

# OPINION OF DEAF ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF DEAF CLUBS

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to assimilate the opinion of the Deaf about Deaf clubs and benefits/detriments of Deaf clubs for the club members. The sample included 50 Deaf people from different Deaf clubs with experience of more than 2 years. The survey method followed for the opinion of the Deaf club members. The researcher made opinionnaire were used for opinion of the Deaf about different types of activities of the Deaf clubs. Based on the opinion of Deaf club members, research has shown that the Deaf clubs organize different type of activities which are categorized as “overall activities of Deaf clubs”. Research has also shown about overall activities of Deaf clubs, 24% Deaf opined that the overall activities of the Deaf clubs are fully beneficial, 54% of them opined that partially beneficial and the remaining 22% opined that minimally beneficial.

While school and colleges are formal agencies of education, Clubs, family and media are informal agencies of education. All these types of agencies are playing a crucial role and also essential for individual’s growth and development in all aspects. Deaf clubs are one of the informal agencies of education for the Deaf. The opinion of Deaf club members about Deaf clubs will be detrimental in understanding & promoting Deaf clubs in various parts of the country and world so as to meet the differential needs of Deaf.

## Introduction

Every individual is endowed with certain qualities and capacities and the lifelong opportunities of interaction and experience help him/her to develop. Education is considered as a lifelong process. Every moment in an individual’s life is said to educate him/her. Hence, it is quiet natural that a variety of individuals and things influence the educational process. According to Bhatia, society has developed a number of specialized institutions namely; agencies of education to carry out the functions of Education.

While schools and colleges are formal agencies of education; clubs, families, media etc. are informal agencies of education. All these types of agencies are essential for individual’s growth and development. Deaf clubs are one of the informal agencies of education for the Deaf. Deaf clubs have been described as a second home of the Deaf; a place where there are no hindrances for communication. It is a place where culture and community are encouraged and stimulated (Swedish National Association of the Deaf 2011)<sup>4</sup>.

## About Deaf Clubs

A place where Deaf can gather and meet on regular basis for various purposes like-knowledge acquisition, language learning & understanding the current affairs. These are places where Deaf people can meet face-to-face and conduct social business with one another. A place to develop friendship with young Deaf men and women to seek out possible marriage partners. Several Deaf clubs organize social and sports activities and promote socialization among the club members. Some of the Deaf clubs are offering literacy classes and share current affairs. In addition, Deaf clubs maintain and transmit Deaf culture and history and offer Deaf role models to young Deaf children and their families, and provide Deaf awareness to hearing people through sign language<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Thus, Deaf clubs form the network of the community’s socio-political structure (DeBee, 1985)<sup>8</sup>.

According to Deaf Enabled Foundation(2011) - Deaf clubs are very popular among young Deaf people who meet and exchange ideas, share problems and find solutions while enjoying each other’s company<sup>6</sup>. Atherton (2009), Hall (1994) and Neisser (1990) reported that a key institution in the maintenance of the Deaf community is the Deaf club.

There are Deaf Clubs in cities like Hyderabad, Warangal, Vijayawada , Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar, Guntur, Anantapur, Machilipatnam, Chennai, Kancheepuram, Thanjavur, Trichy, Puducherry, Pune, Nagpur and Mumbai (Deaf Enabled Foundation2011)<sup>6</sup>. Some of the Deaf clubs are working at the national level and some are at state or regional levels. Even Deaf women in India have their own club/association.

Generally, members of the Deaf club hold a common Deaf culture and use sign language as the primary mode of communication. Deaf clubs carry out various typesactivities for the club members to meet their individual and social needs. However, the differences in method of communication, lower level of awareness, distance between home and club etc. have made only a fraction to join the Deaf clubs and continue to become active member of the society.

In western countries, systematic efforts have been made in establishing & running Deaf clubs for Deaf. Eg: Royal Association for Deaf People of UK, British Deaf Association, Royal National Institute for Deaf people etc. Like western countries, Deaf clubs have been established in different parts of the country<sup>5</sup>. However, in India no systematic studies have been carried out to either study the activities of deaf clubs or the benefits/detriments of Deaf clubs for the club members. The opinion of Deaf members about Deaf clubs will be detrimental in understanding & promoting Deaf clubs in various parts of the country so as to meet the differential needs of Deaf.

While tracing the history, one can find that 1940s and 1950s were considered as the golden age for Deaf Clubs in the western world<sup>5</sup>. Many of the cultural practices of today have their roots in Deaf Clubs. Anderson (1994), Atherton (2009), Lad (2003), Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan (1996), Woodward (1980) found that the gathering together of Deaf people resulted in the creation of shared sign language, which contributed to the development of Deaf society and culture. The members of the Deaf communities also share and experience common Deaf culture (Breivik, 1999). Deaf Clubs even frequently organize athletic events and group outings.

#### Key Terms:

**Opinion:** For the present study opinion means to the view/belief (both favorable and non favorable), held by the members about the various activities of the Deaf clubs based on their experiences.

**Deaf:** Individuals with hearing loss who use sign language as a predominant mode of communication irrespective of their degree and type of hearing loss. They should be members of at least one Deaf club for the past two years.

**Deaf club:** A gathering place of the Deaf individuals for holding meetings to carry out various activities for the empowerment of Deaf.

