



Deaf Individuals' Meaning in the Experience of Managing Anger Through the Maternal Reflective Method

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<p>Abstract: This study examines the meanings Deaf individuals construct in their experiences of managing anger through the Maternal Reflective Method. This topic is important because Deaf individuals often face communication barriers that influence emotional regulation, particularly anger, yet counseling approaches that integrate language development and emotional reflection remain limited. This study assumes that reflective and language-based learning experiences contribute positively to emotional awareness and anger management among Deaf individuals. Using a qualitative exploratory design, four Deaf participants with long-term experience in the Maternal Reflective Method were involved. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that anger emerges mainly from experiences of misunderstanding, social exclusion, and communication difficulties. The Maternal Reflective Method helps participants recognize emotional triggers, reflect on their feelings, and reconstruct anger as an emotion that can be understood and managed adaptively. These results highlight the significance of reflective counseling approaches that are sensitive to language and communication needs in supporting emotional regulation among Deaf individuals.</p>		
<p>KEYWORDS: <i>Anger Management, deaf individuals, maternal reflective method, meaning</i></p>		
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INTRODUCTION

Deaf individuals frequently encounter emotional challenges that stem from communication barriers, limited access to language, and experiences of social misunderstanding. One emotional response that often emerges from these conditions is anger, which may manifest as frustration, withdrawal, or intense emotional reactions. Recent developments in counseling and Deaf studies emphasize the importance of culturally and linguistically responsive approaches that acknowledge Deaf individuals not merely as persons with hearing loss, but as individuals with unique linguistic, social, and emotional experiences (Marschark & Spencer, 2016; Leigh et al., 2020). Within this perspective, emotional regulation is understood as a process closely related to language development and meaning-making.

Previous studies have shown that limited access to effective communication can hinder emotional expression and self-regulation among Deaf individuals, increasing the risk of unresolved anger and emotional distress (Bat-Chava & Deignan, 2018; Fellingner et al., 2019). Counseling interventions for Deaf individuals have increasingly incorporated visual communication, sign language, and narrative approaches to support emotional understanding (Glickman, 2017). However, research that explicitly examines reflective, language-based educational methods as tools for emotional regulation—particularly anger management—remains limited. Most existing studies focus on therapeutic techniques or general coping strategies, leaving a gap in understanding how pedagogical methods grounded in language reflection contribute to emotional meaning-making.

The Maternal Reflective Method, originally developed to support language acquisition in Deaf education, emphasizes dialogical interaction, reflection on lived experiences, and the co-construction of meaning through language. While its effectiveness in supporting cognitive and linguistic development has been documented, its potential contribution to emotional regulation and anger management has not been sufficiently explored in empirical research. This gap highlights the need for studies that investigate how Deaf individuals interpret and manage emotions through reflective language-based learning experiences.

This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the meanings Deaf individuals construct in their experiences of managing anger through the Maternal Reflective Method. By adopting a qualitative exploratory approach, this research aims to contribute to the development of counseling science by providing insight into how reflective educational practices can support emotional awareness and regulation among Deaf individuals. The objective of this study is to understand the subjective meanings of anger, the processes of emotional reflection, and the role of the Maternal Reflective Method in facilitating adaptive anger management among Deaf individuals.

METHODS

Design

This study adopted a qualitative, exploratory research design to examine the meanings Deaf individuals construct in their experiences of managing anger through the Maternal Reflective Method. This design was chosen because it is well-suited to exploring subjective experiences and reflective meaning-making processes that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative approaches. The qualitative, exploratory design enabled an in-depth, systematic understanding of how participants interpret and manage anger, ensuring coherence among the research objectives, design, and analytic approach.

Participants

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling consistent with the qualitative exploratory research design. This approach was employed to ensure the selection of individuals who could provide rich, reflective, and experience-based accounts relevant to the study's focus on anger management through the Method Maternal Reflective (MMR).

Inclusion criteria were: (1) Deaf individuals who experienced hearing loss from birth or before language acquisition; (2) individuals who had received educational exposure to the Maternal Reflective Method; (3) individuals who were able to communicate using sign language, written language, oral language, or a combination of these modalities; and (4) individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. Individuals who did not meet these criteria or were unable to engage in reflective communication were excluded.

