

ROLE PLAYING AND EXTRAVERSION IN HEARING CHILDREN OF DEAF PARENTS

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ABSTRACT: Hearing children born to deaf parents are usually caught between two worlds as they grow in a deaf culture which gives rise to a unique experience. For a deeper understanding of the complexities of their inter-cultural communication this study explored qualitatively, the world of hearing children having deaf parents and was carried out in the deaf community of Punjab and KPK Pakistan. The objectives of this study were to understand how role playing and extraversion develop in the personality of hearing children having deaf parents and how parental deafness impacts the lives of their children. Snowball sampling technique was used to approach hearing adults of deaf parents with an age range of 18 to 35 years. The sample was homogenous on the bases of deaf community and heterogeneous in demographic characteristics. Semi-structured interview was used as a main technique to explore the experiences of participants; thematic analysis was conducted after transcribing the interviews. Themes were based on the concept of extraversion and role playing [1]. Analysis of participant's experiences depicts that parental disability is associated with the personality traits of their children in two ways. At one hand hearing adults of deaf parents show positive effects in personality because they are playing the role of interpreters, but on other hand it gives rise to ambivalent behavior leading to conflicts.

Keywords: *Extraversion, Role Playing, Thematic Analysis, Hearing Children, Personality Traits*

INTRODUCTION

There are many cultural groups in our society and deaf community is also a cultural group that needs to be understood from various perspectives [2]. Previous studies on deaf community describe it only in reference to the problems dealing with spoken language, speech production, reading and writing abilities [3] whereas their hearing children are still ignored in Pakistan. Disabilities have an impact on parenting and in earlier literature various disabilities have been taken into account while the existing research highlights the issues of deaf parenting only [4]. Almost ninety percent of children born to Deaf parents are hearing [5] and there are a lot of factors that are involved in the personality development of hearing children of deaf adults referred to as Coda's since they are a part of the deaf community. It is necessary to understand the complexities of deaf community and social interaction problems as directly or indirectly these affect the personality of their hearing children [6].

Present study comprises of psychological, social and cultural factors, focusing on how hearing disability of parents, their communication styles and children's role as interpreter, effect the personality traits of CODA's. Studying about deaf parenting is important as being nurtured by a disabled parent is of concern to the child to child's physical protection and also to see whether a disabled parent can sufficiently meet the child's, emotional, social or developmental needs that gear towards a healthy development of personality [7].

Hearing children of deaf parents exist between two cultures which gives rise to a unique experience. They are rational as they can talk and use sign language for daily communication with their parents and deaf society which is their indigenous culture. They find themselves more relaxed in their native culture as they typically turn to deaf community to have a sense of family, for real exchange of friendship and for attaining information about the community itself [8].

Deaf people can be found among all ethnic groups and social classes and where as hearing world perceives them as handicapped [9] they have a great influence on their hearing children, as there is a strong bonding between parents and

children. This bond has a deep effect on their children's personality [10]. "*The Psychology of Deafness*" [11] describes deafness as a sensory insufficiency that deprives an organism from the external world experiences. Deafness can be defined in psychological terms as an impact *on the child's social interactions and other psychological processes* [12]. Deaf culture not only includes deafness, but also different ways of thinking, relating to identity and each other in different ways of life [13]. Unlike other disabled groups, deaf individuals strive to become separate from the mainstream culture and establish their own culture [14].

Despite the visible physical obstacles, emotional conflicts also appear to be strong and prominent in the deaf community [15]. Such as they do not think of deafness as a disability, but rather a difficulty in overcoming the language barrier [14]. Communication pattern by deaf parents toward their hearing children sometimes create ineffectiveness, as while they expect their children to communicate with them in sign language, deaf parents use broken speech or mix mode of communication toward their hearing children. This has a great impact on the interaction pattern and produces deficiency in the personality development of their hearing children [16]. Sometimes the parent-child relationship becomes restricted and asymmetrical as deaf parents have a misguided conception of communicating in sign language with their children because they think of the child as hearing, and they want to prevent over reliance on their child to serve as their interpreter [14]. Pakistan Sign Language (PSL) has been shown to be a natural language; fully proficient of articulating any emotion and thought in deaf community [17]. PSL is not simply finger spelling it is comprehensive with a rich vocabulary and grammar. Deaf individuals educated in a strictly auditory/oral program and who never learned to sign generally do not identify with members of the deaf culture. The hearing children accepted as members of the deaf community, use PSL as a genuine language for interacting toward their deaf parents [17].

A study on deaf parent's parenting perceptions and enactment, reports that deaf parents bring up and train their

hearing children in very effective ways to attain emotional stability [18]. Researchers also found [18] that many deaf parents pursue successful parenting and raise their hearing children as dutiful and responsible. Although some deaf parents are not as effective when parenting their hearing children and various communication problems make their children insecure in community [19]. Literature finds that deaf parents try their best to stay concerned about child raising practices and attain access to child rearing information [20]. Hearing children also appreciate and generally have very positive views about the child rearing practices of their deaf parents and this is beneficial in developing competency in the children to the challenges of their life [20]. Previous researchers found that deaf parents are motivated and try to solve various psychological, social and scholastic concerns by being resourceful and practical [20].

