Strategies Used to Enhance Self- Concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the to identify strategies used to enhance self- concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe. People with blindness have a wide range of self-concepts just like sighted people and their experiences may impact their in unique ways. Some people with visual impairment may have a strong sense of identity and pride in their blindness while others may struggle with feelings of inadequacy or social isolation. The main objective of this study was to determine the strategies used to enhance self- concept of people with visual impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe. The research question for the study was stated as follows: What are the strategies used to enhance self- concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe? The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design was used and it was grounded on Social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura. The study targeted people with visual impairment in Harare Metropolitan province in Zimbabwe. The sample of participants was obtained using purposive and snow ball sampling techniques. An interview guide was used to collect qualitative data. The data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis techniques. The findings of the study indicated that, there were various strategies used to enhance self- concept of people with visual impairment in Harare Metropolitan province. The findings also indicated that, individuals had a more positive self-concept and display positive social adaptability. The study recommends that the strategies used to enhance self- concept of people with visual impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe should be enhanced through: Educational opportunities and assistive technologies. Access to assistive technologies can significantly enhance social interaction and independence for individuals with blindness.

Keywords: Blindness, Self-Concept, Strategies, Visual Impairment, Metropolitan

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

World Health Organization reported that at least 2.2 billion people worldwide suffered from blindness, myopia and long sight. A person is regarded as visually impaired when they are unable to see because of injury, disease or congenital condition, or lacking a sense of sight (WHO, 2002). This can range from partial vision loss to complete blindness. Sense of sight is important to human beings. According to Dehghan, Kaboudi, Alizadeh, and Heidarishara (020) learning, education, communication and emotion are greatly associated with the sense of sight and as such in the event that someone has visual impairment it creates an undeniable effect on the psychological and social state of the individual. Blindness leaves humans in a state of physical, psychological and economic dependency.

Psychologists find self-concept as a useful construct in understanding people's development and behavior. Self – concept can be seen as an idea of the self -constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others. It can also be defined as the picture that one has of himself/herself (Habeeb 2017). Self-

concept plays a significant role in the growth and development of a person. Abadali, Asatsa and Ntaragwe (2021) express that self- concept includes our knowledge of how we behave, our individual characteristics and our capabilities. Self-concept infer to a person's attitude and feelings about himself and a number of psychological processes that govern behavior and adjustment (Saikia, 2020).

Loss of sight affects the individual's behaviors and ways of adaptation to the surrounding environment, where anxiety and depression affect them emotionally (Zed & Ibrahim, 2022). Salimi, Mohammadi & Sadeghi, 2016), express that Visual impairment is not only blindness but is also accompanied by many problems, such as lack of basic skills. Ackerman (2019) echoes that self-concept is not only influenced by biological and environmental factors, but social interaction plays a major role as well. Self-concept is influenced by significant others, praise, or criticism, as well as attributes of one's behavior (Harris & Orth, 2020).

In the In Australia and the Netherlands, research shows that, visually impaired persons report lower health related quality of life than peers without visual impairment and that the importance of social networks, access to education, and vocational training in enhancing the self-concept and social adaptability of people with blindness (Justin, Haegele, & Zhu, 2019 and Vervloed, 2015).

In Namibia, Rwanda, and Kenya, there are challenges faced by people with blindness due to limited access to education, employment, and healthcare. There is also lack of inclusive policies and societal stigma impact self-concept and social adaptability among individuals with blindness (Faul et al., 2017, Cloete, 2019, Nsengumuremyi, 2018 and Sibanda, 2017).

The World Health Organization (1990) pointed out that an individual can be called a completely healthy individual only if they are sound in four aspects: physical health, mental health, good social adaptability and morality (Chirico, 2016).

The self-concept of people with blindness may be influenced by their own perceptions of their blindness and how they perceive others attitudes towards blindness. Some blind people may view their blindness as an integral part of their identity while other may focus more on their abilities and strengths. These concerns may make it a challenge for them to adapt in the society. This backdrop builds the foundation upon which this study aims to establish the relationship between the self-concept and social adaptability of people with blindness in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe.

Statement of the Problem

Individuals with blindness face unique challenges in developing their self-concept and adapting to social environments. These challenges are rooted in societal attitudes, limited access to resources, and the need for specialized support. People with blindness may encounter stereotypes and stigmatization in society. These negative perceptions can affect their self-concept by eroding self-esteem and self-efficacy. The social outcry lies in the perpetuation of these stereotypes and the resulting barriers to social inclusion and acceptance. Accessibility issues persist in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and public spaces. This lack of accessibility can limit opportunities for people with blindness, hindering their social adaptability. The outcry stems from the continued presence of physical and digital barriers that impede their full participation in society.

