

## *Original Paper*

# Including the Excluded: Effects of Social Stigma on the Socio-Educational Development of Deaf Persons in Limbe City Council Area, South West Region, Cameroon

Patrick Fonyuy Shey, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>\* & NLIH CATHERINE NGAH<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Psychology, University of Buea, Cameroon

\* Patrick Fonyuy Shey, Ph.D, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Buea, Cameroon

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### ***Abstract***

*This study based on the inclusion of Deaf persons in the mainstream investigated the effects of social stigma on the socio-educational development of Deaf Persons in Limbe City Area of the South West Region of Cameroon. The forms of stigma assessed were limited to: cultural beliefs and, labelling. The study made use of a correlation survey design. A sample of thirty-one Deaf persons, sixteen parents and thirty-one neighbours making a total of 78 participants were selected to take part in the study using the snowball sampling technique study. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire using Rensis Likert scale of measurement. Data collected were analyzed quantitatively with the use of frequency counting and advanced inferential tests like Chi-Square, Cox and Snell R Square. The explanatory power of the Integrated Value Mapping (IVM) comprising all the two predictors (cultural beliefs and labelling) summarized as social stigma was 96.9% and the variability explained was significant ( $P=0.000$ ). It was therefore concluded that social stigma has an effect on the socio-educational development of Deaf person since the overall agreement was highly significant ( $P=0.000$ ). It is recommended that special educators organize seminars or use mass media to educate the public on the need to change cultural beliefs as a means to include Deaf persons in the mainstream society. The government needs to declare sign language compulsory to all citizens so that Deaf persons can have a sense of belonging and maximally socialize wherever they find themselves. This will enable Deaf persons to feel loved and thus cause them to contribute significantly to social progress.*

### ***Keywords***

*Inclusion, exclusion, education, social stigma, socio-educational development, deaf persons*

## 1. Introduction

Persons with disabilities represent about 15% out of the world population (WHO, 2011). They are estimated to live mainly in developing Countries, in poverty and with little chance of survival. According to the most reliable estimation, about 93 million children (1 out of 20 under 14 years of age) are affected by moderate or severe disabilities. In developing Countries, children with disabilities are the most neglected and vulnerable (UNICEF Report 2013 on children and disability: rights without barriers).

Hearing Impairment (HIM) is one category of disabilities within the framework of special education. It is a generic term which describes any condition that reduces the hearing acuity of an individual and makes it difficult or impossible for him or her to perceive and interpret auditory signals/sounds (Okouyibo, 2006). Hallahan, Kauffman, and Pullen (2009) define it as a broad term that covers individuals with hearing loss ranging from mild to profound, categorized in two groups: hard of hearing and totally deaf. With hard-of-hearing, an individual has residual (remaining) hearing and can hear though with difficulties; but with the use of a hearing aid, he or she can hear perfectly well. A hearing aid enables a hard-of-hearing individual to successfully process linguistic information through audition (Brill, MacNeil, & Newman, 1986) as cited in Offei and Acheampong (2011). Deafness is a hearing disability that prevents successful processing of linguistic information through audition (the act or sense of hearing) with or without a hearing aid (Offei & Acheampong, 2011). Deaf individuals suffer from sensorineural hearing loss which results from degeneration or damage of the nerve that transmits the impulses from the cochlea (The hearing part of the ear also called: the inner ear) to the hearing centre in the brain (Gadagbui, 1998). As such, a Deaf person does not perceive sounds and cannot use speech except the person is of the deafened category (that is; deafness which occurred after the acquisition of language). This poses a natural barrier to the socio-educational development of Deaf individuals. To over-ride this barrier, Pedro Ponce de Leon, a Spanish Benedictine monk who lived between 1510 and 1584 structured a sign language and established a school for the Deaf in the monastery to communicate the gift of language and to educate the Deaf. Whereas most of the research regarding deaf identity focused on the development of identity of deaf people who attended general schools, our study investigated the effect of social stigma on the socio-educational development of the Deaf that analyzed their social experiences in mainstream societies in relation to their identity.

