Perception of Visually Impaired Youth about Familial, Academic and Caregivers Support

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Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of :

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Abstract - The present study was an endeavor to explore the perception of visually impaired about familial, academic and caregivers support. Study aimed to explore the difference in the perception of support of visually impaired youth living in the residential institute. A questionnaire consisting of 28 items was develop through standardizes procedure and used for data collection. The sample of the study was consisted of 100 students. Among them 28 were boys and 22 were girls, ages ranged from 15 to 22 years, they belong to different socioeconomic status. The present study unfold various aspects of familial, academic and residential life of visually impaired male and female students, experienced lack of social support by caregivers; visually impaired male students experienced most of problems due to non cooperative attitude of caregivers; students who stay longer hours in hostel face more difficulties; students who are receiving higher education face more problems as compared to students of secondary and intermediate level. Study indicates that visually impaired students perceived lack of social support due the people those are near to them. Finding of the study confirm that the performance and attitude of caregivers are not satisfactory, moreover residential facilities are also not enough. On the basis of results, it is suggested that the excellence of family unit and institutional psychosocial support may provided to visually impaired students because it play a vital role for their successive achievement and success in practical life.

I. Introduction

Vision is a vital mean of obtaining information from the environment, lack of sight can severely limit a person's experience. Visual impairment means impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a students's educational performance. Visual impairment is a distressing physical condition with profound social and emotional implications, which consequences affect not only the personage but also the family and the community. The loss of vision due to any causes major changes in lifestyle, and habits of the blind person which may result in problems in social and psychological adjustments.

According to WHO blindness can define as a physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment, whether temporary or permanent, provided that it lasts for a considerable phase that confines the ability to execute one or more fundamental activities of everyday life. The term includes both partially sighted and blindness. Visual impairment creates an obstruction, which consequently lead to dependency. Visual impaired people always expecting others to lead and take decisions for fear of being rejected. Moreover, they always have to show they are proficient, but their errors are "forgiven" because they are special.

The basic problem faced by the families of handicapped is how to cope with the problems of living in that will enhance family member's growth and development. The behaviour of the handicapped is shaped by the actions and attitudes of others and his adjustment in the family can either distort or encourage potential for growth. In this context the relationship of parents and siblings are most significant. Usually the emotional wellbeing of the visually impaired children is often not very good in their families and residential institutes due to lack of intimacy, concern and communication with parents or caregivers.

For the visually impaired, to be incorporated into the society the relationships between the visually impaired and society is very vital. The person and professionals, each at his own level, must allow society to perceive the handicap itself as well as the person's abilities. For the formation of children's health and behavior features their emotional comfort in the closest environment their family is important. Probably brothers and sisters more than parents can understand the interests of visually impaired, satisfy their needs to associate, to play and get new impressions.

As far as the education of visually impaired is concerned, the primary responsibility of the educational institutions is to provide specialized instruction and services required to meet the unique educational needs of visually impaired. Teachers can help the student, parents, and special and regular education personnel. For the education of visually impaired students, special equipments and teaching aid are vital such as large-type or Braille texts, supplementary materials, educational, aids, and equipment. It is teacher's duty to ensure the availability of these aids to the visually impaired timely and ensure the student's maximum participation in all classroom activities parents and other individuals on a regular basis.

Emotional ailments and maladaptive behavior of the visually impaired are formed by complex biological and social factors. These are peculiarities of their

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individual psychical health, psychical and sensory development as well as emotional experiences caused by occlusion. Inauspicious surroundings such as, improper family education, children's unsatisfactory emotional comfort in the family or at special training institutions causes emotional and behavioral turmoil in the life. Generally individual with visual impairment become anxious due to their life experiences, such as loss of sight, peer interaction negative caregiver's attitude. According to Eniola (2007) "generally visually impaired feel anxious because of their visual problems, thinking about how to cope with the problems of blindness. Moreover visual impairment seem to evoke more awkwardness than more other disabilities because it is a apparent disability because while walkings visually impaired use a cane, guide dog, sighted guide and use dark glasses. Eyes also play an important role in social interaction and other people generally feel uncomfortable to talk with people who they are unable to establish eye contact".

