



**Hands On: The Role of Arts in Health in Decreasing Language Deprivation,
Communication Barriers, and Isolation in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing
Community**

Literature Review
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Introduction

There are many programs available for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to receive services. These services include speech therapy, cochlear implants, interpreters, assistive technology, and medical professionals specializing in audiology. Although these provisions available have been beneficial in promoting independence they mainly focus on navigation in a hearing society. Many decades decisions were made for what was best for Deaf community members without including them in the decisions. Today, there is increasing awareness, advocacy, and laws in place to ensure discrimination is not hindering access, education, and excluding them from having a say about their needs. It is beneficial to have skills to be independent in a hearing society but not in exchange for their own place in society. This research will address challenges that are still present due to lack of cultural knowledge and services that are focused on the social-emotional wellbeing of deaf individuals.

These common challenges experienced by the Deaf/HoH community include language deprivation, communication barriers, and isolation. These areas of focus experienced can negatively impact wellbeing in addition to the challenge of living in a world not tailored to their needs. In order to ameliorate these issues this review will explore utilizing Arts in Health as a possible solution. Arts in Health is a field that integrates literary, performing, visual arts and design, and other forms of creative expression into a variety of healthcare and community settings to enhance health and well-being in diverse institutional and community contexts (NOAH, 2017). A comprehensive review of these pressing issues, the utilization of Arts in Health, the underlying mechanisms that drive these interventions, will highlight

how utilizing Arts in Health will act as a compelling provision to put in practice. Finally, it will provide a summary of the central findings, a proposal description of a new service that incorporates feedback from the Deaf community, and the path it illuminates for future research and practice.

Language Deprivation in the Deaf Community

Language deprivation is defined as an absence of exposure to a fully accessible, natural language and it is particularly prevalent amongst individuals within the deaf community. This issue arises when those who are deaf are not introduced to a visual language, such as sign language, during their formative years. As a result of limited language capabilities, it leads to communication challenges. In contrast to hearing individuals who frequently acquire language through auditory input. For the deaf, the path to language acquisition is often difficult due to sign language not commonly learned and growing up in a spoken language environment and raised by caregivers who may not know sign language.

The deaf community faces a significant challenge in the form of language deprivation. As per the findings of Borghouts et al. (2022), language deprivation affects a considerable portion of the deaf population worldwide. The scarcity of early intervention programs, educational resources, and skilled sign language interpreters is a contributing factor towards the persistence of this issue. It is worth noting that language deprivation is not confined to any specific cultural or geographical landscape, but rather, it is a pervasive challenge impacting deaf individuals across a multitude of diverse communities.

The effects of language deprivation extend far beyond communication, significantly impacting the overall wellbeing of those within the deaf community. The inability to convey thoughts and emotions effectively can lead to feelings of frustration, isolation, and diminished self-esteem. Moreover, language deprivation acts as a barrier to academic and cognitive growth, thereby restricting educational opportunities and limiting access to information.

In the review article titled "Understanding Language Deprivation and Its Role in Deaf Mental Health," Ryan and Johnson (2019) delve into the significance of language deprivation in the context of deaf mental health. The review specifically evaluates the book "Language Deprivation and Deaf Mental Health," shedding light on its key findings and implications in the field.

Language deprivation among the deaf population has long been a topic of concern, with research suggesting its profound impact on mental health outcomes. By critically examining insights from the book, the authors aim to enhance the understanding of the complex interplay between language deprivation and mental wellness in the deaf community. Through their analysis, Ryan and Johnson underscore the importance of addressing language deprivation as a fundamental issue in promoting the mental health of deaf individuals. This review article contributes to the existing body of knowledge on language deprivation and deaf mental health, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and support systems to mitigate its detrimental effects. Overall, "Understanding Language Deprivation and Its Role in Deaf Mental Health" by Ryan and Johnson serves as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to enhance their understanding of the impact of language deprivation and develop effective strategies to support the mental well-being of deaf individuals.

Communication Barriers Faced by the Deaf Community

The deaf community often face communication challenges when interacting with hearing individuals. With sign language being their primary way of expressing themselves and communicating it causes major problems in getting needs met when there is a small number of the population who can sign. This difference in communication styles creates considerable obstacles that hinder effective interactions between the deaf and those who can hear.

