

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP PROGRESSION BETWEEN DEAF AND HEARING FRIENDS BASED ON SOCIAL PENETRATION THEORY

Vincentio Patriciano^{1*}, Doan Monang Yan Hero Sihombing², Teguh Hidayatul Rachmad³

^{1,2,3} Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Bunda Mulia

Email : vpatriciano7@gmail.com

* corresponding author

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People with disabilities are still often faced with stigma and negative stereotypes from society, they often experience difficulty communicating with other people. These communication difficulties create obstacles in building strong social relationships, so that communication becomes the most important aspect of interactions for people with disabilities. Communication has an important role as a process of creating relationships in social life, including romantic relationships. The importance of communication in romantic relationships has been the focus of this research which aims at exploring the progression of relationships between deaf-hearing couples based on social penetration theory.

This research used a qualitative descriptive method with semi-structured interviews with four deaf-hearing couples. Data validity was guaranteed through source triangulation and analysis using coding. The results will describe the progression of the romantic relationship of deaf-hearing couples based on social penetration theory.

This research is useful in providing a clear picture of the progression, dynamics and stages of communication that have taken place in the romantic relationship of deaf-hearing couples. The research results show that there is a progression of relationships in accordance with social penetration theory, starting from the orientation phase, exploratory affective exploration, stable exchange, until finally the deepest phase of stable exchange. This research also obtained results that are in accordance with the depth of information from the social penetration theory that applies to the romantic relationships of deaf-hearing couples, namely public layer, personal layer and inner core.

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1. Introduction

A person with hearing loss, such as a deaf person or a deaf friend, is an individual who has damage or disruption to parts of the body, namely the ear, such as the inner, middle, and outer parts, which can be caused by various factors such as accidents, diseases, or other reasons, so that the functions of these organs are disrupted. (Allo, 2022). The hearing loss can be caused by several factors, including genetic factors, rubella infection in the mother during pregnancy, complications during birth, inflammation of the lining of the brain, inflammation of the middle ear, and other diseases or injuries. (Allo, 2022).

According to Rini (2019), deaf friends are just like normal humans in general, it's just that they have deficiencies in the hearing part. Rini (2019) added that deaf friends still need communication between individuals in their lives, because they are still humans who need other humans in social life. In social life, deaf friends really need humans who are around them as a necessity of life in the aspect of communication and interaction, therefore they really need the role of parents, siblings, friends, friends, and even partners as self-fulfilment.

In terms of communication, deaf friends prefer Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) as their daily language, because deaf friends have a closed nature because of their shortcomings (Rini, 2019). Likewise, in carrying out romantic relationships, deaf friends still need other people as friends and even lovers (Rini, 2019). According to Sanders (2022), equality in romantic relationships involving deaf friends is a very important basic principle. It is important to create an environment where both partners feel respected, recognised, and able to participate fully in the relationship with face-to-face communication, openness, and rapport as well as interpersonal communication in interactions (Sanders, 2022). Sanders (2022) adds that through interpersonal awareness, understanding, and active engagement, couples can create a healthy and equal relationship, where both can grow together and feel respected by having effective interpersonal communication between them.

Effective interpersonal communication is at the core of healthy and sustainable romantic relationships (Alberts, 2019). Alberts (2019) adds that people usually start to open up to romantic relationships when they are in the early adulthood phase, which is when people are 20-34 years old. However, in this increasingly diverse world, we recognise that each individual brings their unique experiences to relationships, including in the context of romantic relationships between deaf and hearing friends (Alberts, 2019). These relationships offer unique communication stories and interactions, requiring deep understanding, empathy and adaptation from both parties. According to Wood (2019), when a person lives with a deaf condition, it brings up special challenges and nuances in interpersonal communication dynamics. Sign language, assistive listening technology, and writing may be vital bridges to convey meaning and emotion (Wood, 2019). On the other hand, for hearing people, supporting and understanding alternative communication methods is a crucial step in creating strong and healthy bonds (Wood, 2019).

