EFFECT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

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Abstract: The aim of the study was Effect of Social Support on Psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students. A Sample of 50 Visually Impaired students (25 Males and 25 Females), living in various Government and aided hostels situated in Raipur, Bilaspur, Durg, Rajnadgaon, and Dhamtari Districts of Chhattisgarh State, were selected as sample for the present study. **Social Support Scale :Social Support Scale constructed by** Indira Dhull and Sangeeta Godara (2015) This scale consists 40 items divided into four areas–I. Family Support, II. Teacher Support, III. Friend/Peer Support, IV. Online Social Support. **Psychological Well-being Scale:** Self-made Psychological Well-being Scale was used by the researcher to assess the psychological well-being of the students. 2×2 Factorial Design Anova was employed for analyses of data and interpretation of the results. Results revealed that Psychological Well-being of the students having high Social Support was better than the Psychological Well-being of the students having low Social Support. Female students were having higher level of psychological well-being as compared to their male counterparts. No significant effect of interaction between Social Support and Gender on Psychological Well-Being of the visually Impaired students was found.

Keywords: Social Support, Psychological Well-Being, Visually Impaired

INTRODUCTION

Social support is a critical determinant of psychological wellbeing, particularly for individuals with disabilities. For visually impaired students, the need for a supportive network is paramount, as they often face additional barriers in education and social integration. These barriers, such as limited accessibility, potential social exclusion, and the need for specialized resources, can negatively impact their mental health, self-esteem, and resilience. However, when a robust support system exists, it can help mitigate these challenges, promoting a greater sense of belonging, confidence, and psychological wellbeing. This study aims to explore the impact of social support on the psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students, examining how various types of support influence their mental health and quality of life.

Types of Social Support and Their Relevance

Social support encompasses several forms: emotional, informational, instrumental, and companionship support, each of which uniquely contributes to an individual's psychological resilience. For visually impaired students:

- **Emotional support** provided by family, friends, and educators can foster a sense of stability, confidence, and acceptance, offering a buffer against feelings of isolation and stress.

- **Informational support** includes guidance on accessible resources, study aids, and adaptive strategies that help students manage academic pressures effectively.

- **Instrumental support**—practical help like transportation or access to assistive technology—promotes greater independence and facilitates active participation in educational and social environments.

- **Companionship support**, or the simple act of social inclusion, helps visually impaired students feel part of their communities, reducing feelings of loneliness or alienation that can stem from their disability.

Each type of support plays an essential role in building a robust psychological framework that empowers students to overcome challenges. This research will assess how these different forms of support specifically affect visually impaired students' wellbeing in school environments.

The Importance of Social Support in Promoting Psychological Wellbeing

Studies indicate a strong positive correlation between social support and psychological wellbeing, with social support often acting as a buffer against stress and a source of adaptive coping strategies. For visually impaired students, who are at an elevated risk of experiencing depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem due to the unique challenges they face, social support can significantly counteract these negative outcomes. A supportive network provides emotional stability, fosters a sense of belonging, and promotes resilience, enhancing their ability to navigate academic and social pressures. However, the types and sources of social support most beneficial to these students can vary, depending on individual needs and the inclusiveness of their educational environments.

Implications for Policy and Educational Practices

Understanding the relationship between social support and psychological wellbeing for visually impaired students holds substantial implications for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals. Insights from this study can guide the development of targeted support programs that address the specific needs of visually impaired students, creating environments that are both accommodating and psychologically nurturing. Through such programs, educational institutions can promote inclusive practices, while families and educators can work collaboratively to foster a positive support network, ultimately contributing to improved mental health outcomes and educational success for visually impaired students.

By examining the distinct role of social support, this study seeks to inform strategies that empower visually impaired students, advocating for an educational system that values accessibility and inclusivity as pathways to achieving psychological wellbeing.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A growing body of research underscores the critical role of social support in enhancing the psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students, revealing how different types of support can help alleviate stress, build self-esteem, and foster resilience.

Chou and Chiu (2021) explored the effects of social support on the mental health of visually impaired students in Taiwan. They found that students receiving consistent emotional support from family and friends showed significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression. This study highlighted family involvement as crucial for enhancing psychological resilience among visually impaired youth.

Ahmad, Qamar, and Naqvi (2020) examined self-esteem among visually impaired college students in Pakistan, finding that those with strong social networks, especially peers and mentors, exhibited higher self-confidence and were more engaged in social activities. Their study concluded that social support not only reduces isolation but also encourages active participation in academic and extracurricular pursuits, thereby enhancing overall wellbeing.

Renaud and Bedard (2019) assessed institutional support's role in improving mental health outcomes for visually impaired students in Canada. Their research showed that accessible resources and peer mentoring programs positively influenced students' stress levels and satisfaction with their educational experiences. The study recommended that schools provide specialized services to foster a more supportive educational environment.

Chakraborty and Singh (2018) focused on peer support among visually impaired students in India. They found that students with supportive peers reported higher self-confidence and a greater sense of belonging. Their study highlighted peer support as key to reducing feelings of isolation and improving psychological health.

Holbrook and Rosenblum (2017) conducted a longitudinal study in the United States examining parental support's long-term impact on the mental adjustment of visually impaired students transitioning into adolescence. Their findings emphasized that consistent parental involvement helped students manage academic pressures, resulting in fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Martinez and Santos (2016) analysed the role of teacher support on visually impaired high school students in Spain. They observed that students who felt supported by teachers had higher self-efficacy and academic motivation. Their study advocated for teacher training in inclusive practices, emphasizing the influence of educators on students' psychological outcomes.