Other factors that contributed to the problems of visually impaired include, inadequate teaching and learning facilities at educational institution, problem of finance, lack of special teaching learning aids. These above-mentioned factors contributed significantly to the problems of visually impaired.

According to Bhagotra, et.al (2008) social support to the blind are important and most important aspect of social support extended to a blind person include family friends and relatives and the community as a whole. They further illustrate that social support to the blind includes, accepting them as a useful part of society, encouraging them to participate in social functions, providing them proper guidance and advice, giving them physical assistance by sharing their tasks, helping them regain their self-esteem and relieving them of their attitude of self-pity etc. All this support helps them accept their disability with dignity and makes them socially cordial, psychologically adaptable and educationally firm.

In Pakistan, as far, the education of visually impaired students is concerned govt and non-governmental organizations are engaged in this task. Government is spending a lot for the education and rehabilitation of visually impaired students but there is lack of coordination among federal government, provincial governments and NGOs institutions. It also fails to provide a barrier-free environment, residential facilities, cooperative caregivers enough teaching aids and energetic teaching staff to the visually impaired students.

The main objective of this research was to investigate the perception of visually impaired youth about familial, teachers and caregivers support through characteristics of home and institutional experiences. Moreover, it is an attempt to determine the predicament stumble upon by visually impaired at educational institutions and family settings.

In Pakistani cultural context in past times, no serious attempts have been made to explore the perception of visually impaired about the familial, teacher and caregiver's support. Although many researches were available on the perception of parents and teachers about the handicapped (Shazadi, 1992), or attitude of people towards the handicapped (Rashid, 1991). Therefore, it is imperative to understand visual impaired reaction to social supports, provided by their parents, caregivers and academic in psychological terms. It also measured the role of certain demographic variables in determining this perception.

II. Methodology

Present study was delimited to male and female visually impaired students studying in the institutions of special education. A stratified random sample of 100 male and female respondents was selected from different Govt. schools and colleges of Lahore and Rawalpindi. For the measurement of visually impaired perception a rating scale consisting of 3 subscales and 28 items was developed through standardized procedure. It measures three dimensions of social support, such as familial, academic, and caregivers support, study was an attempt to explore the perception focusing on: communal understanding, care, educational facilities, social approval, patience and sharing of responsibility. These factors are considered to be basics for sustaining the feeling of confidence and trust in one's abilities. The respondents have to rate these statements on 5 point scale strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) undecided (3) agree (4) and (5) strongly agree. The higher score on rating scale indicates lack of social support and more problems experienced by the visual impaired youth.

a) *Research problem*

The problem to be investigated was to explore the perception of visually impaired youth abut familial, academic and caregivers support, it furthers aimed to explore the role of certain demographic variables such as, age, gender income level of education and length of stay in hostel in determining the perceived level of social support.

b) *Research objectives*

The main objectives of the research are as under:

1. To explore the perception of visually impaired students about familial, academic, and caregivers support.
2. To analyze the affects of various demographic variables including, age, gender, income, grades, and length of stay in hostel in determine the perception about social support.

c) *Hypotheses*

1. Visually impaired perceived that they are facing more problems due to caregivers' attitudes than the attitude of their family and academic staff.

2. Males visually impaired perceived more lack of social support than their females counterpart.
3. Students with longer stay in hostel experienced more difficulties than those who have less stay in hostel.
4. Students of degree classes experience more lack of academic support than students of intermediate classes.
5. Students of higher income group perceived fewer problems of support than students with low-income group.
6. Students with less number of siblings perceive more lack of support than students with more number of siblings.
7. Younger visually handicapped students experience more perceived problems than the older students.

d) *Population*

For this research, the ideal population includes all visually impaired students studying in the public and private sector schools of Pakistan, but due to limited time and resources, it was not possible to collect data from all of them. Therefore, for the convenience of data collection, public special education institutions located at Lahore and Rawalpindi were only selected for the study.

e) *Sample*

The sample of the study consisted of 100 students. Among them 58 were boys and 42 were girls, ages ranged from 15 to 22 years, they belong to different socioeconomic status. Moreover, grades ranged from secondary, higher secondary and graduate level and income level ranged from Rs.10, 000 to Rs.50, 000. Other specifications of the sample are number of sibling and length of stay in hostel.

