

A Comparison of Students' Self-concept on the Basis of Visual Impairment and Normal Vision

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Abstract

The focus of this quantitative study was on analyzing the self-concept of the students with visual impairment in Lahore (Pakistan). A modified self-description questionnaire used by Jayne E. Stake (1992) was used to assess the six subscales (Likability, Task accomplishment, Morality, Power, Giftedness and Vulnerability) of the self-concept of the students with VI (visual impairment) and normal sight. The questionnaire was translated into Urdu to collect data from randomly selected 60 students with visual impairment from the special education schools (30 males and 30 females), and 60 students without visual impairment (30 males and 30 females) from public schools. No significant difference of self-concept was found between the students with visual impairment and students with normal sight. Only sighted students' self-concept about morality was more positive than the students with visual impairment.

Keywords: Self-concept, Visual impairment, Likability, Task accomplishment, Morality, Power, Giftedness and Vulnerability

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Introduction

The gist of present study is the premise to elucidate the comparison of students' self-concept on the basis of visual impairment and normal vision. Self-concept may be visualized as the level of universal regard that an individual has for him or herself as a person (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Visual impairment is defined as "impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sighted and blindness" (Pierangelo, 2007, p. 331). It is very difficult for the families to cope with blindness or significant visual impairment. The pessimistic views about blindness produce social segregation and denial of the blind. The blind persons have restricted options for education and vocational training which keeps them away from the decision making process. This leads to low self-perception and a feeling of insignificance. Inadequate social relations with unemployment and harsh standards of living result in depression (Awan, Mehar, & Memon, 2011). Self-concept, social identity and self-evaluation may vary in students who differ in their visual status (Huurre & Aro, 1998; Pinguart & Pfeiffer, 2013). As illustrated by Augestad & Elmer (2017, p.2), "Children with vision loss may have reduced mobility, fewer opportunities to learn social skills, greater independency on help, and experience loneliness. Moreover, less participation in leisure-time activities with their significant others may contribute to them having an increased risk of mood disorders."

Persons with visual impairment are different in their characteristics, behaviors, needs and activities from sighted individuals. Positive self-concept can enhance their abilities because it is proved that better self-Concept (SC) of the students indicated higher Academic Competence (AC) than low achievers (Barbara, 2011). Thus equal opportunities and useful access to psychoanalysis can help the students with visual impairment to lead a better quality of life. Therefore, the study was conducted to investigate whether differences are present in the self-concept of students with vision loss and with normal sight.

Psychologists have explained self-concept in different ways. "A self-concept is a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities, and typical behavior. Your self-concept is your mental picture of yourself. It is a collection of self-perceptions. For example, a self-concept might include such beliefs as 'I am easygoing' or 'I am pretty' or 'I am hard working'" (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2015, p.167).

Self-concept contains two basic parts: social identity and personal identity as given by social identity theory. Personal identity is related to individual qualities and other characteristics, which make each person distinctive. Social identity includes the society, group, institution, religion, or community someone belongs to. We can say, a person's self-concept depends on one's self-perceptions and how a person fits in a social context. The self-concept can rapidly exchange among the social and personal identity.

The review of the relevant literature has clearly revealed that researchers' results related to the self-esteem and self-concept of the persons with visual impairments indicate disagreements. Leading the way, Jervis, (1959) found two limits in the relation of visual impairment and self-concept. Visually impaired youth had either over valued their self-perceptions or they had very poor self-concept as compared to sighted people. Some studies (Beaty, 1991, 1992) have concluded that feeling of inferiority and incapability can be caused by visual impairment which may result in poor physical capacity, deficiency of communal adjustment and low academic achievement. It was propounded by Rosenblum, (2000) that the fact that most of the adolescents with visual impairment may face difficulties when integrating into society and school, because they have obstacles in establishing social relations. They got lower score in some aspects of self-concept because they are most likely perceived as less attractive by peers. Thus the self-concept have been observed to be negatively affected by visual impairment.

On the other hand Alexander, (1996); and Griffin-Shirley and Nes, (2005), found that students with visual impairment have not developed significantly low self-concept than their sighted peers. As well as there is a study that describes no major differences in the two groups (Huurre, Komulainen, & Aro, 1999). Hence, Lifshitz, Hen, and Weisse (2007) described comparable results after the comparison of self-concept of 40 adolescents with visual impairments and 41 sighted adolescents.

There are some research conclusions to illustrate that the persons with visual impairments exhibit an average level of self-esteem (Cardinali & D'Allura, 2001). On the other hand some researchers have pointed out that adolescents with visual impairments indicate more positive self-perceptions than their sighted peers (Kef, 2002). Mishra (2013) evaluated in his study with purposive sample of 40 sighted and 40 visually impaired students that sighted students have better self-concept than the students with visual impairment. In sum, the literature evidence showed mix results about the comparison of self-concept of the students with visual impairment and normal sight. So due to the discrepant results, more studies are required to explore in this area.