## 2. Theoretical Base of the Study

This study which had as mean aim to examine the effect of social stigma on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons for their total inclusion into the mainstream society, anchored on the theory of Social Stigma by Erving Goffman (1963). According to this theory, an individual who has a stigmatizing attribute which is deeply discredited by his society is rejected as a result of the attribute. The proponent of the theory continues to say that, when a stranger comes into our presence, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, and his “social identity”.

While a stranger is present before us, evidence can arise from his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and if of a less desirable kind, he is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Goffman says such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive. It constitutes a special discrepancy (inconsistency, disagreement, or difference) between virtual and actual social identity (Goffman, 1963).

This theory is relevant to this study in that it clearly exposes what stigma is, how it is manifested, how the stigmatized feel, and the stance (withdrawal, aggressive, or resign to fate) the stigmatized take in the society as a result of being stigmatized. The theory is clearly reflected in the day-to-day interpersonal relationships or interactions between the Deaf and the hearing people of our society. As a result of deafness, persons with deafness experience rejection in the society in which they live in a disguised manner. Nobody voices that “I reject you because of your deafness”. The practical thing that happens is simply that hearing people don’t exercise the same intimacy that they have among themselves with Deaf persons. Just as Goffman (1963) puts It, an individual who might have been received easily in normal social interaction possesses a trait (deafness) that projects itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us the non-stigmatized.

### **3. The Concept of Deafness**

Deafness is one category of hearing impairment that precludes (prevents) successful processing of linguistic information through audition (the act of hearing) with or without a hearing aid (Offei & Acheampong, 2011). Individuals with hearing impairments may be suffering from uni-literal or bi-literal hearing loss; that is, they may have difficulty hearing in one or both ears or may not hear at all. Professionals and laymen alike have used various terms such as: hard-of-hearing, deaf, deaf-mute, deafened, partially deaf or partially hearing as a means to differentiate hearing impaired persons from others (kirk, 1962). Hearing is divided into seven levels ranging from normal to profound hearing loss; and hearing ability is measured in decibels (dB). 0-15 dB is normal hearing. 16-25 dB, slight hearing loss; 26-40 dB, mild hearing loss; 41-55 dB, moderate hearing loss; 56-70 dB, moderate severe; 71-90 dB, severe; 90 dB+, profound or Deaf; but today most people use the term “deaf” to refer to anyone with hearing loss regardless of his or her categories. This study has also adopted the term “Deafness” to refer to persons with severe hearing impairments. At normal level, an individual can hear whispers and has no problem with hearing. At slight hearing loss, an individual does not hear whispers. At profound or 90 dB+, an individual does not hear even the loudest volume and is thus considered Deaf (Offei, 2011).

According to the National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) (Special Education Guide, 2016), the official definition of deafness from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is: “Deafness is a severe hearing impairment that prevents a Deaf person from processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without a hearing aid”. Typically, hearing

loss above 90 decibels is considered deafness. An individual with a moderate hearing impairment may be able to hear sound, but have difficulty distinguishing specific speech patterns in a conversation. Individuals with a severe or profound hearing impairment may not be able to hear sounds at all.

The term “deaf” is written with a lower-case “d”. When referring to the audiological condition of deafened people. An uppercase “D” is used when writing about the Deaf culture, a group of individuals with which many pre-lingual Deaf people affiliate themselves. Culturally, Deaf people have their own language, specific customs, and ways of behaving (Padden & Humphries, 1988), as cited in Scheier (2009).

#### **4. Social Stigma and Hearing Loss**

Social stigma is defined by scientists as the disapproval of, or discontent with a person on the basis of characteristics that distinguish him or her from other members of society (Nobullying, 2015). Goffman (1963) defines social stigma as “the process by which the reaction of others spoils (blemishes) normal identity”. Boundless (2015) sees social stigma as severe social disapproval of a person because of a particular trait that indicates his or her deviance from social norms. Without a society, one cannot have social stigma. To have social stigma, one must have a social stigmatizer and someone who is socially stigmatized. Given that social stigma is a social relationship, the phenomenon (incident) places emphasis not on the existence of deviant traits, but on the perception and marking of certain traits as deviant by a second party. For example, theorists of stigma care little about whether someone has a stigmatizing attribute, but rather how others perceive the condition and subsequently treat the person differently. Social stigma is so profound that it overpowers positive social feedback regarding the way in which the same individual adheres (abides) to other social norms (Boundless, 2015).