For the deaf community, communication barriers significantly impact their healthcare experiences. In healthcare environments, effective communication is a cornerstone for precise diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and overall patient care. However, the general lack of comprehension and accommodation for the unique communication requirements of deaf individuals can lead to misunderstandings, wrong diagnoses, and insufficient care. The inability to effectively communicate with healthcare professionals may result in deaf individuals being excluded from vital healthcare discussions, limited access to information, and a decline in the quality of care they receive.

The responsibility is on healthcare providers to take active steps towards mitigating communication barriers faced by the deaf community. By employing strategies to improve communication accessibility, healthcare providers can assure that deaf individuals receive fair and effective care. Such strategies encompass provision of skilled sign language interpreters, use of visual aids and written correspondence, and making patient education materials available in accessible formats. Furthermore, it is essential for healthcare providers to be trained and

educated about the deaf culture, sign language, and efficient communication techniques tailored to the deaf community, to ensure better understanding and communication.

Social Isolation in the Deaf Community

The inability to communicate effectively with the hearing population is one factor leading to social isolation among the deaf. This communication gap often hinders the ability of deaf individuals to meaningfully interact with others, leading to a sense of alienation and isolation. This, in turn, intensifies the challenges already prevalent within the deaf community (Furness et al., 2019). Other factors leading to social isolation include restricted access to education, employment discrimination, and societal stigmatization. These factors create challenging obstacles to social participation, causing feelings of loneliness and exclusion (Borghouts et al., 2022).

The ripple effects of social isolation on the mental health and general well-being of deaf individuals are significantly damaging. Studies indicate a correlation between social isolation and increased instances of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders among the deaf (Borghouts et al., 2022). The absence of social support and connection can adversely affect an individual's quality of life, leading to a vicious cycle of isolation and deteriorating mental health.

Several interventions have been proposed to counteract social isolation in the deaf community.

Community-oriented programs like deaf clubs and support groups offer platforms for social interaction and connection, thereby helping to combat feelings of isolation. These create environments where individuals can connect with others who share similar experiences (Furness

et al., 2019). Additionally, enhancing accessibility to social activities and events, such as captioned performances and deaf-friendly gatherings, can foster social inclusion and diminish barriers leading to isolation.

It is of extreme importance to consider the unique needs and experiences of the deaf community when crafting interventions to alleviate social isolation. By tackling the root causes of isolation and promoting inclusive and accessible social opportunities, it is possible to cultivate a more equitable and supportive environment for deaf individuals.

The Arts as an Intervention for the Deaf Community

Visual Arts

Visual arts, embracing mediums such as painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography, serves as a unique stage for self-expression and communication within the deaf community. It offers a non-verbal language through which deaf individuals can express their innermost thoughts, feelings, and experiences. By creating a shared visual language, the visual arts bridge gaps, fostering a sense of unity and connection within the deaf community. Moreover, they act as a powerful societal tool, shedding light on the realities and challenges faced by the deaf community, fostering a sense of empathy, and understanding.

Performing Arts

The performing arts, encompassing dance, theater, and sign language poetry, create dynamic platforms for communication and storytelling within the deaf community. Dance, with its emphasis on movement and expression, enables deaf individuals to connect with others through a

physical and visual narrative. Theater, when tailored to include sign language and visual storytelling techniques, provides an arena for deaf actors to exhibit their talents and narrate their experiences. Sign language poetry, a distinctive art form, incorporates sign language with the rhythm and cadence of spoken poetry, allowing deaf individuals to articulate their emotions and experiences in a profoundly creative and impactful manner.

Other Artistic Mediums

Other artistic mediums also significantly influence the lives of deaf individuals. Despite its auditory nature, music can be appreciated by the deaf community through vibrations, visual sound representations, and the emotive power of lyrics. Deaf individuals interact with music by feeling the vibrations of musical instruments, visualizing sound waves, and connecting with the emotional narratives conveyed through lyrics. Furthermore, digital arts such as graphic design and video production offer deaf individuals a chance to channel their creativity and share their viewpoints through digital platforms.

