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Influence Of Peer Group On Future Perceptions Towards Acquiring Skills In Ceramics And Hand Embroidery: A study on Deaf School Students

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Abstract: *“I have always thought it would be a blessing if each person could be blind and Deaf for a few days during his early adult life. Darkness would make him appreciate sight; silence would teach him the joys of sound”- Hellen Keller*

Human being is a social animal and social affiliation needs are a normal part of growing up. These needs are met with support and influence of various organizations and institutions in a structured or unstructured manner in various phases of life. Every moment of our life, senses work continuously to interact with the environment and on the basis of perceived and received information through our senses, we interpret the information and draw conclusions. In case of Deaf population, they cannot hear sound and speech and consequently do not spontaneously learn to talk. Hence, the imagery drawn for a particular subject is primarily based on the visual strength of receiving and the cognitive sub processes of perception. Being a closed minority group, deaf community is a part of their own culture known as “deaf culture” and ought to be influenced by peer groups. At the same time, Peer relationships are important predictors of academic and life skills in children and young people (Von Hohendorff, Couto, & Prati, 2013; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). Peer relationships are particularly salient during adolescence when young people spend much of their time with peers, often turning to peers rather than parents for intimate disclosures, and seeking feedback from peers as an important input to the development of their sense of self (Prinstein & Giletta, 2016). This developmental period may be especially challenging for those who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) (Rich et al., 2013) as they face significant changes associated with puberty and adolescence in a hearing world where communication and access to information and peers can be compromised by their hearing loss (Brice & Strauss, 2016).

Parallely, India’s new education Policy of 2020 has placed an umbrella inclusion of vocational learning programs as part of school curriculum for all schools across the country. This means that, a high impetus at school level towards creating environment of vocational skills learning has to be imbibed. To create this environment, there are many factors that play a role of a facilitator or a barrier, depending on the situation and the context at that particular period of time. The school is able to gather different peer communities and to promote self-esteem and a harmonious development between adolescents, which makes it a privileged space for meetings and interactions (Baptista, Tomé, Matos, Gaspar & Cruz, 2008) . Therefore, this study is limited to understanding the influence of peer Group as one of the factors in influencing future perceptions of deaf school students towards learning skills related to ceramics and Hand embroidery.

Keywords: *Peer Group, deaf , students, future perception, arts, crafts, interest, ceramics, pottery, learning.*

I. BACKGROUND

Deafness is the term that relates with, namely those who lose their hearing power, either at the time of birth or during life time. This implies the non-functionality of one of the sense organs, i.e ears that subsequently leads to loss of speech .Hearing is the sensory modality through which children perceive speech — the universe of talk that ties individuals, families and societies together. Children born with bilateral hearing losses that are severe (70–89 dB loss) or profound (>90 dB loss) are referred to as deaf. They cannot hear conversational speech (approximately 60 dB) and consequently do not spontaneously learn to talk (Mayberry.R.I ,2002). Due to hearing loss, deaf students have difficulty communicating and socializing and referring to the problems faced by deaf children. Man is a social animal and therefore, as the hearing impaired child grows up, he passes through various social institutions at different phases of life that carves his social behaviour and the self-perception about the surroundings, relations, family, careers, aspirations, beliefs, competition, experience etc. that are normal traits for an individual. Primarily, between the age of 3 to 18 years, that includes adolescence, the child goes through situations/ stimulus that carve the behaviour and perception and subsequently the imprinted perceptions makes way for his future perceptions and career choices thereby leading to a certain life pattern, both social and economic.

School is a setting where interpersonal relations are promoted, which are important for youngsters' personal and social development (Ruini *et al.*, 2009); it is responsible for the transmission of behavioural norms and standards and it represents an essential role in the adolescent's socialisation process. The school is able to gather different peer communities and to promote self-esteem and a harmonious development between adolescents, which makes it a privileged space for meetings and interactions (Baptista, Tomé, Matos, Gaspar & Cruz, 2008). Adolescents spend a great part of their time at school, which also makes it a privileged context for involvement in or protection from risk behaviours (Piko & Kovács, 2010).