Nobullying (2015) holds that social stigmas can occur in many different places and for many different reasons. He goes further to assert that as cultural mores (customs) evolve, social stigmas can change, and often very quickly. He gives as example the furor (sudden excited or angry reaction) that existed over the rights of homosexuals throughout history when homosexuality was practically never discussed or acknowledged. Today, homosexuality has become more openly acknowledged and, in some cases, even celebrated. Kochkin (1993) notes that: hearing loss is often misunderstood as an intellectual challenge or a deficiency in personality and character. He goes further to state that socially stigmatising persons with hearing loss in the developing world, means those Deaf children are often hidden from the society. Brigham (1991) asserts that “just as people are attracted to those who are physically attractive, they tend to be indifferent to persons who are very unattractive or disabled. And that people who deviate noticeably from the norms of appearance and behaviour are usually avoided”. The same scholar says that “social stigma can also be studied from the view point of insiders; people who possess a stigmatizing trait are aware of the hurtful views held by the outsiders. Some insiders hold the same detrimental views about their deviant traits as do the outsiders”. Jean-Pierre, Kenneth, and Mary (2011) hold that self-stigma

involves a threat to one's own identity. Often, people who experience self-stigma display a high level of anxiety, shame, and lower self-esteem and self-value or usefulness.

Hosseini, Eissa, Mohammad, Akbar, Hamzeh, and Ismail (2015) report that evidence from around the world suggests that deafness in children can exacerbate (worsen) their negative self-attitudes and may even lead to social isolation of their parents. Most parents are upset with the attitudes of the society towards their child's hearing loss. Some mothers with Deaf children become socially isolated and limit their social relationships (Hosseini et al., 2015). Jean-Pierre et al. (2011) assert that for many individuals, a major obstacle to living well with hearing loss is the social and self-stigma associated with hearing loss. Amplifon (2012) argues that there's no single response or pattern of responses that is true for every person. But there are some common themes showing that hearing loss sufferers go through the same phases. This can mean refusing to accept the problem exists, then responding with anger, then being pre-occupied with "what ifs" and imagining life without the loss. Often depression follows before final acceptance. They worry because of socialization problems. How will others look at and treat me? If everybody was deaf, nobody will worry about his or her deafness (Amplifon, 2012). Helen Keller, the first deaf-blind American to earn a bachelor's degree once noted that being blind cuts you off from objects yet being deaf cuts you off from people. This can cause an effect, with deaf sufferers becoming withdrawn and taking part in fewer social activities (Amplifon, 2012).

Fitaw and Boersma (2006), as cited in Almaz (2011) notes that in Ethiopia, 36% of parents who had children with disabilities reported that they hid their children with disabilities due to social stigma of the disability. The practice of hiding children and limiting their interaction with the society sends a message to children with and without disabilities that this is an acceptable behaviour. By so doing, it communicates that having a disability is shameful and should be hidden. In a document titled: Top 10 misconceptions about deafness in the UK—as revealed to the National Deaf Children's Society, Cathy and Pennybs (2015) says: "Deaf and hearing people do not mix except for those learning sign language. How the two sides will ever converge I have no idea as you cannot force language on people".

## **5. Socio-Educational Development of the Deaf**

Socio-educational development is the process of shaping one's personality and behaviour as a result of interacting with, and learning from one another (Brigham, 1991). The same scholar also holds that it is the process of moulding an individual to fit the expectations of the culture in which he or she lives. He continues to say that parents and teachers are crucial factors in the socialization process through their social power, ability to teach children desired behaviour; and siblings and peers are also powerful influences on socialization. Smith (2002) views social education as: education for sociality, as well as education through communal life and learning about society.