f) *Procedure*

A stratified random sample of 100 students was collected from the three educational level such as secondary, higher secondary and graduate. The respondents were contacted in their respective classrooms. They were given adequate information about the purpose of the study; a rating scale was given to them with request to complete it in one sitting. The assurance of confidentiality and anonymity was provided to them.

i. *Psychometric Properties of the Social Support Scale*

a. *Item Total correlation*

To determine the internal consistency of social support scale, item total correlations were computed and result reveals that all items have significant correlation with the total scale, ranging from .32 to .79.

b. *Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient*

Cronbach's Alpha reliability estimates were computed for the subscales as well as the total scale.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (N=100)

Subscales	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Familial Scale	8	.69
Academic Scale	11	.76
Caregivers Scale	9	.77
Total	28	.81

ii. *Establishment of Norms through Percentiles Analysis*

In order to interpret the score obtained by each individual and to determine the cutoff scores, the percentiles scores were determined.

Table 1 : Percentiles Score of Respondents on 28 items Social Support Scale *(N=100)*

Percentiles	Score
1	63
5	64
10	65
15	68
20	69
25	**70**
30	74
35	74
40	77
45	78
50	**80**
55	81

60	82
65	82
70	83
75	**87**
80	90
85	93
90	97
95	99

Table 1 reveals percentile ranks of respondents' scores on the 28 items social support scale. The percentile ranks were calculated in order to identify the levels of perceived lack of support. The score of 70 falls on 25th percentile, characterized as a mild perceived lack support, score of 80 falls on 50th percentile

characterized as the moderate perceived lack of support and score of 87 falls on 75th percentile rank characterized as higher perceived lack of support.

Table 2 : Levels and Percentages of Perceived Support

Levels of Lack Support	Percentage
Mild lack of Support	20%
Moderate lack of Support	33%
Higher lack of Support	47%

Table 2 describes the three levels and percentages of the perceived support due to familial, teachers and caregivers assistance. From the table it is clear that 20% percentage respondents have mild lack

of support whereas 33% of the respondents experienced moderate lack of perceived support whereas 47 % respondents experienced high lack of support.

Table 3 : Inter -Correlations among the Subscales (N=100)

Subscales	Familial	Teachers	Caregivers
Familial			
Teachers	.63*		
Caregivers	.74**	.57**	
Total	.70**	.78**	.70**

*P <.05 **p <.01

Table 3 portrays the inter-scales correlations of the subscale and total scale social support scale. Result shows that all subscales are positively correlated with each other. The highest inter scales correlations exist between caregivers and familial support.

III. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA RELATED TO THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H1: Visually impaired perceived that they are facing more problems due to caregivers' attitudes than the attitude of their family and teachers.

Table 4

Subscales	M	SD
Familial	10.1	2.4
Caregivers	25.5	2.7
Teachers	20.9	3.4
Total	56.5	8.6

Table 4 shows the mean scores and SD of the respondents score on rating scale. Table shows that students experience lack of support mainly due to the attitude of caregivers. It means that students perceived that the attitudes of residential staff as inflexible and obstinate. Therefore, the statistical results shown in this table confirm H1 that visually impaired perceived that

they are facing more problems due to caregivers' attitudes than the attitude of their family and teachers.

H2: Male visually impaired perceived more difficulties than their female's counterpart did.

Table 5

Subscales	Male		female	
	M	SD	M	SD
Familial	14.7	2.7	8.1	1.7
Caregivers	30.6	4.4	25.3	3.6
Teachers	21.6	2.5	27.5	4.3
Total	66.9	9.6	60.9	9.6

Table 5 portrays the results of the respondents for the second hypothesis of the study. The results illustrate gender wise difference in the perception of support. The results presented in this table confirm the research hypothesis that male visually impaired students perceived more difficulties than the female students because they have higher mean score on the total score of the research instrument.

H3: Students who have longer stay in hostel have more difficulties than those who have less stay in hostel.