Vocational education, like crafts, has existed since the beginning of hearing impaired education -around the 17th century.. In early times the hearing impaired institutes placed more focus on manual labor for the deaf rather than academic achievements as they were considered unable to study in academic fields. It was also a step towards making them independent and enabling them to earn a living because a skill was easier to teach the hearing impaired than theoretical subjects due to less awareness of sign language. In America. vocational training dominated education curriculums for the deaf pupils because they believed that deaf people would have to rely upon vocational trainings like hand skilled art, carpentry or tailoring in order to function in society.

In India , through ages the academics and Craft learning has existed side by side. Infact, thee was a major emphasis on skill learning and especially with traditional art forms. Hand embroidery is one of such art form, prevalent with both men and women.

The aim of craft forms like hand embroidery and ceramics, like few others is to enable deaf students to create jobs for themselves and therefore more career options. These are visual fields that require less of theoretical and more of hands on work which reduces the need of communication and enables independence. . Stitching and embroidery similarly involves less communication and allows them to be independent to a certain extent specially girls who can practice at home and earn a living. The students learn from their observations and if they take it as a profession, limited communication is needed as only the requirements of the employer or client needs to be told to them, the rest is carried out by them.

The institutions were concerned about the welfare of the deaf how could they compete with others in trade and industry - trade training was the answer i.e. trade through crafts. The deaf and the hearing believed that this way the deaf could maintain a n edge over the hearing as the schools for the deaf were the only schools that offered vocational trainings. However, when the vocational training started being offered in schools for the hearing as well, the hearing impaired started protesting against it also saying that it limited them from reaching for white collar jobs. Therefore, along with the education of crafts, academic education was brought into the deaf education through the use of sign language.(Cleve.V,1993)

As a part of curriculum, the deaf students undergo academically oriented and crafts oriented training and learning at Haryana Welfare Society for Persons with Speech and Hearing Impairment, right from the inception at school level. With the evolving age, the content of crafts takes a diversion towards moving from simpler skill learning to relatively complex learning. Ceramics and hand embroidery are two such skill learning areas that shall be covered in this study

Growing and learning in school gradually builds aspirations for being successful and self-independent. Many activities in school directly and indirectly impact the aspirations, interest, likes, dislikes and future perceptions and accordingly the choices for future are managed in the minds of deaf which unlike deaf, the hearing are able to express through the vocal communication presence. Hence, in case of deaf, it becomes immensely important to gauge the force of environmental and social factors that are likely to create an impact on future perception. Peer Group influence is one such factor. A deeper thinking into the subject will be helpful to create a pedagogy and environment around in school that leverages desired outcomes while providing skill learning in ceramics and hand embroidery. Hence, this study aims to gauge the peer group influence on deaf students on their decision making and interest and thereby making subsequent career and learning choices.

II. DEAF AND FUTURE PERCEPTION

Thinking about the future is an important activity which may impact adolescent development in general (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Lewin, 1939)

The examination of future perceptions during adolescence is especially important because this phase is characterized by the individual's ability and willingness to acquire skills which are essential for successful integration into his or her culture (Erikson, 1968). Society in general and the family in particular encourage adolescents to focus on their future transition into adulthood (Malmberg, 1996; Nurmi, 1993). Consequently, adolescents start to make plans for their future career (Kracke, 1997). A perception of the future includes one's plans, ambitions, expectations, and concerns about possible events in different life domains in the near and far future (Seginer, 1988a).

Only few studies have examined aspects of future perceptions among youth with special needs. For example, Palmer and Wehmeyer (1998) found that students with intellectual disabilities were significantly less hopeful about their future than their peers with or without learning disabilities. More recent findings indicate that youth with disabilities have expectations that continue to be significantly lower than those of the general population in certain cases, but that deaf students hold relatively high expectations for the future (Garberoglio, Schoffstall, Cawthon, Bond, & Ge, 2014; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Marder, 2007).