Seefeldt and Barbour (1998) give a better explanation of the concept of socio-educational development in their writing on Theories of Child Growth and Development. They reveal that these theories reflect aspects of nature-nurture theories. They hold that the nativist, Jean Rousseau views human

development as unfolding like flowers in a natural, logical way, according to some innate plan. While the nurturist, John Locke, maintains that human learning or development is the result of the mind receiving stimuli from others and from the environment. Seefeldt and Barbour (1998) also give the perspective of cultural psychologists on development. They view education as inseparable from the cultural context in which it happens and individual differences, at different developmental stages, as accounted for by how they act on events and respond to people in their environment. On the other hand, the interactionist emphasize that education takes place as a result of interaction between a child's natural unfolding and environmental influences. Skinner (1974), as cited in Seefeldt and Barbour, (1998) says children are conditioned by a series of stimuli and responses, and learning results from the conditioning provided by adults and the environment.

According to Baumeister, Ashmore, and Jussim (1997), identity is the representation of the self. The self is a social construction because we develop a sense of who and what we are by observing and interpreting the responses of others (Crocker, Quinn, Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000). Therefore, the development of one's identity is a socially constructed process, which emerges through present and past experiences and interactions between oneself and the surrounding social environment (Baumeister, Ashmore, & Jussim, 1997; Grotevant, 1992; Harter, 1997; Stinson & Whitmire, 2000).

During the last two decades, a considerable number of deaf children have been attending general schools (Hyde, 2004; Moores, 2001), where there is a stronger likelihood for students to identify with the social and cultural norms of the hearing community (Bat-Chava, 2000; Israelite, Ower, & Goldstein, 2002; Leigh, 1999; Maxwell-McCaw, 2001). Nikolarazi and Hadjidakou (2006) concluded that the most critical educational experiences for the deaf identity concerned their interactions with hearing or deaf peers and their language of communication with their peers at school. In particular, if deaf children are raised within a family and educated in a school environment where they interact with Deaf adults and deaf peers and communicate in sign language, they are likely to get immersed in the Deaf culture. On the other hand if deaf children are raised within a family and educated in a school environment where they interact with hearing adults and peers via oral means of communication, they are likely to get conditioned by a hearing culture. Sometimes, deaf persons may develop a bicultural identity and feel comfortable and competent within both the Deaf and the hearing worlds. Other times, though, deaf persons may develop a marginal identity, namely, when they do not feel particularly strong about a particular culture or feel uncomfortable and not well accepted within the deaf or the hearing world (Bat-Chava, 2000; Israelite, Ower, & Goldstein, 2002; Leigh, 1999; Maxwell-McCaw, 2001).

Moores (2001) as cited in Nikolarazi and Hadjidakou (2006) argue that the majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents and therefore do not have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with sign language and Deaf culture within their family, unless they attend a school for the deaf, where they learn sign language as well as the norms of the Deaf culture by interacting with their peers. In such educational environments, children are more likely to get immersed in the Deaf culture, identify themselves with Deaf culture, and develop a strong sense of deaf identity and social consciousness (Bat-Chava, 2000).

## 6. Method

### 6.1 Participants

The sample of this study comprised seventy-eight participants divided into three categories: 31 Deaf persons, 16 family members and 31 neighbours. The sampling technique used to select participants was the snowball sampling technique which, according to Ashley (2016), refers to a non-probability sampling technique that is appropriate to use in research when the members of a population are difficult to locate. The researchers collected data from the few members of the target population they could locate, and then asked those individuals to provide information needed to locate other members of that population whom they know.

### 6.2 Measures

In an attempt to assess the effects of social stigma on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons, different questionnaires were used to collect data from participants. The questionnaire items to the different category of persons (Deaf persons, family members and neighbours) used in the study were constructed in relation to the research objectives developed by the researchers. The Likert scale of measurement (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) developed by Rensis Likert in 1932 was used to measure the opinions or degree of agreements of individuals on every questionnaire item. The questionnaires gave the respondents the chance to give factual responses and freely express the degree or strength to which they thought about a particular statement. The questionnaires had items that centred on the two specific objectives or variables (cultural beliefs and labelling) that constitute the focus of the study.