The study involved four Deaf participants. The sample size was determined by data saturation, i.e., when no new meaningful information emerged from subsequent interviews. This criterion is commonly applied in qualitative exploratory research to ensure the depth and adequacy of the data rather than their representativeness. Participants varied in age and gender and were recruited from educational and community contexts for Deaf individuals in Indonesia, providing sufficient diversity to support the exploration of subjective meaning-making processes.

Participants were recruited through educational institutions and Deaf community networks. Before data collection, all participants received a comprehensive explanation of the study objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations using accessible communication methods. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles and received approval from the relevant institutional ethics authority. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying information. Only participant characteristics essential for understanding the research context are reported in this section.

Instruments

Data were collected using qualitative instruments selected for their relevance to the study's exploratory aims and for their suitability for capturing subjective experiences of anger management among Deaf individuals. The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore participants' experiences, reflections, and meaning-making processes related to managing anger through the Method Maternal Reflective (MMR). The interview questions focused on emotional awareness, sources of anger, reflective communication experiences, and strategies for regulating anger.

The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for probing and clarification while maintaining consistency across participants. Interviews were conducted using communication modes appropriate to each participant, including sign language, written communication, oral communication, or a combination of these modalities. To ensure accessibility and clarity, the interview guide was adapted linguistically to align with the participants' communication preferences and cultural context. Content validity of the interview guide was established through expert judgment by counseling and Deaf education specialists, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and the Method Maternal Reflective principles.

In addition to interviews, field notes served as a supporting instrument to document nonverbal expressions, emotional responses, and contextual information observed during data collection. These notes complemented the interview data by providing additional contextual depth and supporting the interpretation of participants' reflective experiences. All instruments were used solely to facilitate an understanding of what was explored and how data were obtained, without generating quantitative scores or measurements.

Procedure

The research procedure was implemented in a structured sequence aligned with the qualitative exploratory design. Participants were identified and invited through educational institutions and Deaf community networks. After initial contact, prospective participants received a comprehensive explanation of the study's aims, procedures, and ethical considerations using communication methods accessible to each individual. Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained before data collection.

Data collection was conducted in environments familiar and comfortable for the participants, such as educational or community settings. The primary data collection activity consisted of individual, in-depth semi-structured interviews designed to explore participants' experiences of managing anger through the Method Maternal Reflective. Interviews were conducted using communication modes appropriate to each participant, including sign language, written communication, oral communication, or a combination of these methods. Each interview followed the prepared interview guide while allowing flexibility for clarification and reflective elaboration.

As the study did not involve an experimental intervention, the Method Maternal Reflective was explored as a lived, educational, and communicative experience rather than administered as a structured treatment. To support consistency and data quality, interviews were conducted following the same procedural framework, and reflective prompts were used to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences. Field notes were taken during and after interviews to capture contextual information and non-verbal expressions relevant to the reflective process.

Ethical principles were upheld throughout the research process. Participant confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying information from all research records. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. All data were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards and received approval from the appropriate institutional ethics authority. This procedure provides a clear and coherent overview of how the study was carried out while maintaining respect for participant autonomy and data integrity.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, selected to ensure a systematic, transparent, and objective examination of participants' verbal and reflective expressions in accordance with the study's qualitative exploratory design. All interview data were transcribed verbatim, with careful attention to preserving the original meanings conveyed through different communication modes. The analysis was supported by qualitative data management software to organize transcripts and coding categories.

The analytic process followed a structured sequence. First, the researcher conducted repeated readings of the transcripts to achieve comprehensive data familiarisation. Second, coding was performed by identifying meaningful units related to experiences of anger, reflective communication, and emotion regulation processes. Codes were developed inductively from the data while remaining guided by the research objectives. Third, similar codes were grouped into categories, which were subsequently refined into higher-order themes representing consistent patterns across participants' accounts. Theme formulation was based on clarity, consistency, and relevance rather than interpretive speculation.