Objectives of the study

- To explore the six subscales of multidimensional self-concept of students with visual impairment.
- To find out the level of self-perception of students with visual impairment.
- To investigate the significant difference of self-concept between the students with visual impairment and students with normal vision.

Significance of the study

Although the constitution of Pakistan ensures impartiality, justice, liberty, and self-respect of all citizens including persons with visual impairment, we face scarcity of research relevant to the individuals with visual impairment in Pakistan. Present study will bridge the gap among visually impaired and sighted students. Researcher realizes the rationale of conducting research in the field of students with visual impairment to build up their full capacities and to make them self-independent in future.

The study is conducted to bring all those parents in to light who lack consciousness about the self-identity of their visually impaired children and results will work as a guide for them. Those students with visual impairment who may be sufferers of their own negative thinking about themselves being visually impaired will also be rescued by the help of this study.

Internationally persons with visual impairment are strongly supported to fulfill their unique needs. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) was introduced by the U.S. Department of Education in 1975 and passed in 1990. By 2004 it was reported that about 90 percent of children with visual impairments were spending some time with sighted peers in regular classrooms. Hence, it is worthwhile to compare the self-concept of the students with visual impairment and normal vision in Lahore.

Research hypotheses

The hypothesis of the study has been tested at 0.05 level of significance as follows.

- There is a significant difference in six factors of self-concept (likability, task accomplishment, giftedness, morality, power, vulnerability) of the students with visual impairment and their peers with normal sight.
- There is a significant difference in the self-concept of the students with visual impairment and their peers with normal sight.

Research Methodology

Present survey type study was conducted by using quantitative research methodology and is descriptive in design. Target population of the study is comprised of all teenage students of classes VI – X with visual impairment and normal vision in Lahore city. Sample of the study consisted of 60 students with visual impairments (aged 13-19) which include 30 males and 30 females with no other disability, attending special education schools and 60 sighted adolescents (30 males and 30 females). Different schools for visually impaired students were randomly selected from Lahore including public and private sector. Random sampling technique was used to select the students with normal vision.

A modified self-description questionnaire used by Jayne E. Stake (1992) was used to assess the six factors of students' self-concept. Questionnaire was translated into Urdu language and a team of three experts validated it. Data were collected from the students with visual impairment and from those with normal vision by same scale. There were 36 items and participants responded to each item on a four point Likert scale ranging from never true for me to always true for me. Vulnerability was the only negative subscale; scores on this subscale were reversed and was referred to as invulnerability. The researcher read out the questions to each participant with visual impairments one by one during a 45-60 minutes session and then wrote down the answers given by the participant. Each participant was alone with the researcher during the procedure. On the other hand sighted students wrote their responses by themselves.

Self-concept was measured by the six factor self-concept scale including subscales for each of the self-concept areas. The following list describes each subscale.

1. Likability-the ability to foster pleasant and enjoyable relations with others; "easy to talk to"
2. Morality-qualities generally valued as good and virtuous; "trust worthy"
3. Task accomplishment-The capability to manage and accomplish task efficiently; "can concentrate well on task"
4. Giftedness-natural talents, as distinct from current abilities; "bright and ingenious"
5. Power- qualities of strength and leadership; "acts as a leader"
6. Vulnerability- difficulty in performing under pressure and self-criticalness; "easily embarrassed"

The original survey had 36 questions on a seven-point scale. Because the researcher has to read the questions to each respondent due to visual impairment and the seven-point scale is exceeding the average capacity of working memory and thus making students with visual impairment unable to discriminate between categories. The reduction to four point scale much improved the survey. The reliability of instrument was .92 as given under.

Table 1
Reliability of scale

N	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
120	.92	36

Above table indicates that reliability of the instrument of self-concept containing 36 items is .92 and for 120 participants.

Limitations of the study

The examiner read questionnaires to each student with visual impairment, which may have directed the students to present a better self-concept. A larger sample may also increase awareness about the differences present due to educational setting and visual status. Small sample (due to less number of adolescents in special education schools and many have other disabilities along with visual impairment) is also a limitation of this study. In the libraries of Pakistan there is a scarcity of local literature on self-concept of the students with visual impairment that is also a limitation of this study.

Results

The data were entered in SPSS 17.0 for windows and analyzed to see the significant difference in multidimensional self-concept of the students with visual impairment and the students with normal sight.

Table 2
Comparison of the students' Perceptions on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision regarding likability

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	19.65	.68	.65	118
Normal	60	19.32			

Table 2 presents that t-value (.65) is not significant ($p = .68$) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it is decided that there is no significant difference between perceptions of the students with visual impairment and normal sighted students regarding likability.

Table 3
Comparison of the students' Perceptions on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision regarding task accomplishment

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	18.25	.39	3.71	118
Normal	60	16.18			

Table 3 presents that t-value (3.71) is not significant ($p = .39$) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it is shown that there is no significant difference in the students with and without visual impairment regarding task accomplishment.

Table 4

Comparison of the students' Perceptions on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision regarding giftedness

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	14.65	.48	2.81	118
Normal	60	13.25			

Table 4 presents that t-value (2.81) is not significant ($p = .48$) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it is proved that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of students with visual impairment and normal students on the basis of giftedness subscale of self-concept.