Perception is a process governed by senses and cognitive processing. SCCT (Social Cognitive Career Theory) suggests that factors such as race, gender, disability/health conditions, and ethnic background directly predict individuals' career interests and choice processes by allowing or restricting access to occupational preparation and opportunities (Lent et al., 1994). Thus, having a hearing loss, as well as belonging to a minority group, may limit individuals' career opportunities and consequently shape their self-efficacy and future perceptions (Michael, R., Cinamon, R. G., & Most, T. (2015). Acquiring skills for a particular vocational trade is one of the steps towards occupational preparation. The perceptual process is an important cognitive construct that impacts personality. The key to understanding perception is to recognize that it is a unique interpretation of the situation, not an exact recording of it. In short, perception is a very complex cognitive process that yields a unique picture that may be quite different from reality (Luthans, F, 2011) and is largely learned. Situations/ Stimuli vary from person to person. Also situations further depend on various factors related to external surroundings, internal state of mind, personality traits, experience, medical health conditions etc and therefore, identified as a complex cognitive process that defines the "perceptual world" different from a "real world" for an individual.

Behavioural scientist believe that the "reality"(the world around them) depends on their senses. However, the raw sensory input is not enough. They must also process this sensory data and make sense out of them in order to understand world around

them. The five senses are constantly bombarded by numerous stimuli that are both outside and inside the body. The hearing impaired persons face a loss of hearing and thereby the speech. Although perceptions depend largely on the senses for raw data, the cognitive process filters, modifies, or completely changes these data. (Luthans.F,2011). This is enabled by sub processes of perception. (a) Confrontation of specific stimulus. (b) Registration of stimulus(c) Interpretation of stimulus(d) Feedback for clarification (e) Behaviour (f) Consequences.

The above description as expressed by Luthans is with reference to the Organisations. School is an integral part of educational ecosystem comprising of various SBU's, functions, motives, students and various other stakeholders

Cinamon and colleagues (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2014; Michael, Most, & Cinamon, 2011a) extended the concept to include different dimensions. Specifically, they suggested that the term "future perceptions" relates to the process of preparation and construction of the future which includes a life-space dimension (the various life roles that are considered in the individual's future plans, such as work and family), an integrative dimension (the degree to which an individual considers the possible relationships between the different future life roles), an intensity dimension (the degree to which an individual thinks and is occupied by the future), a clarity dimension (the degree of clarity in which the future is conceptualized), and an emotional dimension (the emotions elicited by thinking about the future such as degree of stress and excitement). Since social factors play an important role in adolescents' transition into adulthood (Malmberg, 1996 ; Nurmi, 1993), it seems that in the case of youth with hearing loss, social affiliation should be taken into account, and not merely the severity of the hearing loss, when examining future perceptions.

Research on adolescents' hopes and expectations of the future suggests that they are most interested in their future educational and professional roles (Nurmi, 1991). These aspirations are malleable for teenagers in that they can be influenced not only by factual information but also by the attitudes of others, such as parents, teachers, and peers (Akos et al., 2007). Issues like social structure and functions of the school, the school as a social system, classroom atmosphere, school and environment, job and career can be considered among the primary problems that educational sociology focus on (Gross, 1965).

III. DEAF AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

Education plays a central role in shaping individual and social change toward sustainability. Dewey regards the education as the life itself, not the preparation for the life and he claims that education is a process of social development. This development should be provided from inside according to the needs and interests of the individuals rather than imposing from outside (Dewey, 1916). A single phenomenon can be examined in different levels and aspects. Therefore the structure called as school can be analyzed within the paradigms of various disciplines (anthropological, socio-psychological, organizational sociology and law etc.) as a small model of the society. (Turkkahraman .M,2015)

Education is to create a behavior change in human in a desired direction. The part of education conducted in schools in a planned and programmed way is called teaching. Education is also defined as an effect that is applied by adults to the ones who are not prepared for life yet (Kızılluluk, 2013).