From this problem, the researcher wants to examine how communication can create a romantic relationship progression lived by deaf friends and hearing friends. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive approach. This study tries to find an understanding of how social penetration experienced by deaf friends with hearing friends in romantic relationships that have been lived. Therefore, this study will explore the further progression of the development of romantic relationships between deaf friends and hearing friends by exploring all openness, communication changes, communication challenges and solutions that arise, as well as looking for ways to build a solid and meaningful romantic relationship

bond by using social penetration theory. The research objective of the study is to find out the progression of the relationship between deaf friends and hearing friends in the romantic story lived.

2. Method

Table 1. Data of Research Sources

Indikator	Nama	Jenis Kelamin	Keterangan
Pasangan 1	N.1	Pria	Dengar
	N.2	Wanita	Tuli
Pasangan 2	N.3	Wanita	Dengar
	N.4	Pria	Tuli
Pasangan 3	N.5	Pria	Dengar
	N.6	Wanita	Tuli
Pasangan 4	N.7	Wanita	Dengar
	N.8	Pria	Tuli

The research method used in this research is a qualitative research method which is carried out by paying attention to problem solving from informants related to the problem being studied (Sugiyono, 2019). This qualitative research method is carried out to find out the reality of the problem under study so as to obtain valid and objective data according to the individual's point of view in this research problem (Sugiyono, 2019). The approach used by researchers in this study is a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is an approach in research whose findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or other forms of calculation (Saeful, 2019). In this approach, researchers try to understand the meaning of communication by paying attention to the process, events and authenticity.

The research conducted is qualitative research, therefore researchers need various journal sources and the interview process as information to fulfil the data needs of this research. The subjects in this study are the researcher's relatives who are deaf-hearing couples who have romantic stories. The object of this research is the progression of romantic relationships lived by deaf friends in their romantic relationships with hearing friends, so that it can be seen the state and development of communication and information in romantic relationships lived by deaf friends with real hearing friends.

The data collection technique used in this research is to conduct an interview process with the informants and the search for data can be obtained through the stories of research informants, namely deaf friends and hearing friends. The research was conducted using onsite and online methods, namely by conducting a semi-structured in-depth interview process, so that with this the researcher can obtain valid data and sourced directly from the informant's story (Mulyana, 2019). In this study, researchers used source triangulation by looking for several sources that could be used as data, namely deaf-hearing couples, which would later be used to obtain valid data. The data analysis technique used by researchers in this study is the interactive data analysis technique in which there are 4 data analysis processes, namely by collecting data, reducing data, presenting data and drawing conclusions on each step taken by researchers (Nitiasih, 2021).

3. Results and Discussion

The stages of social penetration of deaf and hearing friends in romantic relationships based on social penetration theory are influenced by several layers, namely the public layer, personal layer, and inner core. These layers become a reference for how deep the information shared is so that it determines the depth of the deaf-hearing couple's relationship. The depth of information shared will determine whether they experience the orientation, exploratory affective exploration, affective exchange, and stable exchange phases.

a. Orientation Stage of Deaf and Hearing Friends in Romantic Relationships

The orientation phase is the initial phase that is the door to exchanging information between deaf friends and hearing friends for the first time. In this phase individuals gradually open themselves to the other party. The orientation stage begins with a process of introduction accompanied by the sharing of general information, such as nicknames, social media accounts, physique, and dialect of speech. This is where individuals peel off their outer layers.

In this study, the orientation stage of deaf and hearing friends is seen in the way they get to know each other. The researcher found that some of the interviewees already knew each other and some did not know each other at their first meeting. The researcher found that hearing friends often introduce themselves first and start the interaction with deaf friends. Hearing friends introduce themselves by explaining who they are and the purpose of the conversation, which is to get acquainted. On the other hand, the deaf friend will also try to understand the purpose and intention of the hearing friend.

At the orientation stage studied by the researcher, it can be found that the initial stage of orientation is the same as the researcher's theory, namely the discovery of self-disclosure little by little from hearing friends and deaf friends. It can be seen in the answers of the interviewees at the stage of the initial part or initial introduction (orientation) which begins the course of a relationship, the depth of information is clearly visible in the public layer area which is the initial and outermost layer of a relationship.