Table 6

Subscales	up to 2 years		2 to 6 years	
	M	SD	M	SD
Familial	9.5	2.1	8.2	1.3
Caregivers	25.6	4.4	34.3	3.2
Teachers	20.6	2.5	29.2	4.3
Total	65.7	8.0	71.7	8.8

Table 6 present differences in the scores of the respondents for the variable length of stay in hostel. It appears from the results that those have longer stay in the hostel, experience more non-supportive behaviour than those who have less stay in the hostel.

The results presented in this table conformed third hypothesis of the research.

H4: Students of degree classes experience more lack of academic support than students of intermediate classes.

Table 7 : Differences in the Responses for the Variable Class

Subscales	Secondary		Higher Secondary		Graduate	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Familial	9.4	1.4	9.7	2.2	10.5	1.3
Teachers	20.9	2.41	9.6	2.4	21.5	2.2
Caregivers	20.9	5.1	21.8	4.2	26.9	2.1
Total	51.2	11.8	50.1	8.8	58.9	5.6

Table 7 portrays respondent scores on the variable class. The result illustrates that students of secondary level have higher score on the total scale; they have also higher mean scores on all subscales.

H5: Students of higher income group perceived fewer problems of support than children with low-income group.

Table 8 : Income Wise Differences in the Respondents Score

Subscales	up to 15000		50000 and above	
	M	SD	M	SD
Familial	13.6	3.6	8.1	1.4
Teachers	22.5	3.9	19.5	2.3
Caregivers	32.4	4.7	21.7	2.7
Total	68.5	13.2	49.3	9.5

Table 8 represents the income wise differences of the scores of the respondents. Results depicted those students who belong to lower income groups perceived more problems due to lack of support as compared with students of higher income groups.

H6: Students with fewer siblings perceived more difficulties than students with more siblings.

Table 9 : Differences in the Responses for the Variable Number of Siblings

Subscales	1		2		3		4	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Familial	9.5	1.4	10.2	1.1	9.6	2.1	9.9	2.4
Teachers	25.6	3.1	27.7	3.3	27.3	2.2	19.3	3.2
Caregivers	30.7	2.4	22.8	3.2	21.8	3.1	27.1	3.2
Total	64.8	6.9	60.7	7.6	58.7	7.4	56.3	8.8

Table 9 describes the respondents' scores on the variable number of siblings. From this table it is evident that respondents with less number of siblings perceive non-supportive attitude of familial teachers and caregivers than respondents have more siblings. Thus, the empirical results presented in this table validate sixth hypothesis of the study.

H8: younger students experience more perceived problems than the older ones.

Table 10 : Differences in the Respondents' Scores on the Variable Age

Subscales	12-18 years		19-22 years		22 and above	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Familial	9.5	3.4	10.6	1.3	11.2	1.2
Caregivers	28.7	1.3	21.4	1.3	22.5	2.1
Teachers	21.9	2.1	16.8	2.2	19.0	2.4
Total	58.1	6.8	48.8	8.0	52.7	5.4

Table 10 describes that the respondents' scores on the variable age, it appear from the results that respondents whose age ranges from 12-18 years perceived more lack of support. Therefore, H8 of the research is confirmed that younger students experience more stress than the older one.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study was carried out to measure the research objectives. It was focus on the perception of visual impaired regarding social and institutional support. It also intended to find out the relationship of demographic variables with perceived lack of support. The result of the study is presumed to be a useful experience for students with visual impairment, parents, caregivers, teachers, as well as others dealing with such student the excellence of parent-child interaction provides foundations for cognitive, social and communicative development of children (Klein etal., 1996; Rye, 1997). Throughout the life, the nature of the person's interactions with family and friends considered as the engine of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The component of support include mutual understanding; acceptance, affection and tolerance; caring and supportiveness of the parents, siblings, teachers and caregivers. The finding of the research suggested that student's difficulties are due to non-supportive teaching learning environment. Moreover, residential institutions also play an important role in the life of visually impaired. The participants of this research were belongs to a segregated setting, and reported they often faced non-supportive cognitive-affective and instructional conditions in educational institution and in residential place. In order to achieve the first objective, to explore the perception of visually impaired students about familial, teachers, and caregivers support. The mean and SD of the respondents on the overall scale were calculated results make it clear that people with visual impairment have negative perception about familial, teachers, and caregivers support, especially they are unhappy with the attitude of caregivers.

