

The Psycho-social Condition of the Bohol Deaf Academy Students and its Influence on their Personality

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ABSTRACT

The Deaf are easily misunderstood minority due to the invisibility of their disability. Even among experts in SPED, Deafness is seen as simply as a sensory problem easily addressed with technological and sensory solutions, such as hearing aids and sign language. The review juxtaposed theories of development with theories on language acquisition to explore the effects of not having an expressive language in the formative years and how it ultimately affects the development of their emotions and personality. The study drew upon years of immersion with the students of a school for the Deaf, including interviews with 10 male and 10 female students during the school year 2013-2014. The study revealed that Deafness results in the delay of language acquisition, and a lag in academic development. However, the setup of the students at the academy which included sponsored education, a stay in dormitory program supervised by surrogate parental figures while in the community of their peers, counterbalances the effects of difficulties in familial communications, delayed academic development, and the discrimination that they experience, leading to the conclusion that despite difficulties, the students had developed healthy self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept.

Keywords: Special Education, differently-abled, qualitative method, anecdotal observation, interviews, Philippines, Asia

INTRODUCTION

Early detection is key to intervention to Children with Special Needs (CSN) including the Deaf. Infant malnutrition often leads to developmental problems which may manifest as sensory impairment and poor brain development. Proper postnatal care which would include breastfeeding and properly scheduled and administered immunizations, should minimize childhood diseases such as rubella, meningitis, measles, and mumps which are often the reason for hearing impairment (World Health Organization, 2014). The most obvious characteristic of the hard of hearing kid is the inability to create oral language, and our principal concern has been to encourage the kid to talk. Discourse has been viewed as the fundamental establishment for different signs of dialect; for sure, in numerous quarters it has been likened with dialect. (Nordén, 1981). The use of Sign Language as an intervention presents a mix of issues ranging from the actual hearing impairment to the resulting difficulty of language acquisition, acquisition of an expressive language connecting to a reading language. The fact that vocabulary is often taught through the use of a phonetic orientation makes it difficult for the deaf to attain the same level of reading comprehension as hearing students do. *"How can someone read if he cannot effectively "sound out" the words in his head?"* This process is a cognitive skill assumed by many reading experts to be necessary for children to develop successful reading skills." (Marschark & Hauser, 2011)

Such may seem to be strange to the Hearing for those who take silent reading for granted, but most readers "vocalize" the phonetics of the letters in their heads as a silent version of reading aloud. It is what Speed Reading practitioners refer to as subvocal reading. Except for trained speed readers: *"Reading is accompanied by a "hidden voice," a tendency to pronounce the printed words silently or even to speak them in a barely audible murmur,"* claims Frank (1994). This need for "vocalization" is evident in the Deaf when they count objects. They will point with one hand and sign the numbers with the other ticking away the numbers mechanically analogous to how they mouth, "1, 2, 3..." When they have pointed to the last object, they will look at their hand and they will know how many objects.

To ground this study in theory would require a review of literature on early childhood development. Most theories of childhood development begin with something that is equivalent to Piaget's Sensory Motor Stage (Simatwa, 2010) because children's learning is acquired through the senses.

It is known in modern pedagogy as Audio, Visual and Kinesthetic modalities of learning. This theoretical grounding presents a problem. Hearing impairment, whether you stand on the Nature or Nurture side of the fence, will always show the Deaf child to be at a disadvantage.

The theories of Bandura and Vygotsky have provided more light on the subject. Because auditory information is not received, the auditory/phonetic components of learning cannot be taken advantage of. Thus, there is neither modeling for that skill nor can the Deaf child be expected to be in their Zone of Proximal Development when information cannot enter through the audio modality. Unfortunately for the Deaf, the auditory component of human experience is something that they cannot model. But they can model visual and kinesthetic input. And with that, they can copy only visual input and each other. Without direct instruction and strong guidance, they look to popular media for their role models, and many will be molded by peer pressure.

On the nurture side of things, behaviorist theories would love to say that a lot of the learning would require reinforcement. Since auditory stimulus is not received, reinforcement from that modality would also not serve. As one cannot simply look at a child and see deafness, alternative stimulation and input for learning are often delayed until the disability is identified. What has been relied upon as the theory for early childhood cognitive development is Piaget's theory. Evolutionary psychologists have found the Sensory Motor and preoperational stages common among other animals. However, the concrete operational and formal operational stage which we take for granted comes with age is actually linked to schooling and advanced interactions. The Deaf when identified during middle and late childhood without having been exposed to the schooling show a marked developmental delay in academics and consequently the move into the higher operational stages.

