

RESEARCH PAPER

# Perspectives of Persons with Deafness about Deaf Culture with Special Reference to Socio-economic Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

Persons with Deafness are belonging to minority. They have their own belief, history, language and have unique communication skill. The present research intended to explore the perspectives of persons with Deafness about Deaf culture regards sign language as a vital aspect of communication and their social and economic challenges facing in daily life. The sample of the study consisted of 90 persons with Deafness registered at the 5 Deaf associations/Organizations of Odisha. A self-developed scale on perspective of deafness on deaf culture was used to assess the perspectives of deaf people about sign language and both social and economic challenges faced by them. Social Challenges includes- fear to deal with others, involve in social activities, discrimination feelings etc. Economic challenges include- unemployment, poor income, inability to buy appliances and software, lack of financial capabilities etc. The study results indicated that the perspectives of persons with Deafness about the Deaf culture among persons with deafness of different age groups with regard to using sign language show minimal variations among different age groups. There exist no significant differences among person with deafness and deaf cultures in facing social and economic challenges with respect to gender and demographic division. On the basis of findings, the recommendations were also suggested.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ① Deafness is regarded as a disability and it has historically been the center point of educational and rehabilitative efforts for individual who are deaf or experiencing hearing impairment.
- ② Deaf people communicate easily with deaf community with the help of sign language.
- ③ Deafness affects both social and economic dimensions of human life. From an economic standpoint, individuals with deafness tend to face higher rates of unemployment and lower incomes compared to their non-deaf counterparts.
- ④ Both male and female person with deafness from rural and urban areas are facing equal type of social and economic challenges in their daily life.

**Keywords:** Perspectives, Person with deafness, deaf culture, socio-economic challenges

Deafness, recognized as disability, has long been the focus of education and rehabilitation efforts for students who are deaf or hard of hearing for long time (Butler, Skelton & Valentine, 2001). In this context, deafness is the inability to reply to the cues and to communicate to others. Person who are deaf should know the function of a family and a community. But this is possible through using

technology like hearing aids and assistive listening devices by a deaf person to function as contributing member of a society (Knonick, 1990). From this viewpoint, deafness is considered a pathology as

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it is a condition that is part of and contributes to certain groups or categories within society (Higgins, 1990). The advocates of deafness as a culture stated that deafness should not be viewed as a medical condition and so no need to be fixed (Lane, 1997). But deafness is encompassing more than just a medical condition, it embodies a rich culture with its own language, values, traditions, norms and identity (Padden, 1980). It meets all five criteria of society to define a culture. For example, the language used by deaf communities possesses its own syntax, semantics and pragmatics reflecting the distinct communication needs. The language of deaf people highly valued as it visually accessible to all. Further, Deaf people communicate easily with deaf community with the help of sign language and even they do not depend on an interpreter. It promotes social and leadership skills among deaf people. But person with deafness have different culture as compare to the normal people even to person with hearing impairment. There is a notable distinction between individuals who are deaf and those who are hearing-impaired on deaf culture (Humphries, 1990). Daisy (2008) identified some affecting factors of deaf cultural identity like family, deaf peers, educational settings etc from school to college. People with hearing impairment belief in sign language. Sign language recognized and promoted deaf culture among hearing impaired persons (Young *et al.* 2019). They want their medium of study/instruction should be in sign language because they can help themselves through sign language rather than oral language. The sign language is served as the primary and unifying element that binds the deaf community together, fostering communication, connection and cultural identity among its members (Filer & Filer 2000).

Deafness profoundly affects both social and economic aspects of human life and its crucial to recognize that deaf individuals are integral members of society (Holman, Drummon, Hughes, & Naylor, 2019; James, *et al.* 2018; Mulwafu, Kuper, & Ensink, 2016). They have the equal right to live in society like normal individuals and enjoy all social and economic rights provided by constitution of India. As far as economic aspect is concern, hearing impaired are often faced with lower employment rates and incomes compared to their non-deaf persons.

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) initiated a National Action Plan (NAP) for skill development of PwDs. The main motto behind it to imparting skill training to PwDs the age group of 15 to 59 years including Hearing and Speech impairment. Department also launched PM-DAKSH-DEPwD portal for Skill training conducted for PwDs across India and *Dibyangga Rozgar Setu* for creating job opportunities for PwDs. National *Dibyanggajan* Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) channelizes concessional loans for the Socio-Economic empowerment of PwDs including deaf and dumb persons throughout the country. Two flagship schemes launched by NDFDC for channelizing concessional finance through its partner agencies i.e., *Dibyanggan Swavalamban Yojana* (DSY), which is individual centric and *Vishesh Microfinance Yojana* (VMY), which is applicable for Self-help groups through various partner agencies for the welfare and rehabilitation of PwDs in the country. (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India).