The results of the research interviews found that all deaf-hearing couples experienced a public layer that was determined by how deeply the topic of conversation was shared and discussed by them. However, there were 2 couples who showed very little depth of public layer information and went straight to the depth of personal layer information, namely couples 2 and 4 (N.3-N.4 and N.7-N.8).

The depth of information is determined by the breadth of information shared by each individual in the initial layer. Based on the results of the interviews, it was answered that the breadth of information is a factor in the public layer being a layer that determines how deep the deaf-hearing couple's conversation is at the orientation stage. The breadth of information based on the interviewees' answers included self-introduction and identity of each other. The interview results show that all interviewees only shared similar things, namely about self-introduction and sharing of their respective identities at their initial meetings and chats. The research data obtained from the interview answers are then supported by the suitability of the theory used by the researcher, namely social penetration theory which can finally frame the course of the relationship from the initial communication that took place in the interviewees' interactions with each other.

As the researchers have mentioned earlier in the research results, that in this study deaf friends and hearing friends there are those who already know each other and some do not

know each other. According to the explanation of social penetration theory, the factor of knowing someone before interacting is a factor in the communication response and the depth and breadth of information sharing between the two. The factor of knowing each other and not knowing each other is an important aspect for the self-disclosure of deaf-hearing couples.

b. Lortatory Affective Stage of Deaf and Hearing Friends in a Romantic Relationship

This phase is the second stage in social penetration theory that involves an increase in the relationship in the exchange of information and a shift to a deeper level of disclosure than the previous stage. The affective exploration stage expands an individual's public domain thereby creating the emergence of aspects of one's personality. This stage is crucial for determining the continuation of the relationship, where at this stage individuals begin to open up and explore the other party to discover and share common interests such as hobbies, favourite songs, or favourite foods. This interaction involves two-way communication. Usually, at this stage individuals will decide whether to continue the relationship to be more intimate or end it due to lack of harmony.

Data based on the results of informant interviews, that there are 2 couples who undergo the exploratory phase and there are 2 couples who do not experience the exploratory phase. This is due to the openness of different attitudes between individuals, especially in deaf men who immediately direct the conversation to intimate topics and are very open. This data can be seen in the affective exchange stage that the researcher has explained earlier based on social penetration theory. Then in the second stage that the researcher has described, the same results are obtained as the theory used by the researcher, namely social penetration theory at the affective exploration stage in how determining the stage of individual self-approach can affect the next relationship to be more intimate.

Based on the answers of all interviewees, the researcher found data that some deaf-hearing couples experience the affective exploration phase and then continue to the affective exchange phase and some do not experience the affective exploration phase, but go directly to the affective exchange phase. This can be seen from the breadth of information that ultimately determines the depth of information shared. It can be seen from the breadth of information shared, which is about work, sign language, status, parents' names, how many siblings, where they come from, where they were born, and family. This breadth of information determines that both partners experience the personal layer, which is the middle layer in accordance with social penetration theory, where they both begin to open up with questions and small talk that can be easily answered by each other. This breadth of information can finally move their relationship to the next stage of affective exchange.

The researcher found that there were 2 couples who did not experience the exploratory affective exploration stage, namely couples 2 and 4 (N.3-N.4 and N.7-N.8). This couple did not show the explorative affective exploration phase, but went straight to affective exchange. Their breadth of information can be shown from the to-the-point chat topics shared, namely about family, daily life, privacy, past relationships, relationship seriousness, marriage, statements of fear of loss, statements of feelings of like and comfort, prohibitions, anger, past romances, c. even obstacles in the relationship. The breadth of information shared can finally find the depth of information in accordance with social penetration theory, namely these two couples are at the depth of the inner core or the deepest layer in onion theory and do not undergo the middle stage of the personal layer in the relationship. The data

obtained is in accordance with social penetration theory precisely at the inner core layer which focuses on intimate chats that become the deepest conversations of both partners.

c. Affective Exchange Stage of Deaf and Hearing Friend in Romantic Relationship

The affective exchange stage focuses on the idea of further commitment as well as the creation of a feeling of comfort that individuals feel with each other. The development of the couple's relationship looks constant and unhurried, the various stages are passed with sufficient time. This stage shows that after the topic of small talk in the context of self-introduction, both of them begin to feel a feeling of comfort that arises which is characterised by their openness to personal or private matters.