In a nutshell, the sequence of Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory is ordered: Sensory-motor stage 0-2 years, Preoperational or intuitive stage 2-7 years, Concrete operational stage 7-11 years and Formal operational stage 11-15 years. But these transitions are not necessarily a result of simple, straightforward development. Evolutionary psychologists found evidence that preoperational skills development is intuitive even for the great apes, whereas the Formal operational stage could hardly be considered, biological. "Formal operational skills should not be thought of as skills that naturally unfold over the course of development. Instead,

these are skills that are acquired with considerable effort and often require instruction" (Genovese, 2003).

This different way of looking at things opens two new threads of thought. Firstly, parts of cognitive development are biological in nature in which parents and teachers have no influence over. In the case of the Deaf where the auditory modality is excluded from the sensory-motor stage, experiences based on auditory perception cannot be developed or at least not without considerable difficulty even for professionals. So what is expected to be a universal milestone for children 0-2 years old, is not so widespread when applied to the deaf. Granted, the sequence of cognitive development set by Piaget still hold true. The approximate ages of their fruition, however, do not match up with what is observed in practice with the Deaf.

Secondly, concrete and formal operational skills require effort and instruction. To paraphrase a pedagogical cliché, *"If it is not taught it is not caught."* It is a common case for students attending the Bohol Deaf Academy, to have experienced a protracted preoperational stage, remaining undiagnosed through most of their early childhood. Without identifying their needs accurately, the necessary intervention could not be provided. In the context of a regularly-abled child, language acquisition should come as a primary ability. As in the context of evolutionary psychology in animals that have a language, adults do not need to instruct their young.

Such presumption means that they pass this stage with little difficulty because language acquisition comes naturally to them. This has been labeled by Noam Chomsky (1959) as the Language Acquisition Device or LAD, (Heidar, 2012). The term was coined to serve as a hypothesis, explaining the universal observation that, children absorb language naturally. And that they make generalizations on unique grammatical, syntactic and semantic constructions that cannot be explained by simple mimicry nor is it through direct instruction.

In Chomsky's mind, it was apparent that there was a part of the brain or parts of the brain collaborating to acquire language almost instinctively without the need for formal instruction that seems to disappear by the time a child reaches grade school level. As a result of the deafness, the child cannot learn by listening and like in Piaget's stages the language learning stages do not always happen in the expected time frame. When these parents, particularly those from economically disadvantaged or poor educational background, encounter deafness, the first thing they notice is

that the child does not respond to verbal stimuli. This manifests itself most profoundly in the fact that the child has no spoken language. The train of thought then goes something like... *"My child isn't responding to me. I call, I clap, I talk slowly, I explain, and he still doesn't understand. He looks at me blankly and cannot imitate the sounds I make. My child must, therefore, be mute or worse mentally disabled."*

Even after the family's acceptance of the child's deafness, it is still not readily understood why being able to hear would result in not being able to talk. The follow-up question is, *"Sure they can't hear, but if there's nothing wrong with their mouth, why can't they talk?"* Until a Deaf person can establish one to one correspondence between objects, concepts, and words (verbal and written), no complex formal instruction can be carried out. Without a formal language, the parents also cannot give any meaningful input regarding their child's life. Interaction would be limited to pointing, pulling and unsystematic gesticulation. Without the requisite language skill with which to interact with people, even emotional development is delayed. In our experience, the language barrier is also an impediment to parental bonding. A crude pidgin Sign Language is developed in the household to facilitate order in the home but little else. Most are demonstrative, ranging from *go, come, cook, clean, and take care*. This method of communication is woefully inadequate to express desire, wishes, and trains of consciousness and make meaningful parental interactions.

Relationships between parent and child are necessary for building trust. Parents transfer their skills and knowledge foster autonomy, interaction with the community and school establishes the child's identity and so on. These conflicts do not arise nor are they resolved in a vacuum. In various theories of personality development, personality conflicts and conflict resolution has always been a matter of relating to others, the dysfunction of that relationship and finding a way to relate better to people in the context of oneself and relationships require more effort for the Deaf.

