

## FUNCTIONING OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION-A STUDY OF THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS

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### ABSTRACT:

*The concepts of nonverbal communication to the problem of social interaction between the disabled and the non-disabled. Due to the need to first define the problem, it is not possible here to suggest a program for direct action. Despite this time and space limitation, it is important to note that social skills based on communication through and by the body need to be conceptualized and taught to the disabled in a manner similar to the therapies developed for rehabilitating impaired motor and speech skills. The purpose of the paper focuses and explores about the functioning of nonverbal communication of the physically handicapped persons.*

**Keywords:** nonverbal, impairment, communication, functioning, handicapped.

### INTRODUCTION

The substantial portion of communication is nonverbal. Every day, we respond to thousands on nonverbal cues and behaviors including postures, facial expression, eye gaze, gestures, and tone of voice. From our handshakes to our hairstyles, nonverbal details reveal who we are and impact how we relate to other people. Scientific research on nonverbal communication and behavior.

The abundant research on the types, effects, and expressions of unspoken communication and behavior. While these signals are often so subtle that we are not consciously aware of them, research has identified several different types of nonverbal communication. In many cases, communicate information in nonverbal ways using groups of behaviors.

### Definition of Physically Handicapped:

*“Physical handicap in British. Noun. Loss of or failure to develop a specific bodily function or functions, whether of movement, sensation, coordination, or speech, but excluding mental impairments or disabilities”.*

The categories of disabilities are as under:-

#### i) Orthopedically Handicapped (OH):

- a. Locomotors Disability means disability of the bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any for form of cerebral palsy.
- b. Cerebral Palsy means a group of non-progressive conditions of a person characterized by abnormal motor control posture resulting from brain insult or injuries occurring in the pre-natal, peri-natal or infant period of development.
- c. All the cases of orthopedically handicapped persons would be covered under the category of “Locomotors disability or cerebral palsy.”

**(ii) Hearing Handicapped (HH):**

"Hearing impairment" means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies.

**(iii) Visually Handicapped (VH):**

a) Blindness refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions viz:-

- 1) Total absence of sight; or
- 2) Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 (snellen) in the better eye with correcting lenses; or
- 3) Limitation of the field of vision subtending at an angle of 20 degrees or worse.

b) Low vision: "Persons with low vision" means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device.

**Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication is the process of sending and receiving messages without using words, either spoken or written. Also called manual language. Similar to the way that italicizing emphasizes written language, nonverbal behavior may emphasize parts of a verbal message.

Behavior and elements of speech aside from the words themselves that transmit meaning. Non-verbal communication includes pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, and proximity to the listener, eye movements and contact, and dress and appearance.

Research suggests that only 5 percent effect is produced by the spoken word, 45 percent by the tone, inflexion, and other elements of voice, and 50 percent by body language, movements, eye contact, etc. Transmission of messages by a medium other than speech or writing.

Non-verbal communication (NVC) is a term used to cover the socially derived meanings of an extensive range of human behaviors, e.g., facial expression, movement, gaze, and gestures. The significance of such body orientations and action is due to their information concerning.

- 1) Attitudes towards the self,
- 2) Attitudes towards others
- 3) Social placement in interaction, and
- 4) Social placement in the wider society.

The physically handicapped must "disavow" this deviant status to allow for smooth interaction between the disabled and the non-disabled. This process of establishing oneself as a "normal" participant is interpreted here as a function of NVC patterns which include defining the "disability" and not the "self" as the source of "deviant" body movements. In

other words, these flaws in interaction can be defined as "unintended" by the actor reducing or eliminating his deviant status.

When the disability is not easily recognized as the source of norm violation, then the meaning of the NVC becomes interpreted within other contexts, e.g., as an indication of an expressive state, as a sign of discomfort with the social situation, or a lack of poise.

## **Understanding Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication plays a significant role in our lives, as it can improve a person's ability to relate, engage, and establish meaningful interactions in everyday life. A better understanding of this type of communication may lead people to develop stronger relationships with others. Often referred to as body language, nonverbal communication can take many forms and may be interpreted in multiple ways by different people, especially across cultures. Even a lack of such nonverbal cues can be meaningful and, in itself, a form of nonverbal communication.

Each movement and combination of movements of the body such as shifts in posture, direction of the eyes, gestures of the limbs, and expressions on the face provide signals to others. These cues may be subtle or obvious, and they can be contradictory: A person might say one thing while body language conveys an entirely different message. This might be especially true when a person is not telling the truth. Because nonverbal communication is often instinctive and typically not easy to fake, it is generally more indicative of a person's true feelings.

### **1. Facial Expressions**

Facial expressions are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication. Consider how much information can be conveyed with a smile or a frown. The look on a person's face is often the first thing we see, even before we hear what they have to say. While nonverbal communication and behavior can vary dramatically between cultures, the facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, and fear are similar throughout the world.

### **2. Gestures**

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words. Common gestures include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Other gestures are arbitrary and related to culture. In courtroom settings, lawyers have been known to utilize different nonverbal signals to attempt to sway juror opinions.