### 6.3 Procedure

To acquaint themselves with the Deaf, the researchers went to the town of Limbe on several occasions. With the help of a Special Educator who lives in this town they were able to locate two Deaf persons who are members of the Limbe community. In the course of their interaction, the two Deaf persons invited the researchers for a crusade that was to bring many Deaf persons in Cameroon to Limbe. The researchers then visited Deaf participants at Saker Baptist College, Limbe where they had a one week crusade organized by Christ for the Deaf International and there a pilot test to determine the reliability of the instruments was conducted on four Deaf participants, two family members and four neighbours who took part in the crusade. Information on the location of other Deaf persons living in Limbe was also collected from participants who took part in the pilot study. Using the snowball technique as mentioned above, the researchers administered the questionnaire to Deaf persons with the help of a sign language interpreter from Limbe who is totally deaf but not dumb. While in their houses, the researchers met the family members and neighbours whom they also used as subjects in the study.

### 6.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were entered using a pre-designed EpiData Version 3.1 database which has in-built consistency and validation checks. Further consistency, data range and validation checks were also performed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 to identify invalid codes and

outliers. They were then analyzed using frequencies, proportions and Multiple Response Analysis to aggregate responses within conceptual components. Reliability test was performed to assess the internal consistency of responses using Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis.

Socio-educational development of Deaf persons was computed using ranked-order scores for highest level of schooling attained, marital status, literacy (ability to read or write), occupation (classified as not working, unskilled work, semi-skilled work and skilled work). The effects of cultural beliefs and labelling on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons were appraised using Logistic Regression whereby the significance of the variability explained/explanatory power was assessed using the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficient. Chi-Square test was used to evaluate the association between the indicators under study and the socio demographic or background indicators. Data were presented using tables and charts. All statistics were presented at the 95% Confidence Level (CL), Alpha=0.05 meaning that any statistical value less than 0.05 was considered significant while any statistical value equal to and above would mean insignificant.

## 7. Ethical Considerations

The participants were given assurance that whatever information obtained regarding their personal life was to be anonymous (unidentified) and treated with confidentiality in the study. Two weeks prior to the actual collection of data, the researchers went to acquaint themselves with the would-be participants in order to gain their trust. During the administration of the instrument, the researchers sought the consent of the participants and made known to them that participation was out of one's free will. At the end of each exercise with any participant, the researchers expressed a word of thanks to the respondent for accepting to participate in the exercise.

### 7.1 Findings

The findings below are presented on tables and charts based on the indicators (cultural beliefs and labelling) under study.

### 7.2 Cultural Beliefs and the Socio-Educational Development of the Deaf

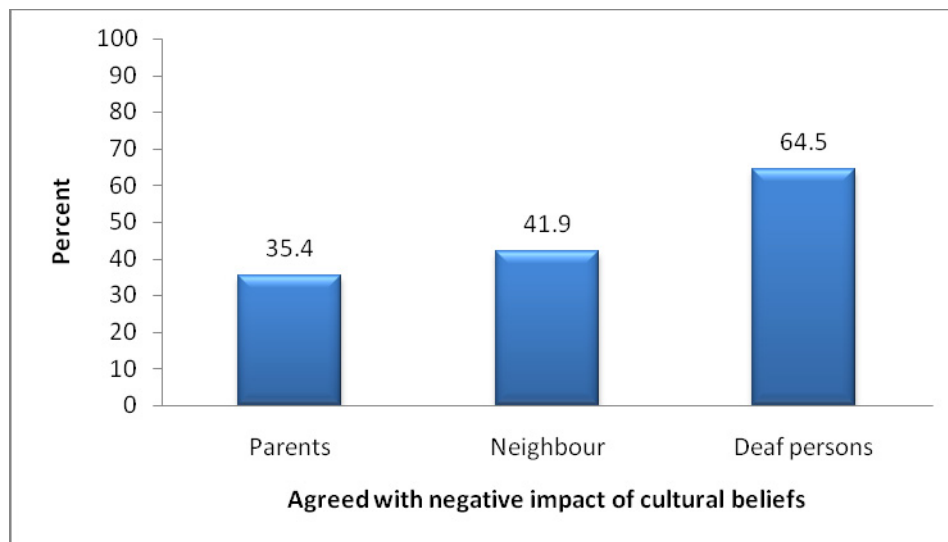
**Table 1. Deaf Person's Perception of Cultural Beliefs by Background Indicators**