Ironically when the children learn to sign, it is common for parents to even more distant from their children. As formerly made up signs do not match with the now formal Sign Language used by their children, parents may feel that the school alienated them from their children. Some parents would realize the need to learn Sign Language also to have a means to communicate with their children. This reestablishes their relevance in the lives of their children and can then proceed to be the parents that they were meant to be.

To the non-signing parent, problems revisit them later on during the adolescence of the Deaf child. The parents find themselves having no disciplinary influence in the lives of their children as they continue to be bombarded by very confusing messages from peer pressure, mass media, and the internet. While affection and care may be shown through body language, without Sign Language, exact sentiments like, "I will always be here for you," or even, "How was school?" cannot be expressed. Without an actual language the expression of emotional support, sympathy, advice is hard to convey. Without words to signify one's most profound thoughts, it can be imagined that intense feelings that require release and catharsis cannot be expressed as well.

Erikson has laid out for us the journey that all people take throughout their lives in his lifelong theory of Psycho-Social development (Newman & Newman, 2012, 2009). And like Piaget he has mapped out development in stages. The unique situation of the Deaf, however, shows the flexible nature of Erikson's (1914) Stages. Their physiological and economic conditions can result in varying rates of success in resolving the conflicts of each stage (Newman & Newman, 2012, 2009). The stages, therefore, are not left behind by the individual after the conflict is resolved. Initial success may not be a guarantee that such a conflict will not be encountered again nor will it mean automatic success in the future. As the Deaf grow up, the Deaf community eventually becomes their family. For better or worse, it is their peers and teachers that will have a more significant impact on the lives of most of the Deaf.

This all stems from the simple fact that often, there is no one at home who signs, no one to "talk to," which ultimately means that many of them have who will have less significant influence in their growing up. And it is these family relationships that Eriksonian psychologists say a person depends on for continued success in negotiating the conflicts.

Its effects and implications are magnified when applied to the Deaf. Guidance and initial successes are necessary for fostering autonomy; initiative is strengthened when independent action is reinforced as desirable and so on. In the researcher's experience, he has come to learn of some uncommon behavior as common to the Deaf who attend the Academy.

- A lot of the girls do not accept gifts from the boys because it was in their mind that accepting the gift would mean becoming boyfriend and girlfriend.

- A girl may not receive gifts from other boys while they are someone's girl.
- If a girl breaks off a relationship, she must pay the boy back for all the gifts previously given.

Whether this is a common personality trait or a facet of Deaf culture, these concepts have gone mostly unnoticed until discovered by the teachers of the school. It was not something known to the parents.

Emotional skills are not developed in a vacuum. The school and home are vital to the development of the affective component of the psyche. The contrast is quite striking when one observes the Deaf child that comes from a signing family. Many of the Honor students of the Bohol Deaf Academy (BDA) come from households where one or more of the family members are good signers. Deaf from these homes adjust better to society at large and have higher chances of gaining meaningful employment. Such instances mean that educators are responsible for more than just the academics of the students.

How Deaf Children Learn says that 30-40 percent of the Deaf have psychological and neurological conditions related to their hearing loss (Marschark & Hauser, 2011). Those statistics are alarming especially when labels condition people to assign a particular set of traits to another group of people. We are supposed to already have a handle on things when a person is diagnosed. *Oh, he's Deaf, his characteristics are these, and appropriate interventions are these.* But to say that they could also have learning disabilities, mental retardation or need counseling and therapy, require Deaf educators take a multi-disciplinary approach.

It is a matter of common sense to look into cognitive developmental theories as a means to explain the deficiency in academic learning. However, experience and studies suggest that the Deaf can learn just as quickly when the tasks are performance based rather than based on literacy (Marschark & Hauser, 2011). That finding strongly suggests that the problem lies not in the processing of information, which would indicate a cognitive problem. Rather, the acquisition of the information is hampered by the sensory depravity and that teaching should be adapted around this problem.

