

Introduction

Communication challenges caused by hearing loss can lead to social withdrawal and a decline in self-esteem. Adapting to these difficulties requires understanding and acceptance, which can be highly challenging without support from both professionals and one's immediate social environment.

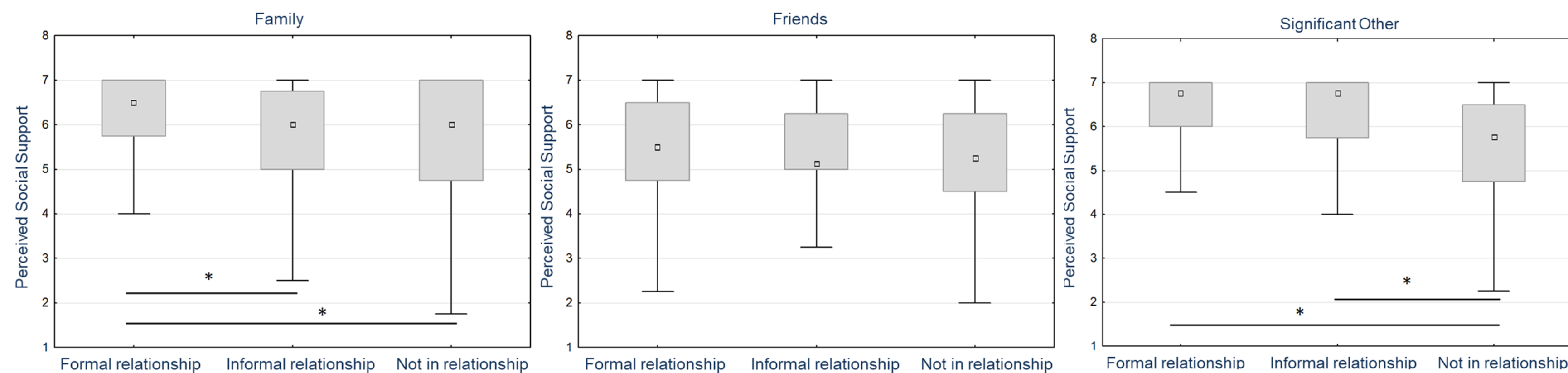


Figure 1. Perceived social support based on the patient's type of relationship

Objectives

To examine how adults who decided to have a cochlear implant (CI) surgery perceive social support.

To examine the relationship between perceived support and sociodemographic variables such as gender, age, education level, marital status (partner), place of residence, and type of hearing loss (bilateral profound hearing loss, bilateral profound hearing loss implanted already unilaterally, single sided deafness, asymmetric hearing loss, partial deafness).

Material and Method

The study included 541 patients scheduled for cochlear implant surgery at the Institute of Hearing Physiology and Pathology. Women constituted 50.6% and men 49.4% of the study group. The age of the patients on the day of examination ranged from 18 to 87 years. The assessment tool was the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support – the questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of social support from three sources: Family, Friends and, Significant Other.

Results

- The results indicate a high level of perceived social support among patients with hearing loss (mean score of 5.80 on a scale of 1 to 7).
- Perceived social support among the respondents was diverse in terms of the source of this support ($\chi^2(2) = 276.8; p < 0.001$). Post-hoc analyzes showed that the greatest sense of support is identified with a significant other, second – with family and then – with friends.
- The overall score of perceived social support was significantly lower in patients who were not in marital or partner relationship ($H = 24.1; p < 0,001$). Figure 1 presents the results of perceived social support based on the patient's type of relationship, categorized into three sources: Family, Friends, and Significant Other. Significant differences are indicated by asterisks.
- In addition, analyses showed that patients living in rural areas perceived greater support than those living in urban areas ($U = 28495.0; p = 0.049$).
- Gender, age, education level, and type of hearing loss did not significantly influence the perceived social support among patients scheduled for cochlear implant surgery.

Conclusion

Individuals with profound hearing loss, undergoing CI surgery report high level of perceived social support especially from significant persons in their lives and family. This suggests that these patients have a valuable coping resource to help them navigate the challenging adaptation process to new hearing with a cochlear implant. The findings also allow us to hypothesize that perceived social support may play a role in influencing patients' decisions to decide for CI surgery. Assessing perceived support at the time of diagnosis provides an opportunity to develop tailored assistance strategies that align with the patient's needs.

References

Witkowska, J., Lorens, A., Obrycka, A., Fludra, M., Skarżyński, H. (2023). Perceptions of social support by adults with postlingual hearing loss who came for cochlear implant surgery. *Nowa Audiofologia*, 12(2), 43-53. <https://doi.org/10.17431/na/169791>.