Based on the results of the study, researchers found that deaf-hearing couples at this stage took a more intense and more open approach. The information provided is deeper and personal in nature, so that each other's self-disclosure has been shown without hesitation. The depth of information at this stage shows a person's personal depth, namely in the personal layer that shares more private information and concerns the confidentiality of each individual. All deaf-hearing couples also express feelings to each other even though not directly, but both of them already know the code and intention of the statement.

The researcher found facts based on the results of the study that deaf-hearing couples all undergo an affective exchange phase which starts from the existence of private and more intimate chatter, more attention, codes, then reinforced by indirect statements of feelings between the two individuals.

d. Stable Exchange Stage of Deaf and Hearing Friends in Romantic Relationships

The stable exchange stage focuses on the disclosure of feelings and behaviour in a very open way from the individual which eventually creates spontaneity and the uniqueness of a deep relationship. At this stage individuals know each other intimately and all information is intimate. In the stable exchange stage, it is possible for individuals to predict each other's actions or responses well.

The results of interviews with the four interviewee couples illustrate the stage of stable exchange in deaf-hearing couple relationships. At this stage the deaf-hearing couple has expressed their feelings directly. The stable exchange stage is also felt by couples when they prohibit each other because they already know each other's habits. The stage of stable exchange between couples focuses on the existence of direct and very open statements of mutual affection, plus the attitude of understanding each other's ugliness.

The results of the data obtained by researchers based on the answers of the interviewees can be seen from the depth of information shared. At this stage, the sources expressed feelings for each other and already knew each other's traits or desires. This stage has entered the inner core layer which focuses on the most intimate relationship between the two partners.

The researcher found that the theories, stages, and depth of information used by the researcher and the interviewees' answers were the same, that is, each individual openly expressed feelings of affection directly at the inner core layer, and then they could predict individual behaviours that often actually occurred.

Based on the overall research results, an understanding of the communication process and social penetration carried out by deaf and hearing couples in establishing romantic relationships is obtained. The communication process is inseparable from the

discussion of communication as a simple picture that shows the relationship between one communication component and another. This communication is the most basic thing in communication science. Dating relationships are established through a communication process that continues to develop in a more intimate direction, which begins with an approach process to get to know each other's attitudes and compatibility.

In accordance with social penetration theory, the approach is carried out through the introduction, exploration, and bonding stages to form togetherness. Based on the results of the interviews that have been obtained, the interviewees said that the communication strategy that occurs when the source intends to convey information, which they want to convey.

4. Conclusion

The journey of romantic relationships undertaken by deaf-hearing couples goes through stages in accordance with social penetration theory. The relationship progression of deaf-hearing couples can be seen based on the stages of orientation, affective exploration, affective exchange, and stable exchange which is influenced by how much information the depth of information shared when interacting. In the progression and stages of the relationship, deaf-hearing couples each open themselves and information slowly, but over time they get to know each other and approach themselves, share information deeply, be open, and know each other's characteristics and intentions.

Communication between deaf-hard of hearing couples in establishing romantic relationships aims to form self-disclosure, breadth and depth of information, togetherness, intimate interaction, and building trust. This shows the influence of the stages and progressions of social penetration which ultimately makes the development of deaf-hard of hearing couples' relationships in a better direction to build mutual trust between partners. Finally, deaf-blind couples can establish a romantic relationship by disclosing information about themselves to each other.

The researcher would like to provide suggestions to future researchers if they raise similar research topics, where researchers suggest obtaining more complete and comprehensive data from each stage in social penetration theory. Furthermore, the researcher suggests that the next research be conducted onsite or face-to-face directly so that it is expected to get more accurate data and facts and feel the true feelings of the sources, finally aiming to be able to dig deeper into the information to be obtained.

The researcher also gave advice to deaf friends to be more confident and open about their romantic relationships. Researchers hope that deaf people can get love and affection properly in undergoing romantic relationships. The researcher also hopes that hearing friends will love their partners honestly, regardless of physical appearance, selflessly, and show sincere love.

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