The primary purpose of this study was to take a look into the conditions that surround the Deaf, to identify which difficulties they have in common, and identify the factors that are the source of discrepancies in the development

of the personality of the Deaf that come from different backgrounds. Specifically, the research hopes to shed light on the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the students in the context of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Age began schooling
2. Find the explanations of the psychosocial conditions of the informants in terms of:
 - 2.1 Family
 - 2.2 School
 - 2.3 Personal
3. Do the psychosocial conditions as explained in above statement affect their personality according to their:
 - 3.1 Self Esteem
 - 3.2 Self Concept
 - 3.3 Self Confidence

METHODOLOGY

This research is exploratory in nature that used the qualitative method, mainly through anecdotal observation and in-depth interviews among 20 students (ten males and ten females), from a school for the Deaf in Bohol. The school also ran a dormitory facility on campus; the school was considered their normal living environment for the duration of their high school life that gave the researcher access to the students in a community setting. Interview questions were used with the use of Sign Language (SL). It helped identify the effects of different factors in a Deaf person's life. They include acceptance of the family regarding the child's deafness, the time it took for the deaf person to be identified, the presence of a signer in the household, the child's perception of himself in relation to the rest of the hearing world. The interview tackled aspects of their family life, their school, and community life, and their thoughts and experiences.

The researcher's fluency in Sign Language - ranked at Level III at the Philippine Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (PRID), and long exposure to Deaf Culture served as prolonged immersion with the respondents having the opportunity to observe them in their academic, dormitory, and community environments and access to their family members during Parent-Teacher Conferences and home visits were vital to this research.

The interviews were comprehensive, guided by series of questions divided into three major areas that would be instrumental to the formation of their personalities. The questions were derived from sentiments commonly expressed by the Deaf. The questions probed their life at home, their social interaction, and their intrapersonal life. The first part of the questions probed the experience of the Deaf in their families. It examined factors like acceptance, the presence of fluent signers in the home to indicate if members of the family have a means to interact with the Deaf child. Were they kept out of sight when there were important visitors in the house? These questions probe at the domestic situation of the student. The family either validates or invalidates the acceptance of the child's disability and the willingness to work with the professionals involved in the education of their children.

The second part delved about the students' social behavior which by and large included the school. How were they outside the home? Did they stay with their fellow Deaf only? Did they make friends with nonsigners among the hearing? Were their families concerned about their life outside the house? Did they prefer community or solitude?

The Deaf involved in the research are monetarily supported by international sponsors as most of the families discovered to have deaf children are indigent. Their support pays for all their tuition, and dormitory care. The making of cards and letters to their sponsors is a community activity. Now and then, a student received a letter or package that came from a sponsor, or sometimes even a face-to-face visit. While sponsors were encouraged to communicate with their sponsored child, not everyone did so. How did these displays of affection impact the child? How did they affect other children who did not have the same privilege? While sponsorship made their education possible did it also develop in them a sense of entitlement? Did they realize that their sponsorship was a temporary arrangement?

The last part was introspective, it asked about their self-esteem and perceptions regarding their value as a person and whether their Deafness was a source of shame. Were they confident enough to try and make it on their own? Did they have a plan? Did they make an effort conceal their disability in front of strangers? Some of the Deaf, for example, wore earphones and refrained from signing even if they could not hear music to not call attention to themselves when in public.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the personal information provided by the respondents, they were generally older than their counterparts from regular high schools. The tally of their ages revealed that the youngest respondent was 14 while the oldest was 27. Given that the general entry age for First Year High School/Grade 7 is 12 and the Graduating age for Fourth Year/Grade 10 is 16, the typical BDA student would still be overage for the graduating twelfth grader.

Reiterating the earlier discussion on language acquisition, most of the students have missed the commonly agreed upon window of opportunity for childhood language acquisition. There are various reasons for missing this window of opportunity. But one of the most common is the notion that a Deaf child is ineducable. Other obstacles include poverty, distance from any appropriate school or that the parents are unaware that such a program as IDEA exists to cater to their Deaf child.

Description of the sponsorship program: When a child is identified as Deaf, IDEA invites the parents to bring their children into the program. Then, the children are assigned to the nearest SPED center in their area, either Loon, Sagbayan, Talibon or Jagna. Then, each child is partnered with a sponsor that will support their schooling for as long as the child, and the sponsor is in the program. If the sponsor quits, or the child drops out, one or the other is reassigned. The sponsorship pays for teachers' salaries, board, and lodging of the students in their dormitories and some school supplies. It is clear to see that most of the students of BDA come from low-income families. And this lends credence to the observation that their poverty constitutes as aggravating circumstances to the children's disability (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001).

In the process of gathering information for this study, the researcher accompanied one of IDEA's social workers on a follow-up survey on a family whose child was about to enter the program in the summer of 2013 to get a firsthand perspective of what goes on in the identification process. The child (Informant 2) that the researcher visited, hailed from Cabilao Island.