Despite the facilities provided by the ministry to uplift of deaf individuals, they are unable to achieve higher employment rate and income. Due to that they get limited professional opportunities and extra efforts are required compared to their non-deaf peers (Mulwafu, Kuper, & Ensink, 2016; Punch, 2016; Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012). They need to determine their social and economic problems, challenges and difficulties facing in day-to-day life (Jaiyeola & Adeyemo, 2018; Agyire-Tetty, Cobbina, & hamenoo, 2017; Frajtag & Jelinic, 2017).

Hence, the researcher felt to explore the different perspectives of Deaf culture with respect to sign language and their socio-economic challenges so that hearing community as well as professionals working in these areas can be made aware about the uniqueness of Deaf culture and their problems behind not include in mainstream of society, which lead to positive development of deaf community without any prejudice.

The purpose of the study is to find out the Perspectives of Persons with Deafness about Deaf Culture with Special Reference to Socio-economic Challenges

## Objectives of the study

- ♦ To determine the significant differences among persons with deafness of different age groups with regard to using sign language.
- ♦ To ascertain the differences between male and female persons with deafness in using sign language.
- ♦ To find out the differences between rural and urban persons with deafness in using sign language.
- ♦ To determine the differences in the level of social and economic challenges facing by male and female persons with deafness.
- ♦ To find out the differences in the level of social and economic challenges facing by rural and urban persons with deafness.

## Hypotheses of the Study

- ♦  $H_1$ : There is a significant difference among persons with deafness of different age groups with regard to using sign language.
- ♦  $H_0$ : There exist no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in using sign language.
- ♦  $H_0$ : There is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in using sign language.
- ♦  $H_0$ : There is no significant difference in the level of social challenges facing by male and female persons with deafness.
- ♦  $H_0$ : There is no significant difference in the level of economic challenges facing by male and female persons with deafness.
- ♦  $H_0$ : There is no significant difference in the level of social challenges facing by rural and urban persons with deafness.
- ♦  $H_0$ : There is no significant difference in the level of + economic challenges facing by rural and urban persons with deafness.

## Research Method

The present research work is descriptive in nature. The Researcher used purposive sampling method and selected 90 persons with Deafness registered at the 5 Deaf Organizations in Khordha district of Odisha. There are five Deaf associations

functioning in and around Khordha, which are non-government organizations. It was estimated that a total number of 350 Deaf people are associated with the organizations/association and the number is increasing continuously. Researcher has included 90 people with Deaf as a sample of this study.

## Tools Used

The researcher used self-made research tool for present study to measure the perspectives of persons with Deafness dealing with Deaf culture regarding sign language and their socio-economic challenges. A rating scale was developed, based on Likert's 5-point scale. To collect the response of participants from Deaf culture, researcher in the beginning, added 12 items, and the items were incorporated to collect the perspectives of Deaf people about Deaf culture regarding the area of sign language. The total number of items in the finally develop tool were 15. For measure the level of socio-economic challenges of persons with deafness, researcher in the beginning, added 20 items (10 items for social challenges and 10 items for economic challenges) and the items were incorporated to collect the socio-economic challenges of Deaf people. The total number of items in the finally develop tool were 22 and each of the two areas (social and economic challenges) contains 11 items. Test/retest reliability was established by distributing the rating scale to 10 persons with Deafness and mean scores were calculated. After a gap of 15 days again the rating scale were distributed to the same people. The reliability coefficient was 0.92, 0.87 and 0.94 for sign language, social challenges and economic challenges respectively. The validity of the tool was high as rated by professionals.

## Data Analysis using Statistical Tools

Both Descriptive and inferential Statistical tools are used to find out the differences among persons with deafness of different age groups in using sign languages and facing social and economic challenges. Statistical Methods such as- Mean, SD, T-test and F-ratio are used in present research.

## Analysis and interpretation

The present study aims to investigate the Perspectives of Persons with Deafness about Deaf Culture with special reference to Socio-Economic Challenges.

For this purpose, the data has been obtained from 90 persons with Deafness registered at the 5 Deaf Organizations in Khordha district of Odisha through self-made tools. After that response of the respondent was scored as per manual and scoring procedure of the tools and the scored data were tabulated in excel sheet.

In order to see the differences among persons with deafness of different age groups in using sign languages and facing social and economic challenges regarding different aspects (gender and demography) Mean, SD and T-test and F-ratio were computed.

**Table 1:** Mean scores and t-value on perspectives of persons with Deafness about Deaf culture among persons with deafness of different age groups with regard to using sign language

Age group	Sign language score		
	Mean	SD	N
Up to 20 years	60.50	9.10	10
21-25 yrs	59.57	7.84	37
26-30 yrs	59.22	8.17	23
31-35 yrs	59.57	7.39	7
Above 35 yrs	59.54	7.96	13
TOTAL	59.58	7.88	90

Table 1 describes the age wise distribution of 90 persons with Deafness into five groups. The mean and SD are also calculated for each group to apply ANOVA and find out difference in the mean score of Deaf culture of different age groups with regard to sign language. The mean score for group up-to 20 years is 60.50, 21-25 years is 59.57, 26-30 years is 59.22, 31-35 years 59.57 and above 35 years is 59.54.

