

Physical Growth of Deaf Mute Boys of Punjab

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Abstract

The present study has been designed to provide information about any possible differentiation between the growth of deaf-mutes and the normal boys. A cross-sectional sample of 267 deaf-mute boys from 5 to 18 years was collected from various educational institutes of Punjab specially meant to teach hearing impaired children who were otherwise normal. Various anthropometric measurements were taken on each subject with the help of techniques given by Lohman et al. (1988) which included weight and height, humerus and femur bicondylar diameter, upper arm and calf circumferences, skinfolds at triceps and subscapular. In a nutshell, it has been found that the deaf-mute boys of the present study lag behind the normal in early years of life in height, have significantly smaller elbow widths and are more fatty at triceps skinfold. The ecological factors and mental attitude of the populace have not changed from those of the past in case of deafmutes while there is a tremendous improvement in the otherwise living standards of the general population. While the normal children seem to experience secular drifts in height, perhaps the deaf children remained mute spectators to the onward march of their normal peers in growth and development.

Key Words: Deaf-Mute, Punjab, Height, Weight, Skinfolds

Introduction

Deafness is one of the most ridiculed handicapping impairments of the child which causes lots of problems to them from birth. It is one of the less talked about disabilities and also one of the least studied one. The deaf people lose their ability of verbal communication and the only way left to communicate is by way of writing and by the use of sign language. Children with hearing loss greater than 90 decibels are designated as deaf. According to *Hunt (1964)*, "The deaf have been described as those whose hearing is of no practical importance for the purpose of communication with others." The condition of hearing impairment may be from the time of birth or it may be acquired later on. The deafness at birth is known as congenital deafness, while deafness that occurs after birth is called adventitious deafness. The most common cause of hearing

impairment is otitis media followed by the impacted wax (*Smith and Hatcher, 1992*).

In order to find out the effect of deafness on physical growth of children *Abolfotouh (2000)* studied 75 blind and 155 deaf subjects and concluded that both blind and deaf mutes attain normal sexual maturity later in life than controls. The deaf mutes and visually challenged have lower height and weight values than controls which reflects a delaying effect of hearing and visual impairment on the physical growth of these children. In another study, *Abolfotouh and Telmesani (1993)* found that the visual handicap affects the growth of children in such a way that 76 percent blinds were below the 50th centile for body weight which meant a considerable growth lag in them.

A mixed longitudinal study was conducted by *Malina and Gorzycki (1973)* on height and weight growth patterns of deaf children of age 6 to 17 years. It was found that the height of deaf boys and