Their house had no running water, they gathered drinking water from a downspout runoff. Electricity was rationed by the barangay, and the family made less than ₱200 pesos (\$4) a week, relying on mat weaving as a source of income. The researcher was told that these situations are found yearly during teacher surveys and that the parents would not have been aware of the program, had they not been informed. It is an unfortunate pattern that many of the Deaf that BDA caters to come from low-income brackets and from parents who had little to no opportunities for higher education. This not only proves a fertile ground for the conditions that contribute to having a Deaf child, but it also counts as an indicator of the child's future at gaining good communication skills (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001).

In a Best Practices Video Documentary of IDEA entitled *Amang: Beyond Silence* (I, Philippines, 2005), a conversation transpired between a teacher conducting a yearly survey for IDEA and the father of a Deaf child. It revealed that the father did not keep track of his child's age and did not know where the birth certificate was. Most striking of all was how he was unaware of the child's Deafness, "*(from Visayan) Deaf? Is he deaf (bungol)? He's not deaf, he's mute (amang)? When he was born, I didn't know he was mute. When he came around the age of about a year, we realized he couldn't speak, and deaf too. So we said this kid is mute. And yes, he is mute.*" (I, Philippines, 2005)

Though not typical, the scenario is also not uncommon. The invisibility of the handicap leads the uninitiated to have an egocentric view of the problem, i.e. "the child doesn't talk." In the same documentary, a parent was asked why it took so long for her to send her "child" (in her early 20s at the time of the video) to school. She replied that the child was useful in doing chores and that she got irritated at the persistence of the surveying teacher, so she finally gave in. (I, Philippines, 2005)

The quality of the results of the intervention for the Deaf children improves the earlier the child is diagnosed. Acceptance from the family, particularly the mother increases the chances of a more successful attempt at social integration (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001). That explains the difficulty encountered by teachers at the school for Deaf in Bohol regarding the development of literacy skills. Most of the students interviewed were diagnosed after the age of seven years old and further. Among those identified late, nine were identified after 12 years of age.

From the interview, the students agreed that they felt the concern of their parents for their well-being and that only a few thought their parents

were ashamed of their disability. When asked if someone in the family hated them, a small minority could detect animosity. While more than half revealed that there are signers in the home, which means that most of them have a person to interact with inside their home. Overall, a vast majority of the informants felt positively regarding their home environment reflected by the statement, *"When I get a job, I will help my family."*

Questions regarding the school were met with even more positivity. Nearly all the students agreed to enjoying school and that, *"BDA helps me prepare for my future,"* and that it is helping them towards a life of independence. It is important to note that it is mostly in school that the Deaf experience a community of their peers. One particular case, (Female Informant 1,15) at the time of this research was a third year (Grade 9) student at the School for Deaf. When she was five, her mother recounted that before to going to school, she stayed home and did not meet any other Deaf person and preferred to be always by her mother's side.

The documentary *Amang* follows her (Female Informant 1,15 years of age) first day in school and shows what happens then. Before Sign Language, there would be no signifier that would represent a Deaf person's being. It is in school that they acquire a unique sign name given to them by their peers. From then on, it is by that sign that they introduce themselves and are called by other Deaf people. In fact, it is common for a Deaf student to be known by their sign name without having the spelling of their name ever known by friends.

First names, first friends and first independent social interactions outside the family are formed in school. Indeed, the school is a community wherein the Deaf exist as social creatures. In school, they attain important social experiences that we take for granted like hanging out with friends or talking about passions, and crushes which are all critical to normal psycho-social development (Marschark & Hauser, 2011). None of these experience could happen without their exposure to Sign Language and the Deaf community. Literacy is a primary concern for the education of the Deaf. It has been mentioned earlier that among regular preschoolers thousands of words are already present in their receptive vocabulary even before school, whereas a Deaf child would learn her name in the first day. Again, early intervention is the key as to how much more work needs to be done.