On the other hand common identity issues for CODA in deaf community are: confusion, uncertainty, doubt, and ambiguity about one's identity. They may also feel alone, diverged, and cast out while growing [18].

Frank [21] describes some of the traits of spoken language and sign language that are bicultural, like experience of nonconformity is a common characteristic and others are being companionless, disorganized, lonely, indecisive, isolated, not affiliated, lost, detached and odd. This generally happens because their deaf parents have internalized a negative view about sign language [22,23]. CODA's sometimes have issues of identity with their indigenizing group and it creates a conflict in their self-concept, that leads them to uneasiness and makes them inexpressive and less conversant with normal population [24]. Some children of deaf do not feel comfortable in deaf community as their peers from normal community reject them due to their deaf parental association, and thus it's a situation in which children cannot openly discuss emotions and feelings of rejection with their parents for fear of breaking their heart [25]. However most of the time children having deaf parents establish a communication link between their parents and the hearing world; they interpret for their parents at every suitable and unsuitable situation which makes them more sociable [26]. They also cherish richness accompanied with knowledge of language and the cultures of two worlds. Maintaining this 'special' role in family configuration facilitates them to become wise and deepens their ability to understand others [24].

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY:

Previous literature shows that many qualitative studies have been conducted on the communication patterns of deaf people but how deafness is distressing the personality of the hearing adults of deaf people is ignored [27]. In the context of Pakistani deaf community, the hearing adults of deaf parents are not given enough importance as they are not recognized as being members of the deaf community. So there is a need to study their issues with various perspectives of deaf community. This study provides description of the deaf community's language, culture, parenting issues in families with deaf parents and hearing children that can affect the personality traits of hearing children.

This research outlines the communication patterns for social worker and personality psychologist as well as defines the

role of special education in creating a communicative environment for deaf people.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How parental deafness and CODA's role as interpreters effects the personality development of hearing adults?

METHOD

Participants

The study sample comprised of 8 (4 males, 4 females) hearing children of deaf adults (CODA). The age range of participants was 18-35 years.

Procedure

For this study, participants were selected on voluntary basis from Lahore and KPK on the basis of snowball sampling. Initial screening was done to select the (CODAs) who are born to both deaf father and mother. Semi structured interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information from the participants following an interview guideline including open ended questions like "what are the effects of deafness on various aspects of your life" and "what are your perceptions about deafness in relation to spoken community". The data was taped and transcribed for thematic analysis [1].

ANALYSIS

After analysis two major themes emerged. The first major theme was "Extraversion" with sub themes of: *outgoingness, liveliness, supportiveness, assertiveness and communicativeness*. The second major theme was "Conscientiousness" with sub themes of: *effectiveness, dutifulness and achievement*.

First emerging theme from the interviews was "extraversion" with the sub theme of outgoingness which includes, taking interest in shopping, attending marriage parties, taking interest in visiting and gatherings with relatives. One of the participant in the study said "*Most of the times when I go out with my deaf parents, people perceive me as a pretty deaf girl because I use sign language with my parents. I go out with my parents as a translator to the spoken community, and especially when we go out for breakfast. In every event we accompany our parents and enjoy a lot with them*".

Another participant said:

"*I like to go out with parents*". These finding were supported by previous researchers [20] who found that among the interpersonal skills of CODA's compassion and understanding for others are present.

Another important theme under extraversion was 'liveliness'. The sub themes were feeling vital along deaf parents, gaining extra protocol from society with them, being occupied and satisfied with routine of life, wanting to promote skills for deaf people and active participation in college functions.

Three participants stated that:

"*We never miss any marriage parties and enjoy a lot with our deaf parents and always take active participation in college and university functions, besides this we also have membership of deaf association Lahore in which we participate fully*".

Another sub theme was 'supportiveness'. This theme seems to compel hearing children of deaf adults to do something for the welfare of their parents and listening to their parents' wishes that gives them pleasure instead of seeking their own personal desires. The sub themes are; trying to make deaf

parents happy and feeling contented by fulfilling their deaf parents' wishes.

One participant stated that:

"I performed a role of pilot on a stage drama in army school, as that was the wish of my parents for which I got appreciation from parents and teachers, my father was very happy that day". "I am a student but I am also working in a deaf center. I teach deaf students there and help them in learning the skills of art, after that I teach tuition at home".

Some of the participants describe their experiences as: *"I feel pleased when I interpret the sign language for my parents. I always feel happy by satisfying my parents;"* and *"I receive appreciation from the community when I interpret sign language for my parents.* Researchers have found CODA's to be responsible and involved in the practice of self-care and care of their parents [21].

The analysis of the study identified 'assertiveness' as an important theme under extraversion. This included sub themes of travelling alone to different places, to feel pleasure when going out with friends, never hesitating to ask for anything and flexibility in ideas to improve communication.