An attorney might glance at his watch to suggest that the opposing lawyer's argument is tedious or might even roll his eyes at the testimony offered by a witness in an attempt to undermine his or her credibility.

### **3. Para linguistics**

Para linguistics refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language. This includes factors such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection, and pitch. Consider the powerful effect that tone of voice can have on the meaning of a sentence. When said in a strong tone of voice, listeners might interpret approval and enthusiasm. The same words said in a hesitant tone of voice might convey disapproval and a lack of interest.

#### **4. Body Language and Posture**

Posture and movement can also convey a great deal on information. Research on body language has grown significantly since the 1970's, but popular media have focused on the over-interpretation of defensive postures, arm-crossing, and leg-crossing, especially after publishing Julius Fast's book *Body Language*. While these nonverbal behaviors can indicate feelings and attitudes, research suggests that body language is far more subtle and less definitive than previously believed.

#### **5. Proxemics**

People often refer to their need for "personal space," which is also an important type of nonverbal communication. The amount of distance we need and the amount of space we perceive as belonging to us is influenced by a number of factors including social norms, cultural expectations, situational factors, personality characteristics, and level of familiarity. For example, the amount of personal space needed when having a casual conversation with another person usually varies between 18 inches to four feet. On the other hand, the personal distance needed when speaking to a crowd of people is around 10 to 12 feet.

#### **6. Eye Gaze**

The eyes play an important role in nonverbal communication and such things as looking, staring and blinking are important nonverbal behaviors. When people encounter people or things that they like, the rate of blinking increases and pupils dilate. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, and attraction.

People also utilize eye gaze as a means to determine if someone is being honest. Normal, steady eye contact is often taken as a sign that a person is telling the truth and is trustworthy. Shifty eyes and an inability to maintain eye contact, on the other hand, is frequently seen as an indicator that someone is lying or being deceptive.

#### **7. Haptics**

Communicating through touch is another important nonverbal behavior. There has been a substantial amount of research on the importance of touch in infancy and early childhood. Harry Harlow's classic monkey study demonstrated how deprived touch and contact impedes development. Baby monkeys raised by wire mothers experienced permanent deficits in behavior and social interaction. Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other emotions.

## **8. Appearance**

Our choice of color, clothing, hairstyles, and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of nonverbal communication. Research on color psychology has demonstrated that different colors can evoke different moods. Appearance can also alter physiological reactions, judgments, and interpretations. Just think of all the subtle judgments you quickly make about someone based on his or her appearance. These first impressions are important, which is why experts suggest that job seekers dress appropriately for interviews with potential employers.

## **9. Artifacts**

Objects and images are also tools that can be used to communicate nonverbally. On an online forum, for example, you might select an avatar to represent your identity online and to communicate information about who you are and the things you like. People often spend a great deal of time developing a particular image and surrounding themselves with objects designed to convey information about the things that are important to them.

## **Three General Problems of Non-Verbal Communication and Physical Handicaps**

### **1. Cleanliness**

The physical limitations of some disabled persons, efforts to maintain personal cleanliness are tedious and time-consuming; for others, they are impossible. Those who are highly dependent on others' care exhibit a wide range of body dirt and odors.

### **2. Eating**

As a form of human and social behavior, eating has a number of communication functions. The act of feeding oneself is strongly associated with being an adult. It reflects individuality through the manner of eating, choice of company, selection of food, and so forth. Table manners are linked with definitions of a pleasant meal, and disabled persons with problems of jaw and/or facial muscles break many norms of etiquette.

### **3. Clothing**

The selection of style and type of clothing is recognized as an important form of self presentation and it may be greatly circumscribed for those with physical disabilities.

## **Specific Disabilities and Problems in Non-Verbal Communication**

### **1. Cerebral Palsy**

The person with cerebral palsy who exhibits spasticity (violent and involuntary contraction of the muscles) has extreme problems in presenting himself as a thinking, intelligent individual.

### **2. Amputation**

Persons who have suffered the loss of a body part have lost a method of communication. Major and minor shifts in posture, movements indicating pleasure or displeasure, patience or impatience, and so on cannot by definition be reflected in the missing part. The socialization process which has occurred throughout the person's

life has trained him to learn to use his body for interpersonal signals, and the adult with a recent amputation must unlearn, relearn and create new information channels.

### 3. Wheel Chair Bound

The fixed position and limited maneuverability of the wheel chair bound is dominant in many interactions. The person in the wheel chair is always seated, even when others stand. This obvious physical difference in self presentation may mean that the person experiences both figuratively and literally that he is "being talked down to."

## CONCLUSION

Nonverbal communication plays an important role in how we convey meaning and information to others, as well as how we interpret the actions of those around us. The important thing to remember when looking at such nonverbal behaviors is to consider the actions in groups. Physically challenged person actually says along with his or her expressions, appearance, and tone of voice might tell you a great deal about what that person is really trying to say.

The role of the body in social interaction is an area of sociological inquiry which remains to be adequately treated in theoretical concepts and empirical research. Therefore, it is particularly difficult to study the abnormal when the physically challenged person boundaries of normal interactions are relatively uncharted.

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