#### Studies on Deaf Clubs

There are only two research studies found in the area of Deaf clubs. In a longitudinal study of the 28 Deaf clubs across northwestern England during a 50 year period beginning in 1945<sup>7</sup>, Atherton (2005) found that club members regularly took part in a number of different types of sports and other form of leisure activity. Hall (1994) identified some extra roles of the Deaf clubs; for example. Deaf people in social Deaf clubs look within the club for adult guidance of their youth. Meet other Deaf people for first time there or meet their future spouse, band together in philanthropic or religious activities, and if they are strangers in town, seek aid and friendship.

The present researcher did not come across with any other research done on deaf clubs and their activities in India and abroad. Further, no Indian research studies have been found on the opinion of Deaf about Deaf clubs. Considering the importance of evidence based practices, it is very important to study the opinion of Deaf about Deaf clubs.

#### Methods

Survey method was followed to explore the opinion of Deaf about the Deaf clubs. The Deaf club members from Mumbai and Thane district participated in the study. A researcher made opinionnaire was used as the tool for data collection. Activities of the Deaf clubs were selected as an area and categorized in various activities as sub area. Some statements on Deaf club activities given in the opinionnaire. Weightage in percentage were given to various activities. Statements were completely and purely based on Deaf club activities. It was decided to include desirable and undesirable statements in the opinionnaire. The opinionnaire was validated by a group of six judges including Special educators, Lecturers in special education, Indian Sign Language Instructors, Indian Sign Language Interpreter cum lecturer. The researcher provided sign language assistorial services wherever required. The experience of Deaf club members who has participated in the study were grouped and categorized based on their experience as low experience, moderate experience and high experience. The qualitative data was converted into quantitative data for the purpose of analysis. Additionally, a fact sheet was also distributed to collect information about various activities of the Deaf clubs.

#### Analysis & Discussion

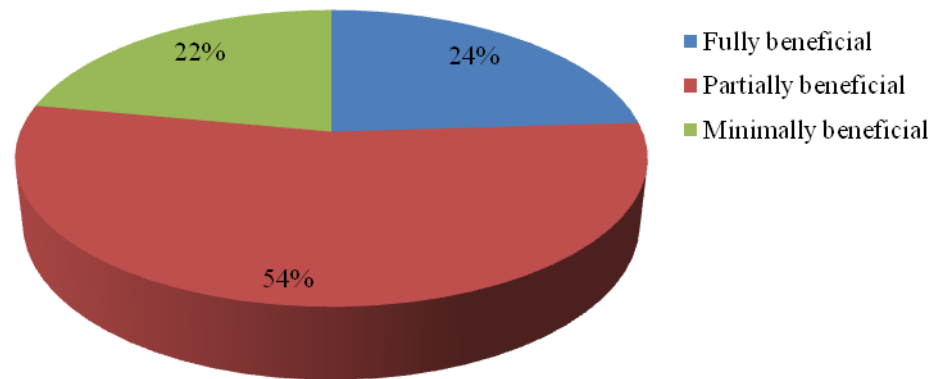
The responses of Deaf club members, marked on a 4 point scale were converted into raw scores for the purpose of statistical analysis to test the hypotheses. The information collected through the fact sheet was compiled for the purpose of answering some of the questions.

In order to study the opinion of Deaf about the overall activities of the Deaf clubs, the procedure as above followed, here also.

#### levels of opinion of the deaf about overall activities of the deaf clubs

Parameter	Sample and size	Number of Deaf and their opinion about the overall activities		
		Fully beneficial (score above 87)	Partially beneficial (score between 55 and 87)	Minimally beneficial (score below 55)
Overall activities of the Deaf clubs	Deaf n= 50	12 (24%)	27 (54%)	11 (22%)

### Level of opinion of the deaf about overall activities of the deaf clubs



#### levels of opinion of the deaf about overall activities of the deaf clubs

From the table and fig. it is observed that 24% Deaf opined that the overall activities of the Deaf clubs are fully beneficial, 54% opined partially beneficial and the remaining 22% opined minimally beneficial. The overall opinion of Deaf about the activities of the Deaf clubs is the collective opinion. Atherton (2005) found that club members regularly participate in a wide variety of activities organized by the Deaf clubs. The researcher mentioned that the Deaf participate in a number of different types of activities and other forms of leisure activity. Hall (1994) identified some extra roles of the Deaf clubs; for example. Deaf people in social Deaf clubs look within the club for adult guidance of their youth. Meet other Deaf people for first time there or meet their future spouse, band together in philanthropic or religious activities, and if they are strangers in town, seek aid and friendship are part of Deaf club activities. All these might have helped the Deaf to develop an appropriate opinion about the activities of the Deaf clubs.

#### Conclusion

The study arrived at the conclusion that, Deaf clubs carry out various activities for empowering the Deaf community. While some activities carried out by the Deaf clubs have some values in the life of Deaf and in Deaf community. The different activities of Deaf clubs are in turn act as catalysts for promoting Indian Sign Language and Deaf culture in the country. However, the number of Deaf clubs is very limited in the country. The study further arrived at the conclusion that, majority of the Deaf club members has the opinion that the Deaf club activities are not fully beneficial to their members. A small percentage of the members differ with this opinion. The study finally came with the conclusion that the low experienced members have more favorable opinion on the educational and personal activities of the Deaf clubs than the senior members. On social activities, all the members participated in the study held same type of opinion amidst of their differences in Deaf club experience.

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