Table 5

Comparison of the students' Perception on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision regarding morality

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	13.41	.02	-18.93	118
Normal	60	20.93			

Table 5 presents that t-value (-18.93) is significant ($p = .02$) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it is concluded that there is a significant difference between students with visual impairment and normal vision with respect to Morality.

Table 6

Comparison of the students' Perception on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision regarding vulnerability

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	16.37	.62	1.03	118
Normal	60	15.80			

Table 6 presents that t-value (1.03) is not significant ($p = .62$) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it is depicted that there is no significant difference between perceptions of students with visual impairment and students with normal vision regarding vulnerability.

Table 7

Comparison of the students' Perception on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision regarding power

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	19.96	.83	1.62	118
Normal	60	18.68			

Table 7 presents that t-value (1.62) is not significance ($p = .82$) at Self-concept.

Table 8

Comparison of students' total self-concept on the Basis of visual impairment and normal vision

Vision status	N	Mean	p	t	df
Visual impairment	60	102.30	.16	-.78	118
Normal	60	104.16			

Table.8 presents that t-value (-.78) is not significant ($p = 0.16$) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it is decided there is no significant difference in self-concept of the students with visual impairment and normal sight.

Discussion

Above results indicate the measurement of self-concept with the description of six subscales. This research is different from previous ones because unusual scale is used for the measurement of self-concept. The reviews of literature have asserted that mostly the data of different self-concept related studies have been collected by the use of SDQ and other instruments but in this study subjects' data regarding self-concept was obtained through the use of self-concept scale of Jayne E. Stake (1992), that contained six subscales (task accomplishment, likability, giftedness, morality, power, vulnerability) and it is a multidimensional evaluation of adults' self-concept. For several years it has been a matter of great controversy to explore the potential relation between visual impairment and the developmental problems of the self-concept. Due to the discrepant results, most of the studies necessitate to explore in this area. Most of the studies have concluded that students with vision loss have lower self-concept because their psychological and social challenges in life differ from those with normal sight. Results of the present study indicated that likability or Social self-evaluation of both the groups was equal. The ability to make positive and pleasant social relations was also same in both groups. There was no significant difference in task accomplishment subscale (the ability to complete task efficiently and capably). Giftedness or the measure of natural aptitude and talent possessed by the participants of both the groups was also at the same level. Subscale

power that is a tool to assess the ability to influence others effectively was also equivalent in both groups. Students with visual impairment were proved as vulnerable as sighted students. Students with normal sight got significantly higher score than the students with vision loss in only one subscale that is morality.

Results of the present study were similar as depicted by Tuttle and Tuttle (2004, p. 73), “the psychological principles involved in the dynamics of the development of one’s self-concept and self-esteem among sighted are equally applicable to persons who are blind.” However, persons with visual impairment (VI) may have lower self-concept due to their experiences of life differ from those faced by sighted ones (Hadidi & Al Khateeb, 2013; Konarska, 2007). But in present study no significant difference was found in all subscales except morality where sighted students showed better self-concept. Correspondingly no significant difference was found when we analyzed the data to compare total self-concept of the students with VI and their sighted peers.

Conclusion

It is concluded that there is no significant difference in the self-concept of students with visual impairment and normal sight. Both groups’ perceptions regarding 5 subscales of self-concept i-e Likability, Task accomplishment, Power, Giftedness and Vulnerability were the same. A significant difference is found in the factor of morality. Sighted students’ self-concept about morality is more positive as compared to the students with visual impairment.

Four subscales likability, Task accomplishment, vulnerability, and morality contained six items. So their total score was 24. But giftedness was rated against 5 items and power was rated against 7 items and having total score 20 and 28 respectively. Results of students with visual impairment indicated that the mean of Likability was higher than the other factors.

Recommendations

Following educational recommendations on the basis of the present study will anticipate the better future of students with visual impairment in Pakistan.

1. Same levels of self-concept in both groups have proved that students with visual impairment should not be underestimated. They are as ambitious, energetic and full of confidence as their sighted peers.

2. Parents, siblings, teachers and caregivers may realize that the students with visual impairment have the same social, emotional and academic perceptions about themselves as their normal peers. They can support them to fulfill their unique educational needs by providing more supportive teaching leaning environment with teaching aids, such as Braille books, large print material, Perkins Braille, tape recorders computer and other technological devices, so that visually impaired students can perform up to their maximum potential level.
3. Integrated educational programs and other co-curricular activities organized by public and private institutions can also help to develop the hidden potential of visually handicapped students.
4. There is a need of reoriented teacher training programs to encourage the students with visual impairment. So that they can take part in daily activities like their sighted peers.
5. Different types of co-curricular activities like games, singing, dramatics, scouting can be provided in the schools of the students with visual impairment to increase their social self-concept and to help them to become an integral part of society.
6. Teachers, parents and counselors can also help students with visual impairment to develop appropriate career aspiration, job performance skills and make them able to support their families financially like their sighted peers.

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