**Table 2:** The comparison of perspectives scores among the different age groups

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Score	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.516	4	2.879		
Within Groups	5516.439	85	64.899	0.044	NS
Total	5527.956	89			

Table 2, depicts the result of ANOVA that is the difference between the groups and within the groups. The ANOVA result shows that the calculated F-ratio value is 0.044 which is less than the table value of 2.479 and not significant at 0.05 level of significance. It is inferred that the sign

language scores do not vary significantly among different age groups.

**Table 3:** Mean scores and t-value on perspectives of persons with Deafness about Deaf culture regarding sign language based on their gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Male	75	59.35	8.10	0.620	NS
Female	15	60.73	6.81		df = 88 P>0.05

Table 3 Give a picture of the gender wise mean scores of deaf cultures with regard to sign language. The mean score for male is 59.35 and for female are 60.73. The t-test was applied to find whether the sign language scores varied significantly between male and female. The calculated t-value is 0.620 which is less than the table value of 1.987 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is less than the table value it is inferred that there exists no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in using sign language.

**Table 4:** Mean scores and t-value on perspectives of persons with Deafness about Deaf culture regarding the use of sign language based on their demography

Demography	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Rural	39	48.19	5.33	0.342	NS Df=88
Urban	54	48.56	4.61		P>0.05

Table 4 give a picture of the demography wise mean scores of Deaf cultures with regard to use of sign language. The mean score rural is 48.19 and for urban is 48.56. The calculated t-value is 0.342 is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates there is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in using sign language.

**Table 5:** Mean scores and t-value on social challenges facing by the person with deaf according to their gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Male	53	48.49	4.64	0.184	NS
Female	37	48.30	5.26		df = 88 P>0.05

Table 5 indicates the gender wise mean scores of deaf cultures with regard to facing the social challenges. The mean score for male is 48.49 and for female are 48.30. The t-test was applied to find whether



the social challenges scores varied significantly between male and female. The calculated t-value is 0.184 which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is less than the table value it is inferred that there exists no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in facing social challenges in daily life.

**Table 6:** Mean scores and t-value on economic challenges facing by the person with deaf according to their gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Male	78	48.41	4.82	0.004	NS Df = 88
Female	12	48.42	5.55		P>0.05

Table 6 indicates the gender wise mean scores of deaf cultures with regard to facing the economic challenges. The mean score for male is 48.41 and for female are 48.42. The t-test was applied to find whether the economic challenges scores varied significantly between male and female. The calculated t-value is 0.004 which is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is less than the table value it is inferred that there exists no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in facing economic challenges in daily life.

**Table 7:** Mean scores and t-value on social challenges facing by the person with deaf according to their demography

Demography	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Rural	22	60.27	7.97	0.474	NS
Urban	68	59.35	7.90		df = 88 P>0.05

Table 7 give a picture of the demography wise mean scores of Deaf cultures with regard to facing the social challenges. The mean score rural is 60.27 and for urban is 59.35. The calculated t-value is 0.474 is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates there is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in facing social challenges in daily life.

Table 8 give a picture of the demography wise mean scores of Deaf cultures with regard to facing the economic challenges. The mean score rural is 59.31 and for urban is 59.76. The calculated t-value is 0.266 is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 8:** Mean scores and t-value on economic challenges facing by the person with deaf according to their demography

Demography	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Rural	36	59.31	7.31	0.266	NS Df = 88
Urban	54	59.76	8.30		P>0.05

It indicates there is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in facing economic challenges in daily life.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that:

- ♦ The Perspectives of persons with Deafness about the Deaf culture among persons with deafness of different age groups with regard to using sign language do not vary significantly among different age groups.
- ♦ There exists no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in using sign language.
- ♦ There is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in using sign language.
- ♦ There exists no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in facing social challenges in daily life.
- ♦ There exists no significant difference between male and female persons with deafness in facing economic challenges in daily life.
- ♦ There is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in facing social challenges in daily life.
- ♦ There is no significant difference between rural and urban persons with deafness in facing economic challenges in daily life.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main overall finding of this study is that the perspective of person with deafness about the use of sign language do not vary significantly among different age groups. This finding is supported by (Young *et al.* 2019). Deaf individuals have the option to assimilate and attempt to integrate with the Deaf culture with the help of sign language. Sign language plays a vital role in deaf community to promote deaf culture irrespective of their age.

The person with deafness and deaf cultures are facing various social and economic challenges in daily life. But there exist no significant differences among person with deafness and deaf cultures in facing social and economic challenges with respect to gender and demographic division. So, both male and females from rural and urban areas are facing equal type of social and economic challenges in their daily life. They should aware about their social and economic rights, various schemes launched by Government, which help them to tackle the difficulties in their daily life. Through educational institution, campaigns organized by various government and non-government organization, poster presentation, advertisement these awareness programmes may conducted.

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