The second objective of the study was to analyze the affects of various demographic variables including, age, gender, income, class, number of siblings and length of stay in hostel in determine the perception about support. Results revealed that demographic variables affect on the perception of visually impaired students. In this regard, various hypotheses were formed; findings of this research validate our research hypotheses.

The early psychosocial home environment and the state of the participants' current emotional climate are very important for the health and positive self-esteem, which has to be cultivated early in life. Low self-esteem is often cited as the ultimate source of poor academic achievement and self-destructive behavior. Particularly, the type of early childhood upbringing, early school experiences and peer relations play a vital role in molding the child's self-esteem (Safri,1972). Indeed, the opinions of significant adults (parents, teachers etc.) have an impact on a child's level of self- esteem. In Pakistani cultural context, the visually impaired experience unfavorable social conditions such as, improper family education, unsatisfactory emotional comfort in the family and special training institutions, that can leads to distress.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Findings of the study reveal that 47% visually impaired male and female students experienced lack of social support. It was also found that visually impaired experienced most of problems due to non cooperation attitude of care givers in this respect male face more difficulties than female. It was also found that students who experienced have to stay for longer duration in hostel face more difficulties. Another major finding of the present study was that students who are receiving higher education face more problems as compared with students of secondary and intermediate level. The results of the study unfold various aspects of familial, academic and residential life of visually impaired. Study indicates that visually impaired students perceived lack of social support due the people those are near to them. Study also concluded that at present there is serious lack of teaching aids for the visually impaired students. Finding of the study confirm that the performance and attitude of caregivers are not satisfactory, moreover residential facilities are also not enough. The results of this study also provide insight into the demographic variables that may influence the perception about the social supports. Gender, income age seemed to have a statistical significant relationship with negative perception. The results of this study were in line with the stated hypotheses.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Visually impaired students have unique learning needs that must be addressed in order to become them independent and productive citizens of our society. Thus, family and educational institutions face a significant challenge in providing services that will enhance successful post-colleges outcomes. Making appropriate decisions about the development and implementation of social support for students with visual impairments requires a clear understanding of their unique learning needs and the interventions. Academic administrators must have knowledge about specialized personnel, materials, equipment and educational settings to ensure appropriate individual educational program planning for this unique population. Based on the special need of visually impaired student population Following are some recommendation

1. Parents, siblings, teachers and caregivers may not be treated visually impaired people in the stereotypical and demeaning manner. They should recognize that each person is unique and different from every other person, Moreover they should understand that persons who are visually impaired have the same emotions as everyone else.
2. Parents support and involvement are most important for the visually impaired, therefore, they may provide appropriate training so they can actively involved in the betterment of their children.

3. People those who are dealing with the visually impaired they should respect and encourage the individuality, capabilities and independence of the visually impaired youth.
4. Schools/ colleges counselor need to take an active role in helping visual impaired students to develop appropriate career aspiration and job performance skills.
5. Special and general educators should treat visually impaired in the same manner as they do the rest of their students.
6. There is lack of teaching aids, such as Braille books, large print material, Perkins brailler, tape recorders computer and other technological devices for visually impaired. At college level there is serious lack of Braille books, recorder books may be provided for all subjects at the beginning of the session.
7. Schools, colleges and the residential institute may provide a barrier free environment for the visual impaired persons.
8. The capacity of the residential institutions is not according to needs, so the capacity of the existing institutions may be enhance if possible.
9. The institutions should provide more supportive teaching leaning environment so visually impaired can perform up to their maximum potential level.

Suggestion for Visually Impaired youth

1. Feel yourself valuable and contributing member of society.
2. Recognize own strengths and weaknesses in a realistic manner and acknowledge both positive and negative feelings in oneself and in others and appreciate that both feelings are justifiable.
3. Being able to identify and appropriately express their likes and dislikes and being aware of alternative ways to respond to the feelings and behavior of others.
4. Feel comfortable asking for help from others when it is appropriate.

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