| Indicators     | Categories | Cultural belief |           | N <sub>reponses</sub> | Chi-Square    |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------|
|                |            | Agree           | Disagree  |                       |               |
| Gender         | Male       | 68.8%(44)       | 31.2%(20) | 64                    | $\chi^2=1.04$ |
|                | Female     | 60.0%(36)       | 40.0%(24) | 60                    | P=0.309       |
| Age            | <20 years  | 62.5%(20)       | 37.5%(12) | 32                    | $\chi^2=0.08$ |
|                | 20+        | 65.2%(60)       | 34.8%(32) | 92                    | P=0.782       |
| Marital status | Married    | 58.3%(42)       | 41.7 %()  | 72                    | $\chi^2=2.87$ |
|                | Single     | 73.1%(38)       | 26.9%(14) | 52                    | P=0.090       |



|                                     |                     |           |           |    |               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|----|---------------|
| Ability to read                     | Yes                 | 61.8%(42) | 38.2%(26) | 68 | $\chi^2=0.18$ |
|                                     | No                  | 57.1%(16) | 42.9%(12) | 28 | P=0.674       |
| Ability to write                    | Yes                 | 61.8%(42) | 38.2%(26) | 68 | $\chi^2=0.18$ |
|                                     | No                  | 57.1%(16) | 42.9%(12) | 28 | P=0.674       |
| Highest level of schooling attained | No formal education | 63.2%(48) | 36.8 %()  | 76 | $\chi^2=0.12$ |
|                                     | Primary             | 50.0%(4)  | 50.4%(4)  | 8  | P=0.729       |

Deaf persons' perceived characterization of cultural beliefs as applied to them was not dependent on any of the background indicators. However, the male agreed more with the stigma related to cultural beliefs than the female, with a proportion of 68.8% and 60.0% respectively. Those aged 20 years and more (65.2%) agreed more than those aged less than 20 years (62.5%). The single (73.1%) agreed more than the married (58.3%), and those who were able to read (61.8%) agreed more than those who could not read (57.1%). There was the same trend between those who could write and those who could not write, while those who had not been to school were more susceptible (63.2%) than those who had been to school (50.0%).



**Figure 1. Participants Perceptions on the Negative Impact of Cultural Beliefs on the Deaf**

$\chi^2=5.78$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $P=0.048$ .

Deaf persons had the highest proportion of those who perceived the negative impact of cultural beliefs on Deaf persons with a proportion of 64.5%, followed by the neighbours (41.9%) and then the family members (35.4%) and this difference was significant ( $P<0.05$ ).

**Table 2. Logistic Regression Predicting the Effect of Cultural Beliefs on the Socio-Educational Development of Deaf Persons**

| Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients | Model Summary  |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Chi-square=44.470                   | Log likelihood | Cox & Snell R Square |
| Df=84                               | 54.861         | 0.830                |
| P=0.002                             |                |                      |