Benefits of Arts Interventions on Language, Communication, and Isolation

Enhancing Language Skills

Artistic platforms present a unique and powerful avenue for bolstering language skills within the deaf community. Through the medium of visual arts, individuals can engage in visual storytelling, using an array of images, colors, and symbols to convey their thoughts and emotions. This visual language proves to be an invaluable tool for deaf individuals to express

their inner world, communicate their ideas, and refine their linguistic skills (Deaf Art, 2018). In addition, the world of performing arts, such as theater and dance, provides a fertile ground for deaf individuals to immerse themselves in language-rich settings, where they can observe, mimic, and practice linguistic expressions (Borghouts et al., 2022).

Boosting Communication Skills

Artistic interventions have the potential to significantly enhance communication abilities in the deaf community. Visual arts, for instance, encourage individuals to interpret and analyze visual representations, thereby fostering critical thinking and enhancing communication skills (Deaf Art, 2018). Furthermore, performing arts open the door to non-verbal communication through body language, facial expressions, and gestures, enabling deaf individuals to express themselves creatively and convey emotions effectively (Borghouts et al., 2022).

Mitigating Social Isolation

Artistic interventions can play a pivotal role in mitigating social isolation among deaf individuals. Participation in visual arts, performing arts, and various other artistic forms allows individuals to connect with their peers, establish social bonds, and foster a sense of community (Deaf Art, 2018). The collaborative nature of artistic activities promotes social interaction, providing opportunities for deaf individuals to engage with others, share experiences, and nurture relationships (Borghouts et al., 2022). These connections can serve as a relief to the feelings of loneliness and isolation often encountered by deaf individuals.

Mechanisms Underlying the Impact of Arts Interventions

The article by Moses, Golos, and Holcomb (2018) titled "Creating and Using Educational Media with a Cultural Perspective of Deaf People" explores the importance of incorporating a cultural perspective of deaf individuals in the creation and utilization of educational media. The authors provide insights into the significance of considering the unique cultural identity and experiences of the deaf community when developing educational resources. Acknowledging the cultural diversity within the deaf population, the article emphasizes the need for educational media to be inclusive and culturally relevant. By integrating a cultural perspective of deaf individuals, educators and content creators can enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of educational materials for this specific population.

The publication in Language Arts highlights the role of cultural sensitivity in promoting educational equity and fostering a more inclusive learning environment for deaf learners. Moses, Golos, and Holcomb advocate for a collaborative approach that involves deaf individuals in the design and implementation of educational media to ensure authenticity and cultural responsiveness. Through their exploration of creating and utilizing educational media with a cultural perspective of deaf people, the authors contribute to the discourse on inclusive education and cultural competence in the context of deaf education. This article serves as a valuable resource for educators, curriculum developers, and media producers interested in enhancing the educational experiences of deaf students through a culturally informed approach.

Overall, Moses, Golos, and Holcomb's study underscores the importance of recognizing and respecting the cultural identity of deaf individuals in educational settings. By embracing a cultural perspective, educational media can better reflect the diversity and richness of the deaf community, ultimately promoting learning outcomes and fostering a more inclusive educational environment for all. Emotional processes significantly contribute to the influence of artistic interventions on language, communication, and social isolation within the deaf community.

Emotional mechanisms encompass how artistic activities shape an individual's emotions, feelings, and perception of self. Individuals, through creative expression, gain a sense of achievement and cultivate a positive self-concept. This surge in self-confidence can profoundly impact communication, as individuals feel more capable of expressing their thoughts and emotions. Artistic practices offer individuals a platform to voice their deepest feelings and experiences, which might otherwise be challenging to convey verbally. This cathartic release can improve communication by fostering a richer understanding and rapport with others.

Social mechanisms significantly contribute to the influence of artistic interventions on language, communication, and social isolation within the deaf community. Social mechanisms encompass how artistic activities foster social bonds, dismantle societal barriers, and alleviate social isolation. Artistic interventions create opportunities for individuals within the deaf community to connect with others who share similar experiences and interests. Participation in communal art activities or becoming a member of art societies nurtures a sense of belonging and community, curbing feelings of isolation and estrangement. Through artistic expression, individuals within the deaf community can challenge societal perceptions of deafness and advocate for their rights

and needs. This heightened social consciousness and advocacy aid in the creation of a more inclusive society that values and supports the deaf community.