One of the participants said that:

"I travel alone to places such as college, university and market. I never hesitate to ask for anything from anybody. My siblings sometime hesitate to speak out to people and other family members, my parents often keep quiet in front of my uncle and aunt but I never hesitate to speak them about any issues" *"I never hesitate to go out in community.*

Researchers [25] found that seventy-three percent of CODA's feel optimistic about their deaf parents and forty-nine percent of the children showed parental reliance.

Another participant said *"I enjoy the company of friends and participate in social gathering. I never have difficulty in open discussion, and I discuss every issue with friends".* According to researchers [29] children of deaf parents often serve as a bridge, they are primary linguists for their parents and establish a communication link between their parents and the hearing world.

The next sub theme identified was 'communicativeness' under extraversion. This had sub themes of; to speak a lot with parents, use sign language for parents and spoken language for spoken community, also to help siblings in communicating with parents.

"I speak a lot in deaf community and hearing community. I use sign language as a source of communication with deaf parents and spoken language with hearing community. Previous researchers [14] supported the views that CODA's acquire cultural language as a spoken language and become the member of their hearing community. Hearing children are involved in issues of communication within the family and with outsiders and act as cultural mediators, in general it does not appear that they are at a greater risk for serious family dysfunction, they seem to play their role normally in every activity of their life [15].

The next major theme was of "Conscientiousness" under which 'effectiveness' emerged as an important theme, its sub themes are; competence in facing the challenges in and out of deaf community, having skills of creating humor, resourceful and doing indoor and outdoor jobs.

Following are the feelings of participants:

"I have seen many ups and downs with deaf parents as I suffered financial crises. Many times I even saved my pocket money for buying my clothes, but I think I am more mature than my other age fellows. I am competent in facing the challenges in a deaf community and out of deaf community". Another participant added *"I am a resourceful person and can do indoor and outdoor jobs".* Hearing children living with deaf parents learn the expertise of the two cultural languages and are familiar with the appropriateness and inappropriateness of these situations that makes them more sociable [30].

Another theme that makes hearing children of deaf adults more responsible for communicating between the two communities is the theme of 'dutifulness' under "conscientiousness" and the emerging sub themes are; taking care of the parents, trying to make them happy, doing jobs to release the burden of deaf parents, getting educated for parents and being patient towards deaf parents,

The views of one participant are:

"All the hearing children in our society are obedient to their deaf parents. I translate sign language of my parents to the hearing society. I take care of the deaf parents even to the extent of giving medicine to my father regularly; one of our sisters must stay at home to take care of my father as he is sick nowadays. I make every possible effort to make my parents happy. I am also interested in doing a job just to release the burden of deaf parents because their whole life they did a lot of effort for us. To be an interpreter of parents make me wise as my parents cannot express themselves so I convey their ideas to people".

Another participant stated that; *"I am doing part time job along my studies to release the burden of parents".* Earlier researchers [13] have found the same views in their qualitative study.

'Achievement' was another theme under "conscientiousness" which included sub themes of promoting skills for deaf people, realization for deaf parents, always doing the best and learning to do better, and having trust in creative abilities.

"I feel motivated to work for the betterment of the deaf community, I have some goals for future; I am studying for my parents. I want to buy a car for my parents and will provide them with a driver. I want to do something for other deaf people as well".

The views of another participant were:

"I trust my abilities and I will do a job in future. I am already learning the skills of the deaf for their better future". Previous researchers [31] reported high theoretical achievement and ambition as optimistic characteristics of CODA's. Parents of CODA develop competency in their children to face the challenges of their life [20].

There were themes which showed conflicts in hearing children and these were: hostility, shyness, and reserved nature.

'Hostility' had sub themes of; mistrust and being reserved.

Participant stated as:

"I do not trust anybody; my friends have deceived me several times". Another stated *"I do not know what to speak to the people around me so I just observe them".* According to a

previous research [21] hearing children of deaf adults have difficulty in maintaining social identity.

'Shyness' was another theme with sub themes of; lack of self-confidence, sitting quietly among other family members and having difficulty in expressing ideas. "*I do not like to communicate with people, even with my mother sometimes I am not expressive, and I spend most of my time in doing some sort of work*". Parents of CODA's sometimes do not communicate by using sign language with their children, which makes them introverts [23].

'Reserved nature' was another theme taken from the experiences of participants; it had sub themes of less friendly toward deaf community and mistrust.

"*I do not make friends as my friends deceived me, at present I have only one friend from deaf community*".

Researchers have [18] stated that sometimes deaf parents are not cooperative when nurturing their hearing child, which makes their children less communicative toward the community.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the themes strengthens the fact that hearing adults of deaf people role play as interpreters. This role playing helps in making them extroverts as they act as a bridge between deaf community and spoken community for their parents.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

The main limitation of this research is in relation to the demographic variables of the study as all the participants belonged to low and middle socio economic status and all the participants were educated. So findings can vary if different demographics are taken into account.

SUGGESTIONS

There is a need for extensive research on hearing children in Pakistan, as one participant stated, "*I think there is a need to for more research as we grow up in a distinctive setting*". Enhancing knowledge of their individual lives can help parents, educationalists, and mental health providers reduce the possible negative consequences due to parental deafness.

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