



A STUDY ON LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AMONG STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIREMENT IN PUDUCHERRY

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ABSTRACT

The rehabilitation measures in India are focusing more on physical health of persons with visual impairment. Nevertheless, these people are having more psychological problem than others. Therefore, more attention is needed to understand the mental health of persons with visual impairment. In this background, this study aims to examine the mental health of visually impaired students who are studying in government special schools in Puducherry. This paper aims to study the socio-demographic status and to measure the mental health index of visually impaired students. It was found that among various socio-demographic factors, gender has been associated with the psychological well-being among visually impaired students while other factors such as types of visual impairments and domicile had no association. This study results revealed that the mental health is low for visually impaired students. The psychological distress among the visually impaired students was not associated with types of blindness, caste and their gender. The researcher has put forth the positive recommendations for practitioners, academicians and other related professionals in order to improve the mental health of visually impaired students.

Key words: Mental health, Visual impairment, Psychological wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a positive psychological state of the mind. The World Health Organization defines Mental Health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses

of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". In India there are 33,00,121 children with disability attending educational institutions. Out of that 15,89,954 children are with visual impairment and lies within

the age group of 5-19 years. In Puducherry, there are 1,501 children with visual impairment in the age group of 5-19 years attending educational institutions (Census of India 2011). According to the Child Relief and You (CRY 2011), 3 percent of Indian children are estimated to be mentally challenged. Out of these, 15 million children are below the age of 10 years, 10 million are boys and 5 million are girls. It is estimated that one in every ten is either born with or acquires a physical, sensory or mental impairment in the first year of their life.

RESEARCH GAP

Plenty of studies are available on level of mental health status among the college students, school children, runaway children and adolescent girls and boys. As there are limited research works are available on mental health status of students with disabilities especially with visual impairment who are studying in special schools in India, special attention is needed to focus on their mental health. Hence, the researcher aims to study the Mental Health, Psychological Distress and Psychological Well-being of students with visual impairment who are studying in the Special School at Puducherry.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study was carried out to study the mental health status of students with visual impairment who are studying in Ananda Ranga Pillai Special School for Differently Abled Children (Hearing Impairment & Visual Impairment) at Puducherry.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-demographic status of students with visual impairment.
2. To assess the level of mental health in relation to certain socio-demographic characteristics among the respondents.
3. To gauge the level of psychological well-being of the respondents.
4. To measure the level of psychological distress among the respondents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The researcher used descriptive research design for this study. This design is suitable for this study as it describes the level of mental health, psychological wellbeing and psychological distress status among the students with visual impairment. It also describes the relationship between socio demographic

variables and its association with mental health of the respondents.

Sources of data: Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Books, online articles and research articles regarding mental health, psychological wellbeing, and psychological distress are used as secondary sources of data while primary data mainly depends on visual impaired students.

Census: Ananda Ranga Pillai Special School for Differently Abled Children (Hearing Impairment & Visual Impairment) is the only special school available for the children with visual impairment in Puducherry. This study focus on adolescent students between the age group of 13 and 18 years with visual impairment. Hence the researcher has chosen all adolescent students with visual impairment who are studying in 8th to 10th standard. The researcher used census method to collect data from all adolescent students who belong to the age group of 13 to 18 years. The total number of the respondents of this study area was 17 students with visual impairment.

Tool for data collection: The researcher prepared a structured interview schedule to collect the Socio-Demographic details of the students with visually impairment and the mental health was measured using the standardized scale the

Mental Health Inventory (MHI-38) developed by the RAND Corporation which contains 38 items. All the items in this scale, are scored on a six-point scale. A global Mental Health Index score lies between 38 and 226 which are classified into three levels such as 38 to 101, 102 to 163 and 164 to 226 are considered as low, moderate and high respectively. The level of psychological distress lies between 24 and 142 where the scores are classified into two levels such as 24 to 83 as low and 84 to 142 as High. The level of psychological well-being lies between 14 and 84 where the scores are classified into two levels such as 14 to 49 as low and 50 to 84 as High.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no association between the level of mental health and age of the respondents.
2. There is no association between level of mental health and gender of the respondents.
3. There is no association between level of mental health and educational status of the respondents.
4. There is no association between level of psychological well-being and gender of the respondents.

5. There is no association between level of psychological well-being and domicile of the respondents.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Out of total population, 64.7 percentage of them are male, and 35.3 percent of the respondents are female. The students with visual impairment who belongs to Most Backward Class (MBC) (41.2%) are higher than other communities. A reasonable size of the respondents (58.8%) are from rural area. Most of the respondents (88.2%) are from nuclear family. 47.1% of the respondent's monthly family income is less than Rs. 5,000. 41.2 percentage of the respondents have 2 siblings. Majority of the respondents (70.6%) are having partial visual impairment. 41.2% of the respondents belong to the age group of 13 to 14 years. Most of the respondents (94.1%) are Hindus.

