

DECODING NON-VERBAL CUES OF EMOTION COMMUNICATION AS A KEY DETERMINANT OF PEER STANDING

F. Zaadha Siraj^{1,*} and Ramila Usoof

¹PGIHS, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

²Department of Psychology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

*fzaadha@yahoo.com

Friendships are often considered as necessary indicators of healthy social adjustment. It does not simply fulfill our affiliation needs as human beings, but friendships also act as a key determinant of self-esteem, confidence, positive attitudes and social competence. Many studies have explored the important role of verbal language in facilitating social interactions. This study is an attempt to determine the extent to which the preschoolers' ability to understand non-verbal cues of emotion communication has an impact on their ability to form friendship networks. The correlational/ experimental research approach was utilized to design this study. A sample of 60 preschoolers aged 4-5 years were selected using stratified sampling method with informed consent from a parent/guardian; the sample consisted of 30 girls and 30 boys. The participants' ability to understand visual and auditory cues of emotion communication was explored by exposing them individually to photographs and voice recordings of the six basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, disgust and subsequently examining how many out of these visual and auditory cues of emotion the participant can correctly identify. Following this, a two-way measure was carried out to determine the number of friends each participant had: for an individual to be considered as a friend, both the participant and the individual were required to name each other as friends. This step was carried out individually for each participant in private due to ethical considerations. The data collected through these steps were then analyzed using a correlation test and a regression test. The analysis revealed a significant correlation between the two variables ($r = 1, p < 0.01$), indicating that the ability to understand non-verbal cues of emotion communication both visual and auditory has an immense impact on the preschooler's ability to form friendship networks. Comparatively, the ability to comprehend the auditory cues of emotion communication was more predictive of the number of friends one has than the visual cues. The regression analysis for the visual cues ($\beta = .789, t = 4.11, p < 0.0001$) and auditory cues ($\beta = 1.345, t = 7.49, p < 0.0001$) also revealed a significant regression, meaning that the better the capacity to understand facial expressions and vocal tones is, the more friends one had. Therefore, it could be inferred that accurately perceiving these non-verbal cues play a key role in deciding an individual's social interactions and relationships. Thus, the study concludes that understanding the non-verbal cues of emotion communication as one of the crucial factors that shapes social adjustment and social competence among preschoolers.

Keywords: Non-verbal Cues, Emotion Communication, Social Adjustment