Organization is a structure or an association composed by two or more people to achieve an aim or a common goal. In other words, organization is a social association created by a group of people to achieve a certain aim or a goal. From the sociological perspective, educational system is an administrative organization embodying various factors and forces. As a sub-institution of it, the school can be analyzed and handled as a bureaucratic organization (Kornblum and Julian, 1992). Because of this, as well as the school is a place where the students are educated, it is also a social organization where the people come together to achieve certain goals. Similar to the other organizations, the school is an organization having a certain place which consistently incorporates new members (students and teachers) and conducts the educational and instructional activities in an organized and systematic way (Musgrave, 1983).

The schools have become obligatory educational institutes in almost all the societies. Schools are complex social structures in which students, teachers and school administrators interact with each other and educational experiences of the child are shaped

Educational activities are neither independent from structural features of the outside world that surrounds them nor from the structural characteristics of the society they are located in. Schools can survive as long as they develop students' individuality and contribute to their socialization. Any structures which do not fulfill social and individual demands become ineffective. The student would like and attend school as long as their needs and expectations

In addition, in recent years, many of contemporary educational researchers increasingly and specifically focus on the particular problems at school and this situation causes them to have difficulties in understanding the relationships in social and global magnitude of instructional developments and social changes in the classroom (Schneider, 2005). All these indicate that analysis of educational problems cannot be done alone in a simple manner. In other words, educational problems and activities cannot be considered independent from the social structure lived in and changing social and global developments. (Turkkahramana.M, 2015)

Educational problems cannot be solved unless we understand the developments and changes occurring as a result of the dynamic interaction of social relations network and differentiation of institutions as a consequence of these. Therefore, any educational event experienced or carried out must be scientifically analyzed and evaluated within the reality of social structure(Turkkahramana.M,2015)

Dewey considers that it is possible to create a new society by means of the school. Dewey regards the education as the life itself, not the preparation for the life and he claims that education is a process of social development. This development should be provided from inside according to the needs and interests of the individuals rather than imposing from outside (Dewey, 1916).

IV. DEAF AND EFFECT OF ART AND CRAFT

The effect of arts and crafts stands more relevant with experiential learning of the teachers and experts in the past. The Government's role is to lay down policies for economic upliftment of hearing community. However, the real picture, practically is defined while being on the ground through constant interaction with deaf students in school or the deaf organisations . Experiential learning from Taiwanese Arts and Craft teacher, (Pan Yuan- Shih,2015) in his article has expressed his 25 years' experience of working with the Hearing impaired school children and the Effect of Arts and Crafts Education on Hearing-Impaired Children. In his article, "The Effect of Arts and Crafts Education on Hearing impaired Children", states Creation via arts and crafts can afford the child an opportunity to recall the past and imagine the future" . With example of above experience and the bombardment of information and technological aids, the study becomes pertinent to understand that do the future perceptions for acquiring training in ceramics and Hand embroidery get impacted with peer Group influence.

V. DEAF AND PEER GROUP

Peer relationships are important predictors of academic and life skills in children and young people (Von Hohendorff, Couto, & Prati, 2013; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). Peer relationships are particularly salient during adolescence when young people spend much of their time with peers, often turning to peers rather than parents for intimate disclosures, and seeking feedback from peers as an important input to the development of their sense of self (Prinstein & Giletta, 2016). This developmental period may be especially challenging for those who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) (Rich et al., 2013) as they face significant changes associated with puberty and adolescence in a hearing world where communication and access to information and peers can be compromised by their hearing loss (Brice & Strauss, 2016)

Deaf (D) people, for instance, tend to have a sense of community and to develop a well-defined deaf identity (Anderson & Leigh, 2011). The term ‘Deaf culture’ has been used to signify a unique group of people with a common condition. This culture has developed a set of attitudes and habits that appear to be universal within the deaf community. To wit, members of the focus group reaffirmed five Deaf culture communication patterns — passing behavior, bluntness, close interactional proximity, increased touching behavior during interactions, and unhurried communication exchanges.(Goss.B,2003)

Effective communication in which needs and feelings are expressed and understood is essential for psychosocial wellbeing and development for deaf youths (Jambor and Elliot 2005), and theoretically, may affect self-determination skill development as well. Beyond communication and accessibility issues, opportunities for identity development are also not always present for deaf youths. Deaf youths’ opportunities to build cultural affiliations with the deaf community in the process of identity development appear to be important contributors to psychosocial well being (Hintermair 2008; Jambor and Elliot 2005)

