

# Research concludes women have higher levels of personal growth among deaf people

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Amaia Jauregi-Orbe. Photographer: MItxi. UPV/EHU. Credit: MItxi. UPV/EHU

One of the features of the deaf community is that it is highly diverse. As well as including people of different ages and genders, the members of the community do not all share the same type of deafness or form of communication. Firstly, the time of onset of deafness and the degree of

hearing loss vary greatly. And secondly, not everybody uses sign and oral language in the same way. All these aspects have a bearing on the well-being of deaf people. However, few studies specifically analyze the effect of each one.

The Ph.D. thesis, defended by Amaia Jauregi-Orbe at the Faculty of Education—Bilbao, makes a significant contribution to the scientific literature. So far there has been no record of any other research of this magnitude analyzing all these factors and exploring their relationship with so many variables, thus allowing psychosocial well-being (self-concept, [self-esteem](#), perception of social support and loneliness, etc.) to be measured.

"I set out to make a general diagnosis designed to contribute towards approaching the reality of [deaf people](#) and making it visible. The work provides data with the potential to enrich the academic debate," she said.

One of the pieces of evidence revealed by the study is that women have higher levels of personal growth than men. This is a fact that has surprised the researcher herself, given that her initial hypothesis suggested the opposite. Jauregi believes that this may be due to the fact that "the associative fabric of the deaf community offers women empowerment tools that allow them to strengthen their capacities and autonomy."

Moreover, the study also identified significant differences linked to age. People under 30 have higher self-esteem, greater perceived social support and greater personal growth than people in older age groups.

"The reasons behind this need to be explored now. I believe that one of the important variables may be the fact that they have received an inclusive education," she explained.

In relation to this hypothesis, the results of the thesis indicate that prelingually deaf people (those who lost their hearing before acquiring oral language) who were educated in mainstream schools have higher self-esteem than those who were educated in special schools. Another remarkable result linked to the educational context is that well-being varies depending on the level of education achieved.

The group of people with a university education have a higher level of self-esteem, personal growth and social well-being than the group that achieved primary education or lower.

According to the conclusions of the thesis, other factors, such as linguistic-cultural or occupational factors, for example, do not seem to have a direct bearing on the psychosocial well-being of deaf people. However, the researcher considers that the data could be read differently if the intersectionality of the variables were analyzed. "To gain a better understanding of the reality, studies need to be carried out in the future to explore the correlation between the different factors."

## **Large sample and adapted assessment instruments**

The [research design](#) and procedure are two of the strong points in the research, as all the challenges involved in research into deaf people have been addressed.

The results of the Ph.D. thesis were obtained after analyzing the responses of 166 deaf adults of different sexes, ages, types of deafness and linguistic and cultural characteristics. It was ensured that the group of participants was representative of the diversity of the deaf community and that the evaluation instruments were adapted to the heterogeneous needs of the participants.

Provided by University of the Basque Country

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