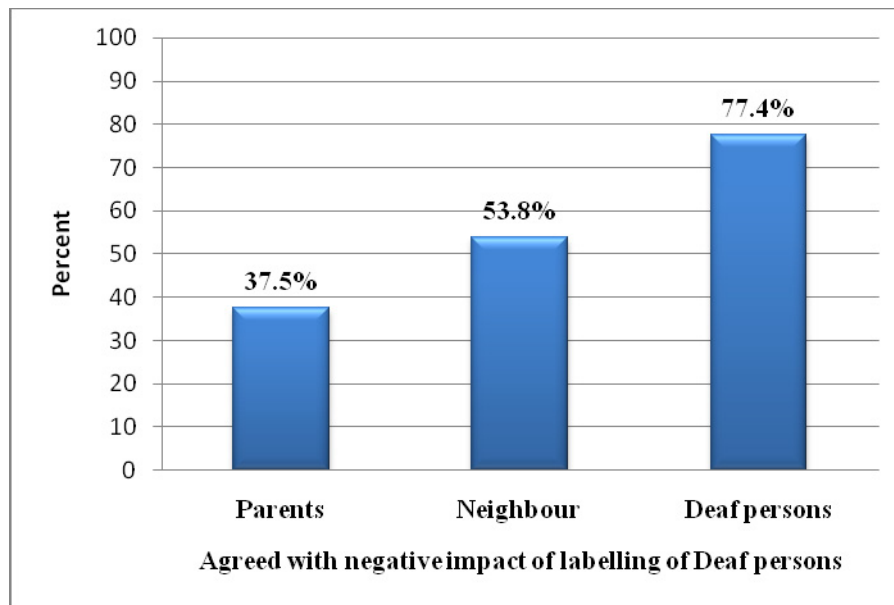
The model fitting information test expressed through the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients indicates that cultural beliefs significantly influence the socio-educational development of Deaf persons (Chi-square=44.470, df=84, P=0.002) with an explanatory power of 83.0% (Cox & Snell R Square=0.830). This model fitting validation therefore supported the fact that the variability caused by the predictors on the socio-educational development of the Deaf was significant indicating that cultural beliefs have significant influence on the socio-educational development of deaf persons.

### 7.3 Labelling and the Socio-Educational Development of the Deaf

**Table 3. Deaf Person's Perception of Labelling by Background Indicators**

| Indicators                          | Categories          | Perception of labelling |          | N <sub>reponses</sub> | Chi-Square    |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|-----------------------|---------------|
|                                     |                     | Agree                   | Disagree |                       |               |
| Gender                              | Male                | 100%(64)                | 0.0%(64) | 64                    | $\chi^2=0.26$ |
|                                     | Female              | 96.7%(58)               | 3.3%(2)  | 60                    | P=0.613       |
| Age                                 | <20 years           | 100%(32)                | 0.0%(0)  | 32                    | $\chi^2=0.00$ |
|                                     | 20+                 | 97.8%(90)               | 2.2%(2)  | 92                    | P=1.000       |
| Marital status                      | Married             | 97.2%(70)               | 2.8%(2)  | 72                    | $\chi^2=0.00$ |
|                                     | Single              | 100%(52)                | 0%(0)    | 52                    | P=1.000       |
| Ability to read                     | Yes                 | 97.1%(66)               | 2.9%(2)  | 68                    | $\chi^2=0.00$ |
|                                     | No                  | 100%(28)                | 0%(0)    | 28                    | P=1.000       |
| Ability to write                    | Yes                 | 97.1%(66)               | 2.9%(2)  | 68                    | $\chi^2=0.00$ |
|                                     | No                  | 100%(28)                | 0%(0)    | 28                    | P=1.000       |
| Highest level of schooling attained | No formal education | 97.4%(74)               | 2.6%(2)  | 76                    | $\chi^2=0.00$ |
|                                     | Primary             | 100%(8)                 | 0%(0)    | 8                     | P=1.000       |

Deaf peoples' perception of labelling was not dependent on any of the background indicators (P>0.05). The perceptions of deaf persons across the various categories were highly similar, 100% agree or nearly with the least proportion being 96.7%.



**Figure 2. Compares Perceived Negative Impact of Labelling among Family Members, Neighbours and Deaf Persons**

$\chi^2=0.00$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $P=1.000$ .

Neighbours had the highest proportion of those who perceived the negative impact of labelling on Deaf persons followed by the Deaf persons and then family members but this difference was not significant ( $P>0.05$ ).