She (Female Informant 1,15 years of age) became a very sociable and good student. In that school year's Science Fair at the school for the Deaf,

her team won first place overall in school for making a comparative study on the most effective strategy for weight loss among, walking, running, and aerobics. Their research was data-driven, and the controls were strict. Observing before and after statistics on body weight, waistline and thigh girth and measuring the percentage of overall measurements lost. She has come quite a long way from being unaware of her own Deafness and name. Identification and intervention at five years of age have proven very beneficial for her academic development

All factors held constant, Sign Language is an easy language to learn. The syntax is loose, and gesticulation fills in the blanks when an exact sign cannot be found to express an idea. On the spot, gesticulation can be employed by any signer to invent a sign to convey an idea not formally learned. "Smartphone" for example can be signed by flicking one's middle finger across the palm of the opposite hand mimicking the operation of a smartphone. This gesture can be invented on the spot and recognition of the idea is instantaneous. However, in that instance, a word has just been communicated without the need for the recognition of any letters, morphemes or graphemes. Teachers are often in a game of cat and mouse trying to find the spelling to a sign the students have just invented. Thus, Sign Language's flexibility also contributes to the difficulty of learning how to read because sign syntax does not match written syntax.

The consequence of this flexibility is stunted vocabulary development. Vocabulary size is strikingly smaller among the Deaf (Marschark & Hauser, 2011). And a smaller vocabulary would, of course, mean limited reading. The thickest Sign Language dictionary the researcher has encountered is the American Sign Language Dictionary (Sternberg, 1998). This edition boasts of having more entries than other dictionaries, and it has around 4000 words and its comprehensive edition it declares having 5430-word entries. Each word entry may have three to five synonyms attached to each sign. Compare that to a pocket edition dictionary, and it would easily have 20,000 words, and a comprehensive dictionary would have more than 50,000-word entries. Such a disparity would mean that if a student relied on sign vocabulary alone to match up with their reading, they would have a vocabulary equivalent to a first to second-grade pupil (Philips, Buckland, & White, 2008).

This deficiency in their vocabulary also affects their interactions with the hearing community. They are aware that they could be using the wrong words in exchanging notes with nonsigners or could be typing the wrong things in

chat, making them look stupid. This could seriously affect their confidence when trying to connect with nonsigners. If the students are to grow their vocabulary to mature levels, there would need to be an acceptance that many words would not have signs. Maybe they can be spelled but not all signed. In science class, for example, we would sign “guess” or “h-guess” to mean “hypothesis.” The Principal of the school is herself Deaf. She is a Masters degree holder. To simply navigate college and post-graduate studies alone would require a lexicon of at least 15,000 to 20,000 words). The Principal admitted that her reading vocabulary surpassed her signed vocabulary often admitting, *“I know the word, but I cannot sign it.”*

Informant 3's mother was infected with German measles during her gestation of the informant and she was told by her doctor that the chances of the baby coming out with a sensory impairment were high. The informant's deafness, therefore came as no surprise to the family. Everyone in the family learned to sign, and the informant's sister became a shadow interpreter for her including during her post-graduate studies. The Deaf of the school did not have the benefit of very early intervention as Informant 3 had, and the love for reading was not fostered early enough. As a result, signs are not always readily correlated to equivalent spellings, and the students mostly ignore finger spelling. Many do not even bother to learn the correct spelling of the names of their friends.

The researcher discontinued the use of basal reader trade books because he observed a lack of interest in reading among the students when he did, it seemed to affect their self-esteem. Even other teachers made the same observation when they were seen by the students using elementary level school books to base their lessons on. For this reason, teachers of deaf school now make their classrooms a print-rich environment and compile their own material rather than assign a particular textbook. To cater to their more immediate needs, the researcher switched to more functional uses of literacy like reading labels and instructions. It proved more appropriate, and because the material was authentic, they didn't feel they were being taught “basic material.” As pointed out by Manning (2007), this mode of instruction is a better approach as it considered their self-esteem.

The Sponsorship program gives the students more than academic opportunities. They are also given dormitory care and stay in the dorm during school days and are provided transportation fare twice a month to allow them to go home to their families. To involve the families in the development of the child, Sign Language classes are held for family members. This program is vital especially for the students because adolescents would need the guidance of their parents, not just of the school. Sadly, not everyone avails of the service. Only a little over half of the students affirmed that there are family members who can sign well. Even so, it seems that some communication is facilitated somewhat as almost all of the students agree that *"When I have problems, I can ask for help from my parents or siblings."* But without a formal means of education, parents find themselves lacking important details in interacting with their children.