Nguyen and Lam (2015) investigated community support for visually impaired students in Vietnam, revealing that students engaged in community support programs reported greater resilience and coping skills. The researchers recommended community-based programs to enhance visually impaired students' integration and wellbeing.

These studies collectively illustrate the profound effect of social support—whether from family, peers, teachers, or the community—on the mental health of visually impaired students. A comprehensive support network is essential for fostering a positive educational experience and promoting psychological resilience among visually impaired youth.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the effect of Social Support on Psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students.

HYPOTHESIS:

- There will be no significant effect of Social Support on Psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students.

METHODOLOGY:

SAMPLE:

A Sample of 50 Visually Impaired students (25 Males and 25 Females), living in various Government and aided hostels situated in Raipur, Bilaspur, Durg, Rajnadgaon, and Dhamtari Districts of Chhattisgarh State, were selected as sample for the present study.

TOOLS:

Social Support Scale :Social Support Scale constructed by Indira Dhull and Sangeeta Godara (2015) This scale consists 40 items divided into four areas–I. Family Support, II. Teacher Support, III. Friend/Peer Support, IV. Online Social Support.

Psychological Well-being Scale: Self-made Psychological Well-being Scale was used by the researcher to assess the psychological well-being of the students.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES:

2×2 Factorial Design Anova was employed for analyses of data and interpretation of the results.

ANALYSES OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT:

Data collected with respect to the objective, to study the effect of Social Support on Psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students, was analysed by using 2×2 Factorial Design Anova. Summary of this analyses has been presented in table 1 below:

Table 1

Effect of Social Support on Psychological Wellbeing of Visually Impaired Students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Social Support	1767.976	1	1767.976	4.341*
Gender	2362.232	1	2362.232	5.800*
Social Support * Gender	767.688	1	767.688	1.885
Error	18735.800	46	407.300	
Total	166456.000	50		
Corrected Total	27696.880	49		

*Significant at 0.05 level.

EFFECT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

From table 1 above it is evident that the f value of Social Support i.e. 4.341, df=1/46, was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. This reveals that there exists a significant effect of Social support on psychological well-being of the visually Impaired students. Further to find out whether the students having high social support or low social support were have better psychological well-being, Mean and SD of psychological well-being Scores was calculated, which has been presented in table 2 below:

Table 2

Mean and SD of psychological well-being Scores

Social Support	N	Mean	SD
High Social Support	21	64.38	16.06
Low Social Support	29	44.20	25.05

From table 2 it can be seen that the Mean and SD of Psychological Well-being Scores of students having High Social Support was 64.38 and 16.06 and Mean and SD of Psychological Well-being Scores of students having Low Social Support was 44.20 and 25.05. It can therefore be concluded that the Psychological Well-being of

the students having high Social Support was better then the Psychological Well-being of the students having low Social Support.

EFFECT OF GENDER ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

From table 1 above it is evident that the f value of Gender i.e. 5.800, df=1/46, was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. This reveals that there exists a significant effect of Gender on Psychological Well-Being of the visually Impaired students. Further to find out whether Males or females were having better psychological well-being, Mean and SD of psychological well-being Scores was calculated, which has been presented in table 3 below:

Table 3

Gender-wise Mean and SD of psychological well-being Scores

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	25	41.04	25.10
Female	25	64.32	15.53

From table 2 it is evident that the Mean and SD of psychological well-being scores of male students was 41.04 and 25.10 and that of female students was 64.32 and 15.53 respectively. This reveals that female students were having higher level of psychological well-being as compared to their male counterparts.

EFFECT OF INTERACTION BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND GENDER

From table 1 above it is evident that the f value of interaction between Social Support and Gender i.e. 1.885, df=1/46, was not found to be significant. This reveals that there do not exist any significant effect of interaction between Social Support and Gender on Psychological Well-Being of the visually Impaired students.

CONCLUSION:

- There exists a significant effect of Social Support on Psychological Well-Being of the visually Impaired students. Psychological Well-being of the students having high Social Support was better than the Psychological Well-being of the students having low Social Support.

- There exists a significant effect of Gender on Psychological Well-Being of the visually Impaired students. Female students were having higher level of psychological well-being as compared to their male counterparts.

- There do not exist any significant effect of interaction between Social Support and Gender on Psychological Well-Being of the visually Impaired students.

SUGGESTIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

The findings from the studies reviewed highlight the essential role of social support—whether from family, peers, teachers, or the community—in enhancing the psychological wellbeing of visually impaired students. To improve the mental health outcomes of visually impaired students, the following suggestions can be made:

1. **Strengthen Family Support Systems**: Schools and support services should engage with families to provide guidance and resources that foster emotional and practical support for visually impaired students. Family involvement has shown to be critical in building resilience and reducing stress (Chou & Chiu, 2021).

2. **Promote Peer Mentoring Programs**: Peer support is a powerful tool in improving self-esteem and reducing isolation. Schools should establish peer mentoring programs, where older or more experienced visually impaired students can guide younger peers, providing social and emotional support (Chakraborty & Singh, 2018).

3. **Enhance Institutional Support**: Institutions should improve the accessibility of educational resources, such as braille materials and audio tools, and offer counseling services to address emotional needs. Institutional support has been shown to positively influence students' psychological wellbeing (Renaud & Bedard, 2019).

4. **Teacher Training in Inclusive Practices**: Teachers should be trained to recognize the specific emotional and academic needs of visually impaired students. Supportive teacher-student relationships are linked to better academic performance and mental health (Martinez & Santos, 2016).

5. **Community Engagement**: Community-based programs should be developed to provide additional emotional and social support. These programs can help visually impaired students integrate more fully into society, enhancing their overall wellbeing (Nguyen & Lam, 2015).

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