Friendship is considered as sub type of of peer relationships. Peer acceptance and popularity define peer relationships, whereas friendship is defined as a close, mutual, dyadic relationship (Hartrup, 1996). The peer relationships and friendships of deaf adolescents might be influenced by both individual’s characteristics (e.g., gender, degree of hearing loss, type of amplification, language, and communication) and contextual factors (e.g., education placement, family characteristics). Research in the past have demonstrated the impact of the groups in which deaf spends the time in school and the stimulus thereby absorbed through the sensory organs shapes the way of thinking and thereby the choices that the deaf make . The conceptualisation of peer group as influencer in future perception has been selected owing to self experience as skill instructor , teaching Hand embroidery and ceramics to 10 deaf students at Haryana Welfare Society for Person with Speech and Hearing Impairment.

VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the above background and the informative research done in past, following are the research questions formulated to understand the influence of Peer Group on Future perception of deaf students in learning skills related to Hand Embroidery and Ceramics at Haryana Welfare Society for Persons with Speech and Hearing Impairment.

1. Does the deaf school students learning interests for ceramics and Hand embroidery vary with Deaf group association?
2. Does the deaf school students learning interests for ceramics and Hand embroidery vary with influence of Deaf friends?
3. Will learning hand embroidery and ceramics skills support their overall development and future plans in life ?

VII. METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Research

School as an organization is required to optimize its resources , efficiency and effectiveness pattern to achieve determined goals through various academic and nonacademic activities . In case of deaf students, owing to the disability of hearing, their world is encircled with altogether different challenges and hence the initiatives taken at school apart from academic growth are required to be carefully seeped through so that the desired outcomes are met . Added to it are the behavioral and cognitive dynamics that mutually interplay to tone up the interest and mind of deaf students towards perceptions for future. The initiative of providing skill Learning training to deaf students in Ceramics (pottery) and Hand embroidery defines the area of this study in which we would be interested to surface the real interest of school students towards the said learning program being provided . Also, the skill programs are meant to enhance the employability ability and prospects right from the school days so that the students align themselves to specific area and move up in the ladder of advanced learning and take up jobs in near future and be a part of economic cycle. Therefore , the purpose of the study is to understand the influence of peer group on future perception,

specifically towards learning above said skill programs at Haryana Welfare Society for Persons with Speech and Hearing Impairment

Data Collection

Since deaf school students cannot hear and speak, hence a questionnaire comprising of 14 closed ended questions, in a simple language was administered to 24 students out of class of 60 students learning the skills in ceramics and Hand embroidery.

Random sampling technique has been used for sampling. Out of the class of 60 art and craft students, 24 deaf school students were randomly selected from the class as sample for our study. These 24 students were in age group of 12-16 yrs. A qualified interpreter, who is hearing has been deployed for the exercise of facilitating the filling of the questionnaire. The interpreter has used the Indian Sign Language (ISL) to explain the language through movement of hands to the deaf students. The process was video graphed to capture the minor details of deaf body language and expressions. Data collection method has been done in 2 steps.

Step 1: Individual response of each sample unit has been taken on the 15 questions questionnaire on paper with the help of interpreter. For doing so,

- a. The sample units were collected and individually given the questionnaire printed on paper.
- b. The interpreter became the facilitator and the researcher was the observer. The purpose of observer was to ensure that the explanation of the question is appropriately done to the interpreter. The interpreter then using sign language explains the question to the sample units, who in turn then answer either in Yes or No
- c. Any doubts or questions raised by students were expressed in sign language to the interpreter, who in turn clarified with the observer (researcher) and communicated the same back to the students in sign language.
- d. The filled questions were collected at the end of step 1.
- e. Each paper was assigned a unique number ranging from 1 to 24.

Step 2: In the second step, basis the above number tagging, the number tag was given to each student corresponding student. Therefore the questionnaire number on student 1 matched with the number tag assigned to that particular student. They were all made to sit in a group. The same questions were administered only by sign language, and no paper pen used. The aim was to understand the change of response owing to peer influence and being in a group together vis a vis the individual responses and also to capture the response dynamics basis the other deaf students around.