Distribution of the respondents by their level of Mental Health, level of Psychological distress and level of Psychological well-being

This study reveals that half of the respondents (52.9%) have low level of psychological well-being and few respondents have high (29.4%) and very few have moderate (17.6%) level of psychological well-being. One third of respondents have moderate (35.3%) as well as low (35.3%) level of psychological distress. Few respondents have high level of psychological distress (29.4 percent). It was found from the study that nearly one third of the respondents have low level of mental health (35.3%). Another one third of respondents have high (35.3%) level of mental health and few respondents have moderate (29.4%) level of Mental Health.

Table 1
Association between the selected socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their level of Psychological Well-being

S.No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	Level of Psychological Well-being		Chi-square
		Low	High	
1.	Gender			3.438, df = 1 P<0.05 Significant
	Male	4	7	
	Female	5	1	
2.	Domicile			0.486, df = 1 P>0.05 Non-Significant
	Urban	3	4	
	Rural	6	4	
3.	Type of Visual Impairment			0.476, df = 1 P>0.05 Non-Significant
	Partial	7	5	
	Full	2	3	

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 depicts, the association between level of psychological well-being and socio demographic characteristics of the respondents. It is found that there is an association between gender and level of

psychological well-being. There is no association between the level of psychological well-being and domicile as well as type of visual impairment of the respondents.

Table 2
Association between the selected socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their level of Psychological Distress

S.No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	Level of Psychological Distress		Chi-square
		Low	High	
1.	Type of blindness			0.476, df = 1 P>0.05 Non-Significant
	Partial	5	7	
	Full	3	2	
2.	Caste			0.486, df = 2 P>0.05 Non-Significant
	BC	3	2	
	MBC	3	4	
	SC	2	3	
3.	Gender			0.701, df = 1 P>0.05 Non-Significant
	Male	6	5	
	Female	2	4	

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 reveals that the association between level psychological distress and Socio Demographic characteristics of the students with visual impairment. It is

found that there is no association between socio demographic characteristics namely type of visual impairment, caste and gender with level of psychological distress.

Table No: 3
Association between the selected socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their level of Mental Health

S.No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	Level of Mental Health		Chi-square
		Low	High	
1.	Age			
	13-14	1	6	2.738 df = 2 P>0.05 NS
	15-16	2	3	
	17-20	3	2	
2.	Gender			
	Male	3	8	0.878 df = 1 P>0.05 NS
	Female	3	3	
3.	Educational status			
	8 th std	1	4	1.987 df = 2 P>0.05 NS
	9 th std	3	2	
	10 th std	2	5	
4.	Religion			
	Hindu	6	10	0.580 df = 1 P>0.05 NS
	Muslim	0	1	
5.	Domicile			
	Urban	3	4	0.298 df = 1 P>0.05 NS
	Rural	3	7	

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 revealed, the association between level of mental health and socio demographic characteristics of the students with visual impairment. It is found that there is no association between socio demographic characteristics namely age,

gender, educational status, religion and domicile with level of mental health.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study reveals that students with visual impairment from the special schools are having low level of psychological well-being. Hence school

social workers can be appointed in every special school for the students with visual impairment to improve their psychological well-being. Social workers can identify the psychological issues of students and help them to recover from psychological distress using psycho therapies. Teachers and parents can allow the visually impaired students to play, to do creative things and to take rest. This will help them to get relief from psychological distress. Social workers can identify the strength of the students and motivate them to improve their self-esteem and self-confidence. Government can strengthen the existing mental health programs for adolescents and create new programs especially for visually impaired students to improve their mental health. There is a risk for visually impaired children to become Deafblind at the adolescent period, so that regular health check-ups can be ensured as a preventive measure.

The present study clearly shows that there is a significant association between gender and the psychological well-being. So that gender sensitivity training and awareness about psychological well-being can be given to parents, teachers, policy makers, government officials, students and community. It helps to create a gender sensitive environment which can fulfil the

needs and ensure the rights of the students with visual impairment based on their gender like female, male and transgender. By this way their psychological well-being can be improved.

CONCLUSION

In India, majority of the rehabilitation measures provided to the disabled children and concentrating only on their physical health. But numerous issues relating to mental health are still unexplained and unattended. Hence, the present study was conducted with a focus on mental health in relation to certain socio-demographic characteristics of the students with visual impairment studying at special school in Puducherry. This study revealed that the importance of mental health among students with visual impairment studying in special school. It is our duty to take necessary steps to improve the psychological well-being of the students with visual impairment.

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