To ensure rigour and trustworthiness, several procedural safeguards were put in place. Credibility was supported through systematic coding and careful documentation of analytic decisions. Dependability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail that detailed each stage of the analysis process. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive notes to limit researcher bias and to ensure that findings were grounded in the data. As this study employed a qualitative design, statistical assumptions, model fit, and missing data handling were not applicable. The analysis focused on describing and organising the data in a structured manner without reporting numerical results or analytic outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study are derived from qualitative content analysis of interview data obtained from Deaf participants. The analysis identified several consistent themes describing how participants experienced and managed anger through the Maternal Reflective Method. These themes reflect structured patterns of emotional awareness, reflective communication, and regulation strategies rather than isolated emotional reactions.

One central theme concerns the development of emotional awareness. Participants described an increased ability to recognise anger triggers and distinguish anger from other emotional states through reflective communication. This process supported clearer emotional identification and reduced confusion in emotional experiences.

A second theme concerns the role of reflective communication in emotion regulation. Participants reported that guided reflection enabled them to reconsider emotional responses and regulate anger more deliberately. Reflective dialogue provided a structured communicative framework that supported emotional expression while limiting impulsive reactions.

A further theme highlights the emergence of adaptive anger management strategies. Participants described changes in how they responded to anger, including delaying reactions, using communication to express emotions, and applying self-regulation strategies informed by reflective experiences. Overall, the results indicate systematic patterns in anger management shaped by reflective engagement through the Maternal Reflective Method.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce existing research on emotion regulation by demonstrating the importance of reflective communication in supporting emotional awareness and behavioural regulation. Previous studies have shown that reflective processes enhance individuals' capacity to recognise and organise emotional experiences, which is fundamental to effective emotion regulation (Gross, 2015; Koole & Aldao, 2017). The present study extends these findings by contextualising reflective emotion management within Deaf individuals' communicative experiences.

The theme of emotional awareness aligns with prior research indicating that structured reflection improves emotional clarity and emotional labeling (Lane *et al.*, 2015). In Deaf populations, limited access to emotionally rich communication has been associated with challenges in emotional development. The Maternal Reflective Method appears to provide an accessible reflective framework that supports emotional understanding, consistent with findings in Deaf education and counseling literature (Marschark & Knoors, 2019).

The role of reflective communication in regulating anger is consistent with evidence that guided reflection supports cognitive control and adaptive emotional responses (Sheppes *et al.*, 2015). However, this study contributes a distinct perspective by illustrating how reflective communication functions as a regulatory mechanism rather than merely an expressive tool. This finding suggests that reflective-based approaches may be particularly effective for counseling and educational practices involving Deaf individuals.

The identification of adaptive anger management strategies further supports research emphasizing reflective and emotion-focused counseling approaches. Unlike behaviourally oriented interventions alone, reflective methods integrate emotional awareness and regulation processes, offering a more comprehensive approach to anger management (Berking & Whitley, 2014). Overall, the findings contribute to counseling science by demonstrating the relevance of reflective communication methods within Deaf populations, using a systematic, positivist qualitative framework.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a qualitative exploratory understanding of how Deaf individuals construct meaning in their experiences of managing anger through the Maternal Reflective Method. The findings indicate that reflective communication plays a central role in supporting emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and the development of adaptive responses to anger. Rather than functioning solely as a medium for emotional expression, the Maternal Reflective Method facilitates a structured reflective process that enables individuals to recognise, organise, and regulate their emotional experiences more deliberately.

From a counseling and psychological perspective, this study contributes to the development of emotion regulation theory by demonstrating the relevance of reflective communication within Deaf populations. The Maternal Reflective Method emerges as a meaningful approach that integrates emotional awareness and regulation through accessible communication, addressing limitations often encountered by Deaf individuals in emotional development and counseling contexts. This finding extends the application of reflective-based approaches beyond general populations and underscores their significance in inclusive counseling practices.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that counseling and educational practitioners consider incorporating structured reflective communication strategies when supporting Deaf individuals in managing emotions, particularly anger. Future research is encouraged to explore the application of the Maternal Reflective Method in broader contexts, including different age groups and counseling settings, as well as to examine its integration with other evidence-based counseling approaches. Overall, this study offers a systematic qualitative contribution to counseling psychology by strengthening the empirical and conceptual understanding of emotion regulation through reflective communication.

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