

Preface

The book focuses on some of the psychological aspects of blindness (loss, grief, and eventual ‘acceptance’), adaptation and coping strategies. It propagates the social model of disability and is a complete breakaway from the individual approach. It opposes the issue of blindness being positioned absolutely on individual approach with little consideration of societal context. This reductionist approach tends to assume blindness as solely a physiological event and not a social process.

This book is an initiative towards addressing the dearth of adequate research on the correlation between various psychosocial factors (anxiety, depression, self-esteem) and their cumulative impact on the psychological development and educational achievement of blind individuals in the Indian context.

Adolescence is a critical period of development marked by rapid changes such as transition to independence and finding one’s own identity and necessitates in-depth research. The psychological well-being of both blind and sighted adolescents is dependent on several factors such as their social and economic background, gender, age, perceived social support and social and emotional maturity. Inability to adjust to the various physical, cognitive, and affective changes may cause them to exhibit different types of behavioural problems.

Social acceptance and psychological well-being as essential prerequisites for successful rehabilitation of all individuals made it an imperative to explore the traumas, dilemmas, and challenges that people with disabilities experience. These have a significant influence on the latter’s self-view, adjustment patterns, and acceptance into mainstream society. This volume provides a comprehensive analysis of social adjustment and emotional development of visually impaired individuals to identify if a type of school setting produces significant impact on their educational achievement. Apart from this, although studies indicate differences among students with visual impairments regarding their psychosocial development and social interaction in various settings, there is lack of substantial research that describes the structural properties of diverse educational settings and their impact on adjustment patterns and academic performance.

The book assesses and analyses if the type of educational placement (non-integrated) produces any significant influences and differences among adolescent blind and sighted students in respect of their self-esteem, adjustment, and academic achievement. The interaction pattern and self-perception of blind students at school have been looked into from the social constructivist perspective of disability to analyse if experiences of schooling for children with disability are mediated through school practices and processes rather than the physical impairment itself.

Chapter 1 highlights the marked changes in paradigms for defining disability from the individual approach, or more specifically the medical model, to the social approach. This facilitates understanding various issues concerned with disability being perceived predominantly as medical or biological or the social approach theories which were found to be more concerned with structural and material conditions, culture, and representation. I highlight certain important issues as well as shortcomings existing in the area of research concerning visual impairment, thus urging the need for undertaking more in-depth and extensive research.

Chapter 2 explores various aspects of self-esteem and adjustment and their relation to disability. It critically analyses the diverse theories and their relevance in affecting the psychological well-being of people with disabilities, particularly blind individuals.

Critical reorientation of different approaches and perspectives has significant implications on the manner in which law and policy relating to disability are developed. There is now growing awareness among people that the problem does not reside in the person with a disability, but results from the structures, practices, and attitudes that prevent the individual from exercising his or her capabilities. Keeping this in view, Chap. 3 investigates policy perspectives regarding the education of people with disabilities at the global level and specifically in India. It is obvious that although there has been a marked shift in paradigms towards making educational provisions, there are also various backlogs and barriers, which make it essential to undertake more focused and comprehensive efforts for deriving optimum benefits. It is within this perspective that the book aims to look into the diverse trends and factors affecting the academic performance of blind individuals as well as their performance in relation to their sighted counterparts.

Chapter 4 on quantitative and qualitative analysis provides an analysis of this data.

Chapter 5 provides an overall analysis of the various findings. It also specifies some implications and limitations of the research undertaken and offers some suggestions for further research.

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in Visually Impaired Adolescents
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