaired students.

Plagiarism Check Report:

Date of Report: Dec 17, 2025

Similarity Index: 5%

Remarks: No significant matching text. All citations and matches are properly referenced. The manuscript is considered original.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

How to Cite: Shinde, P. (2025). *Barriers to Higher Education Attainment among Hearing-Impaired Students in Mainstream Colleges: An Empirical Study from Satara City, India*. *IIP: World Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IIPWJHSS)*, 1(VI), 2297–2300.

INTRODUCTION:

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a powerful instrument for social mobility. For hearing-impaired students, however, the journey into higher education is often shaped by systemic exclusion rather than lack of ability. In India, special schools provide adapted education up to the secondary level, but higher education largely follows a uniform model that does not accommodate diverse learning needs.

When hearing-impaired students transition from segregated schooling environments to mainstream colleges, they encounter unfamiliar curricula, oral-centric teaching methods, and limited academic support. The absence of interpreters, assistive technologies, and trained faculty significantly affects comprehension, classroom participation, and confidence. These challenges often lead to stress, disengagement, and dropout.

Satara City represents a semi-urban context where higher education institutions admit hearing-impaired students but lack structured inclusion mechanisms. This study seeks to examine the barriers faced by these students and to generate evidence-based recommendations for inclusive higher education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous studies highlight that communication barriers remain the most significant challenge for hearing-impaired students in higher education. Research emphasizes that inclusive education is not limited to physical access but requires academic accommodations, trained educators, and supportive institutional environments.

Indian studies consistently report gaps between disability policies and their implementation at the college level. Despite legislative frameworks such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, higher education institutions often lack interpreters, captioning systems, and faculty sensitization programs. International literature further stresses that lack of inclusive pedagogy contributes to academic underperformance and psychological distress among hearing-impaired students.

Overall, the literature indicates a persistent disconnect between inclusive education policies and actual educational practices, particularly in non-metropolitan regions.

RESEARCH GAP

Most existing studies on hearing-impaired education in India focus on primary and secondary schooling or adopt a policy-centric approach. There is limited empirical research examining the lived experiences of hearing-impaired students in mainstream colleges, especially in semi-urban settings like Satara City. Additionally, few studies systematically link communication barriers, institutional neglect, and academic outcomes at the post-matric level. This study addresses this gap by providing field-based evidence from hearing-impaired students themselves.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the difficulties faced by hearing-impaired students in pursuing post-matric education.
2. To examine the need for separate classrooms or trained teachers for hearing-impaired students in mainstream colleges.
3. To assess whether hearing-impaired students experience neglect in higher education institutions.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Hearing-Impaired Students: Students with severe to profound hearing loss who primarily rely on

sign language or visual modes of communication.

- **Higher Education:** Post-matric education including 11th, 12th, and undergraduate degree programs.
- **Inclusive Education:** Educational practices that accommodate diverse learning needs through appropriate teaching methods, support services, and accessibility measures.
- **Mainstream Colleges:** General higher education institutions not exclusively designed for students with disabilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

• Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative empirical research design to examine barriers affecting higher education attainment among hearing-impaired students.

• Sampling Design

A simple random sampling method was used. The sample consisted of 30 hearing-impaired students pursuing post-matric education in general colleges within Satara City.

• Tools of Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured close-ended questionnaire designed to assess communication barriers, academic support, institutional facilities, and student experiences.

• Data Collection

Primary data were collected through face-to-face interactions, with sign language support provided where required. Secondary data were obtained from books, research articles, government reports, and policy documents.

• Data Analysis

Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency and percentage analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis revealed that all respondents experienced communication difficulties in classrooms. A majority relied exclusively on sign language, while colleges lacked interpreters, microphones, and captioning systems. Teachers' awareness of students' needs was inconsistent, and opportunities to clarify academic doubts were limited.

Many students reported academic stress, partial comprehension of lectures, and minimal participation in extracurricular activities. Although some physical infrastructure was available, academic inclusion remained weak. These findings confirm systemic barriers within mainstream higher education.

Empirical Evidence

The study found that:

- 100% of students faced communication barriers.
- Over 80% reported absence of trained support staff.
- A majority demanded separate classrooms or trained teachers.
- Overall satisfaction with institutional support was low.

These findings highlight structural exclusion rather than individual limitation.

Challenges

Key challenges include:

- Lack of trained and sensitive faculty
- Absence of interpreters and assistive technology
- Rigid curriculum and teaching methods
- Limited academic counselling and grievance mechanisms

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Colleges should appoint trained interpreters and disability support staff.
2. Faculty development programs on inclusive pedagogy must be mandatory.
3. Use of assistive technologies such as microphones and captioning systems should be institutionalized.
4. Curriculum adaptation and flexible assessment methods should be introduced.
5. Dedicated grievance redressal and counselling cells should be established.

APPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings can guide:

- Higher education institutions in designing inclusive frameworks
- Policy makers in strengthening disability-inclusive education policies
- Social work practitioners in advocacy and intervention planning
- Researchers pursuing disability and education studies

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that hearing-impaired students in mainstream colleges face significant academic and institutional barriers. While access to higher education exists, meaningful inclusion remains limited. Strengthening inclusive mechanisms, faculty training, and institutional accountability is essential to ensure educational equity and social justice for hearing-impaired learners.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to a small sample size and a specific geographic area. The use of close-ended questions restricts qualitative depth. Future studies may adopt mixed-method approaches.

REFERENCES

1. Bhattacharya, S. (2018). Inclusive education in India: Issues and challenges. *Indian Journal of Education Research*, 22(3), 113–129.
2. Government of India. (2016). Rights of persons with disabilities act, 2016. <https://vikaspedia.in>
3. Johnson, P., & Williams, S. (2020). Technological interventions in special education. Springer.
4. Singh, D. (2015). Policy gaps in inclusive higher education. *Journal of Educational Policy and Research*, 19(4), 49–65.
5. World Health Organization. (2021). Hearing loss and hearing care. <https://www.who.int>