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

(i) Learning attitude

Two questions were based on learning attitude and the results show that 75% students on individual basis were keen to acquire skills related to arts and crafts but the same % of preference dropped to 54% when being in the group.

Similarly, there is not much difference in the learning attitude towards acquiring new skills at individual and group level.

Inference: The learning attitude towards new skills is positive and high. Wherein, the data shows high difference in choice related to arts and craft at individual and group level, which implies

- a. While arts and craft is preferred, but the scope of additional skill learning areas exists.
- b. There exists clear peer group influence in responses related to art and craft skills at individual and group level.

(ii) Strength of Association on choices.

Three questions were introduced to understand the impact of association of friends and senior deaf students in making choices. The data shows that there is not much difference in the responses at individual and group level when friendship as association and sub component of peer group is taken as influencer. However, when the senior deaf student as being a part of deaf culture is taken as peer group influencer, the results show that the students are not driven by what the senior says . It also shows that while the senior deaf students may tend to influence students, however, the students will apply their own understanding to make a particular choice.

Inference: The strength of association amongst friends is very high. However, the senior deaf group does not act as peer influencer while making choices.

(iii) Peer group influence on learning hand embroidery

Four questions were administered to understand the responses at group and individual levels. The data analysis show that at individual level 33% students opted for hand embroidery as career choice which at group level, none of them opted for the same. This shows an extremely high peer group influence on making hand embroidery as a career choice. Also, 58% students expressed that their friend likes to do hand embroidery but at the group level it dropped to 8.33% .

Inference: The peer group influence for taking hand embroidery as career choice is very high . Also, there is a tendency of preserving and protecting oneself by aligning to the response of peer group. This perhaps could be for reasons of community affinity and fear of alienation from deaf community.

(iv) Peer group influence on learning Pottery (Ceramics)

Four questions were administered to understand the responses at group and individual levels. The data analysis show that at individual level 42% students opted for pottery as career choice which at group levels it reduced to 17%. At individual level, data analysis show that 50% students like to be trained on pottery but the same question when administered at the group level, the interest percentage dropped to 13%. Also, 42 % students expressed that their friend likes to do pottery but at the group level it dropped to 8% .

Inference: Relatively, the peer group influence for accepting pottery as career choice exists unlike the case in hand embroidery, though not very high at group level. At the same time, the peer group influence is relatively lower with respect to hand embroidery. The probable reason could be that pottery is a flexible art form of expression of thoughts which could be a silent cognitive influencer. There are no rules of expression in this art form.

IX. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study could have been extended within male and female students for a much better understanding of male and female traits of making choices towards and embroidery and ceramics as career choice which became a challenge with schools closed down due to Covid menace. Also, the interpreter will interpret basis what has been understood by them. This has high chances of message not reaching the deaf students with intensity and strength as it ought to be. Also, deaf students struggle with their cognitive understanding owing to no speech in them. This also disrupts the process of capturing their real views in some cases.

The above limitations in this study can be taken up as prospective area for future research.

X. CONCLUSION

Future perceptions are natural occurring thoughts and viewpoints that emerge and disrupt with ongoing mental activity as a result of interplay of the senses. If what is seen is understood as true then what is heard and seen together is understood as reality. Absence of hearing disrupts the world of belief and creates a force of factors that mediates in developing opinions about a person or a situation. One of the factor is the community peer group influence. The study clearly brings out that the peer group

has influence on choices that deaf make for themselves. The learning ability, association tendency and moving in groups can be prominently observed out of this study. At the same time, the learning programs which are part of skilling activities at school is not looked upon as learning for earning. Hence, context setting becomes an important actionable for which various visual modes can be used. With changing times, the skills acquisition willingness will further depend upon the rewards, recognition and machine driven work where the output is relatively fast. Preparing the school students with “What is In For Me concept will impact their future perceptions and most likely, the peer group influence will reduce , thereby building in consistency in the aspirations .

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