



## **Functioning and Disability in Adults with Hearing Loss**

The preparatory studies in the ICF Core Sets for Hearing Loss  
project

av

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### **Akademisk avhandling**

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## Abstract

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Hearing loss (HL) is a health condition that affects more than 360 million people worldwide. The findings from previous research point at the adverse relationship between adults with hearing loss and important aspects of everyday life such as social relations, communication and work-related tasks. However, the overall picture concerning the functional and disabling aspects of adults with HL remains incomplete. To identify the functional and disabling aspects, a conceptual and/or theoretical framework is required. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) offer a multidimensional framework based on bio-psycho-social assumptions about health. In previous research investigations in which the ICF has been used, some utility problems in the linking (relating) of data to the classification have been highlighted.

The aims of the present thesis were to explore the areas of functioning and disability of relevance for adults with HL and to explore how audiological data can be linked to ICF. The aims were explored by applying the methodology of the 'interdisciplinary evidence-based approach to functioning and disability in adults with HL', acknowledging the merging of three perspectives designated the Researcher, the Patient and the Professional perspective. Four studies that focus on the three perspectives were conducted. All results were linked to the ICF classification. The results were merged into a model designated 'the integrative model of functioning and disability in adults with HL'.

When the three perspectives were linked, the results revealed several aspects of relevance for the target group. Bodily (individual) dimensions, such as hearing, auditory perception, memory, attention, energy, and emotions, were acknowledged. Aspects of everyday life such as conversations, the usage of communication strategies, family relationships and work, were highlighted. Influential environmental factors, such as noise, assistive technical devices, the design of public buildings, social support and the attitudes of people in the environment, were also identified. In conclusion, *interactions* seemed to be vital as almost all identified aspects highlighted or were tied to this dimension of human functioning. Further, concerning the linking of the data it was acknowledged that the ICF and the research area of adult HL do not fully comply. Suggestions for improvements in future revisions of the ICF were highlighted and discussed.

*Keywords:* hearing loss, adults, ICF, classification, functioning, disability, linking.

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