One of the unique experiences that the researcher believes contribute heavily to their personality as Deaf students are their knowledge of the sponsorship setup. Students are partnered with sponsors who pay for their schooling and dormitory care. During their inclusion in the program, they write seasonal letters, summer and Christmas letters, and thank you letters whenever receive anything from their sponsors. More than half of the students have indicated that *"My sponsor has answered my letters before."* This relationship with their sponsors positively contributes to their emotional development.

Other sponsors further made efforts to meet their sponsored child or show up for graduation. Almost all of the interviewees reported having received gifts from their sponsors. In contrast, while a significant majority of the Deaf enjoy group work, nearly the same number of Deaf students expressed their preference for working alone in class projects. However it can be thought of group work can be a function of their self-esteem which is validated by interaction with peers (Emler, 2001) and that their confidence to work alone is a function of a deeper self-concept that tells them they are adequate and equal to the task given to them, it's what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). The conditions that brought about their home and school experiences in the end built their self-concept as, "...cognitive structures that can include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgments and

are used to make sense of the world, focus attention on one's goals, and protect one's sense of basic worth" (Oyserman et al., 2012).

Introspective questions of the interview were of this nature. It reveals conclusions and ingrained mindsets which may be a result of their interactions at home and in school. The responses to the last 15 questions reveal a complex juxtaposition of contradicting thoughts. Majority of the respondents responded emphatically to wanting only Deaf friends, yet also expressed the desire to have more hearing friends.

The researcher ventured to say that wanting only Deaf friends speak to what they find to be their comfort zone on the here and now. After all, their community helps define their identity (Oyserman et al., 2012). When the Deaf of the school freely talked about their experiences, they related at times how the Hearing made them feel bad. Hearing, of course, is the opposite of Deaf, but during these exchanges, the dichotomy is clear that Hearing people are bad, literally signed as *bad Hearing* and the Deaf are the victims.

The terms, Deaf and Hearing, carry over to everyday conversation making the distinction between the two groups very evident. For example:

Teacher: Is your class complete?

Students: Some Deaf are still outside. (*Deaf, refers to their classmates.*)
and ask

Students: Who is that Hearing that just arrived? (*Hearing, meaning the stranger*)

The teachers, of course, take pains to explain to the students that generalization is not helpful, that their parents, teachers, sponsors by and large are also hearing. However, it becomes clear that "hearing" becomes a label for those who do not understand them, those who do not interact with them. In class, the researcher found out that the answer to, "*What does deaf mean?*" is "*Someone who can sign,*" rather than, someone who cannot hear. "Hearing" then can also be understood as a "privileged" class, people who have more opportunities open to them because they can interact with more people. Since that time more answered, "*someone who cannot hear,*" but in their everyday conversation they still sign, "Deaf" to mean others like them and "Hearing" to mean outsiders.

Notably, they revealed in the interview that while they can follow a Deaf leader, they think that a Deaf person cannot be a government official. The researcher ventured to say that it is not an admission of incompetence, but rather it would be impossible for a Deaf person to become a government leader because they may believe a Deaf candidate to be incapable of winning. This belief makes sense when one spends time with them and sees the treatment they get from much of the hearing community, the stares, the faces and the discrimination.

The researcher thinks this is also reflected in the common sentiment, *"I want to show people that the Deaf can succeed,"* expressed by a large majority, but about half also expressed, *"I wish to be a hearing person."* Again, this sentiment makes sense when you think about the access and opportunities available to hearing people that are not available to the Deaf. For example, no matter how intelligent a Deaf person is, their condition will not allow them to be doctors because many procedures require the use of hearing (examining with a stethoscope, listening to a Doppler, performing palpation on the abdomen). While only about a third of the students admit to pretending to be hearing while traveling, which may include wearing earphones and avoiding signing; it is significant that there are those that do so. The researcher observed that their signing gets followed by stares or unwanted calls, hisses and mock mimicry of signs and Deaf vocalization from onlookers and passersby. Generally, the pretense is just to avoid such unwanted attention rather than an emulation of the hearing.

For a more detailed look at the effects of the psychosocial conditions to their Personality, the questions were regrouped according to the aspect they were touching on; whether they were questions for self-confidence, self-esteem or self-concept. To reiterate, self-confidence is contextual to specific situations; self-esteem is an evaluation of adequacy based on their knowledge of themselves. Questions that reflected a conclusion about oneself was classified under self-concept. The interview experience and immersion with the Deaf in their academic and community environment revealed that the students' (School for Deaf) self-concept as a product of their social interactions within and outside their homes. The school in this study is a big social setting exactly because of their extended stay on campus for most of their childhood in their dormitories. By the time a Deaf student enters the school, they are far removed from their pre-Sign Language days and have become well-adjusted to their situation.