Technology Integration

Technology holds promising potential to mend the communication challenges faced by the deaf community, by providing a platform that is inclusive to their unique needs and desires. Assistive technologies, such as video relay services and captioning tools, have already laid the groundwork for enhancing communication access (Borghouts et al., 2022). The fusion of arts and technology can foster innovative platforms for self-expression, communication, and community development. Online platforms, tailored to meet the unique needs of the deaf community, can serve as a forum for exchanging experiences, accessing resources, and nurturing peer support. By harnessing the power of technology and infusing arts-based strategies.

The digital space aims to present resources, educational content, and support, targeting the mitigation of language deprivation, communication hurdles, and feelings of isolation often experienced by the deaf community. The goal is to construct an environment conducive to open dialogue, lessening mental health stigma, advocating self-care routines, and facilitating peer support within a digital community. This space will serve as an open platform to all who are interested.

Design and Features

This website will be called *Hands On*, it will provide a platform for self-care education and resources, arts-based interventions, and support that is inclusive and accessible to the D/HH community. Currently, there are not any websites that promote wellness that are accessible and inclusive that meet their unique needs. This website will serve as a platform and resource open to diverse populations, beneficial to individual users needs without singling out a particular community. It will integrate Arts in Health and the desired features deaf members expressed they would like to see.

Mission

This artistic integration aims to enhance emotional well-being, boost self-esteem, and instill a sense of accomplishment. The therapeutic potential of art has been acknowledged for ages, paving the way for individuals to interpret emotions, alleviate stress, and uplift overall mental health. Through art-focused workshops and activities, individuals will discover a nurturing environment for personal evolution and recuperation, thereby leading to enriched mental health.

Accessibility

The integration of Arts and Health, aiming to foster inclusivity for the deaf community, centers on an unwavering commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. It is essential to design the proposed platform with vital focus on accessibility, ensuring that every individual from the deaf community can actively participate and reap the benefits. Crucial factors to be considered are the unique requirements of deaf individuals, such as offering visual substitutes for auditory content,

integrating closed captions or sign language interpretation, and affirming compatibility with assistive technologies.

Desired Features

Feedback and suggestions from Deaf individuals from the conducted interview by Borghouts et al 2022, that will be incorporated in the development of *Hands-On*.

- Activities such as writing, painting, playing, or making music
- Use online Chat and peer support as well as exercise programs or activities to manage their mental health
- Outlet to allow them to express themselves or have an outlet through art, photos, or writing
- Providing different options to present content through a digital mental health intervention, such as text, videos, and icons, and providing ASL video where possible
- One participant mentioned that to build a connection with a health provider, it helps to talk to someone who looks and signs like them. An additional barrier to accessing mental health services was that providers were not sensitive enough to cultural differences.
- Participants expressed a need for increased education and awareness around mental health, and to promote a message that mental health services are helpful in a good way, that it was OK to seek help, and that mental health is for everyone
- Suicide prevention crisis. emergency support, peer support and chat, and telehealth (referring to a direct connection to clinical mental health services within the app)

- Blogs or short videos to share their experiences and knowledge. Participants liked the aspect of inclusivity where visitors can be ‘part of the news’: *“Like a blog that people could add – share their experiences and their knowledge and their education*
- Participants recommended having community members involved in the design process to give feedback on features and on what can be improved
- Some participants reported that it would also be valuable to have community members provide guidance on how to access and use the platform, for example through instruction videos and visual posters with step-by-step instructions
- Recommended that it does not mention that is a mental health site but provide education within the site to reduce stigma

Conclusion

Utilizing Arts in Health decreases language deprivation, communication barriers, and isolation experienced by the Deaf community. The issues addressed result from lack of cultural knowledge, and resources that support the unique needs in the Deaf community. Utilizing Arts Health offers a way to express themselves in the presence of non-signers and is natural since their visual perception is enhanced. Utilizing arts for expression early is necessary to develop all functions of nonverbal and verbal communication for the Deaf community decreasing language deprivation. It acts as a bridge between hearing culture and provides cultural understanding of the Deaf experience. This lessens isolation and provides inclusion in mainstream culture creating a sense of pride and community. However, further research is needed to provide specific ways in how to integrate arts in health as an effective resource starting from an early age and long term data to find out long term effects of this resource.

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