**Table 4. Logistic Regression Predicts the Effect of Labelling on the Socio-Educational Development of Deaf Persons**

| Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients | Model Summary  |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Chi-square=19.665                   | Log likelihood | Cox & Snell R Square |
| Df=21                               | 10.132         | 0.279                |
| P=0.043                             |                |                      |

The model fitting information test here expressed through the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients indicates that labelling significantly influences the socio-educational development of Deaf persons (Chi-square=19.665,  $df=21$ ,  $P=0.043$ ) with an explanatory power of 27.9% (Cox & Snell R Square=0.279). This model fitting validation therefore supports the fact that the variability caused by the predictors on the dependent variable was significant thereby indicating that labelling has a significant influence on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons.

## 8. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the Deaf, their family members and neighbours all perceived cultural beliefs as exerting negative influence on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons. In ranking the findings, Deaf persons were the highest in perceiving the negative influence of cultural beliefs, followed by their neighbours and lastly their families. The findings were in conformity with the results obtained from a study titled: *Barriers to Social Participation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Ghana* by Nortey in 2009. Her analysis of interviews with Deaf and hard-of-hearing participants revealed that the experiences of hearing impaired individuals within their families were not fulfilling for most of the participants because of superstitious beliefs.

The findings of this study also showed that Deaf persons' perception of cultural beliefs as applied to them was not dependent on any of the background indicators. That is to say, they did not need to be male or female, single or married, literate or not literate and young or old to believe that cultural beliefs impact negatively on them, for a greater number of all these categories agreed that cultural beliefs exert negative impact on their socio-educational development. The findings challenge the belief held by the people who lived in the days of Padre Ponce De Leon (the Originator of Sign Language). The people in his days believed that Deaf people were inherently uneducable and could not be taught to speak but in our case, the demographic data on the literacy of Deaf persons indicates that the highest proportion of Deaf persons were literate and this as well challenges the beliefs held by the people of Cameroon who, before the 1975, perceived disabilities as incurable diseases and wondered how people who are sick and cannot be cured go to school (Yuh & Shey, 2008). Although educated, traces of negative effects of cultural beliefs still linger among the family members, neighbours and the Deaf themselves.

The findings of this study also indicated that a greater number of the participants (the Deaf, their family members and neighbours) confirmed that labeling has a significant effect on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons. The findings above go in line with the findings of the study conducted by Glen, Schmidt, and Sabatino (1976), whose study revealed that the label "learning disabled" generates negative expectancies in teachers which affect their observations of behaviour and may be detrimental to the child's academic progress. The findings also go in line with the statement of Jan Hunt of the Natural Child Project (2010) who suggests that "labeling a child is disabling" because children believe what adults tell them. The study is also supported by Nobullying (2016) who holds that labels often affect the behaviour of those who are labeled and that those who are labeled often start to act in ways that their "stigmatizers" expect of them. Nobullying also says that labeling changes the behaviour of the labeled and shapes their emotions and beliefs. Therefore, labeling affects the socio-educational development of Deaf persons and makes them to live up to that description. Members of stigmatized social groups often face prejudice that causes depression. These stigmas or labels put a person's social identity in threatening situations, like low self-esteem (Nobullying, 2016).

To support the findings, Goffman (1963) also reveals that the society establishes a means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these

categories. This sustains the practice of our society wherein Deaf persons are placed in a category and given the name “mumu” to each individual of that category. This practice has made the Deaf to know that they are called “mumu” for though they cannot hear, they lip-read and understand that hearing people refer to them when their lips move in the direction that pronounces the word “mumu”.

### 8.1 Concluding Remarks

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that social stigma is still manifested against the Deaf. The study reveals that the indicators under study (cultural beliefs and labelling) still have significant influence on the socio-educational development of Deaf persons. The entire society thus needs to be educated (through seminars in the community and the use of the mass media) more and more in order to overcome all forms of cultural and superstitious beliefs about deafness. This will help them not to see Deaf persons in their neighbourhoods as outcasts but as normal human beings who can also play an important role in social progress. The government needs to declare sign language compulsory to all citizens so that Deaf persons can have a sense of belonging and maximally socialize wherever they find themselves. This will enable Deaf persons to feel loved and thus cause them to contribute significantly to social progress.

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