In general, they feel loved and accepted in family and school alike. For the most part, they feel included in family life and have a strong determination to succeed. They have a belief that the school is preparing them for independence, making statements like, *"My friends and I have plans for the future."* This belief suggests that they feel optimistic to be independent with their friends, and that the school has contributed to that optimism. They have become more confident and exhibit well-developed self-esteem, as their community has given them opportunities to grow and succeed. Through schooling, they developed a proper understanding of self-concept, and managing their expectation to align their goals to be more realistic.

The presence of "sponsors" facilitated their positive outlook that opportunities are never lost for them. And when the sponsors are very visible in their lives by responding to letters, giving gifts, and meeting them face-to-face, it contributed to their sense of belongingness and self-esteem. It is also clear however that the Deaf draw strength from the Deaf community. A willingness to work away from the community is met with uncertainty or negativity, although, half of them were willing to give it a try. Also, the fear of interruption of support from from their sponsors caused anxiety as it worried majority of the respondents.

It is clear that their identity and self-concept are tied up with sponsored education which became a norm in their lives. That norm would obviously change when they graduate. Sponsorship would be discontinued, and the Deaf would need to fend for their own. Given a change in the situation, their self-esteem could suffer if not addressed. A sort of transitioning should be carried out for the future graduates of the school to face this challenge.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data, the researcher concludes that the psychosocial contexts do affect the personality of a Deaf child in terms of their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept. However, the age at which their intervention begins has little if at all to do with their personality development.

The results of the interviews depict that the students were optimistic and socially well-adjusted. They also had normal dreams and ambitions. Even though only around 60 percent were reported to have good signers in their respective homes, it also revealed that there are effective lines of communications and interactions in their homes. Almost all of the informants reported of feeling loved by their families.

The realization during the course of this research is the Deaf community and the school that houses the students for most of their academic days serves as a family. Their setup is a live-in arrangement. They stay at in the dorm two weeks at a time 24 hours a day with classmate and friends. Their dorm supervisors are called dorm fathers, and mothers and they do act in *loco parentis* on behalf of the Deaf student's parents. The students, sleep in quarters, sharing the household chores of cooking, cleaning and preparing food. They watch TV and movies together. They support each other and fight in behavior that could be akin to sibling rivalry, basically experiencing the same dynamics as a domestic household.

What their answers revealed is that we are entering a more progressive paradigm wherein the parents are becoming aware that their involvement with their children's lives yields better results. A large percentage of students answered that there were good signers in their household. It did not use to be that high. There was always an admonition given to parents at every chance Deaf Educators could get during enrollment, Parent-Teacher conferences and other social gatherings.

However, in 2011, the students were all sent home with a new Sign Language dictionary, the Filipino Sign Language Dictionary by IDEA Philippines (IDEA, 2010). Among the unique features of this dictionary is the Visayan translation of the sign. It was made by IDEA to unify the signs of the SPED centers they were sponsoring. The dictionary was put together by surveying the SPED centers of Loon, Sagbayan, Talibon, and Jagna and publishing the signs most used by the Bohol Deaf; making the dictionary an accurate depiction of actual signs used in Bohol and a dictionary Visayan-speaking parents could use.

In conclusion, the sense of belongingness experienced by the Deaf positively contributed to their personality development. It provided a setting of authentic personal and social interactions that would not have been present had they stayed home. These elements may be missing in their homes but these are found in the BDA enhancing their well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. A comparative study of the performance of other Deaf in Bohol and elsewhere in the country may reveal alternative best practices which may prove beneficial to the performance of the Deaf in Bohol.
2. With more and more Deaf children identified in teachers' surveys every year, it is high time that the academic community of Bohol take up the challenge to train specialized experts in the field of Deaf Education to include interpreters, resource and classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators who can study and design systems and curriculum from the ground up specially suited for the Deaf of Bohol so that Boholanos can have local talent addressing their needs rather than importing expertise off island.
3. To participate in the advocacy and inclusion of the Deaf in meaningful programs and opportunities where their contributions will be appreciated.

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