Research has shown that, the availability of psychosocial support systems for individuals with blindness is inadequate yet visual experiences are undeniably valuable for the formation of concepts, and given the significant role vision play in cognition, children with visual impairments exhibit distinct variations in this aspect compared to their sighted peers (Pandey 2018). There is an outcry that, the limited access to counseling, mentoring, and peer support programs, which are crucial for the development of a positive self-concept and social adaptability. It is on the basis of this growing concern that this study was an attempt to

conduct a comprehensive analysis on the relation between self-concept and social adaptability of individuals with blindness in Harare Metropolitan province, being the capital city of Zimbabwe.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to explore self-concept of people with blindness in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe so as to establish the way this target population perceived themselves and how they were perceived by others in the context of the support systems, such as family, friends, educational institutions, and assistive technologies, playing a role in shaping both self-concept among individuals with blindness.

Research Objective.

The research was guided by the following objective:

To determine the strategies used to enhance self- concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe.

Research Question

This research sought to address the following research question:

What are the strategies used to enhance self- concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe.?

Theoretical Framework

The study was carried out within the context of Social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1986). Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) started as the Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. It developed into the SCT in 1986 and posits that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior. The unique feature of SCT is the emphasis on social influence and its emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement. SCT considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior. The theory takes into account a person's past experiences, which factor into whether behavioral action will occur. These past experiences influence reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies, all of which shape whether a person will engage in a specific behavior and the reasons why a person engages in that behavior (Wayne W. LaMorte, 2022).

Justification and Significance of the study

The study may provide valuable insights into the relationship between self-concept and social adaptability of people with visual impairment. Understanding how blindness affects self-concept and social adaptability can lead to the development of tailored interventions and support systems that empower individuals to lead fulfilling lives and participate actively in society, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities. This research can also provide insights into the emotional and psychological challenges faced by people with blindness, leading to the creation of targeted mental health resources and strategies that enhance their overall well-being. By uncovering the barriers and facilitators of social adaptability, the study can contribute to designing environments and social interactions that are more accommodating and welcoming for individuals with blindness, fostering their integration into various social settings.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The study undertook a scholarly theoretical review as well as a scholarly critique of empirical studies that have been conducted the area of self-concept of the people with blindness in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Review

The study reviewed the cultural identity theory presented by Collier and Thomas in 1988 which highlights the dynamic interaction between an individual's cultural identity and their experiences in a multicultural society and the Psychological Empowerment Theory which was proposed by Zimmerman (1990) whose summary is provided in this section.

Cultural identity theory

The Cultural Identity Theory presented by Collier and Thomas in 1988 highlights the dynamic interaction between an individual's cultural identity and their experiences in a multicultural society. Collier and Thomas propose that cultural identity is not a fixed or static construct but is rather shaped by a person's social environment and interactions. This theory recognizes that individuals often belong to multiple cultural groups simultaneously, each influencing their identity in distinct ways.

Psychological empowerment theory

The Psychological Empowerment Theory was proposed by Zimmerman (1990). According to the theory, empowering directs attention towards health adaptation, competence and natural helping setting. An individual who has psychological empowerment is able to change his/her mindset compounded with positive thinking and his/her own ability to have control of his/her potential in addressing challenges either at individual or societal level. Empowerment process attempts to gain control, obtain needed resources and critically understand one's social environment. It also helps to develop skills so individuals can become independent problem solvers and decision makers. According to Zimmerman, (1990) Psychological empowerment has the potential of upholding self-efficacy in terms of perceptions of competence, personal control and positive self-image.

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES AND RELATED LITERATURE

Strategies used to enhance Self- Concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe.

The empirical literature was drawn from different settings, in Iran, Mirmohammadi (2021) carried out a study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the acceptance and commitment group therapy on self-esteem of students with visual impairment in Tehran City. The results of multiple analysis of covariance for the data obtained from the self-esteem questionnaire showed that the participation of female students with visual impairment in the acceptance and commitment group therapy sessions led to significant increase (P<0.001) in self-esteem (general, family, social, and educational) of them. In fact, according to Eta quotient, 71%, 78%, 78%, and 72% of variation in self-esteem (general, family, social, and educational respectively) of the experimental group can be explained by participating in the acceptance and commitment group therapy sessions. The results of the related t-test for comparing the self-esteem of the experimental group in posttest and follow-up situations showed that the effectiveness of group therapy based on acceptance and commitment has been lasted on the self-esteem (general, family, social, and educational) of the experimental group after two months follow-up later (P>0.05). The study concluded that the acceptance and commitment group therapy can use for planning and policy making instructional courses suitable for students with visual impairments.

In Jordan, Al-Kenani (2022) conducted research aimed to investigate the impact of assessing mental orientation and social adjustment among individuals with visual impairment. The study recommendations emphasized the importance of fostering more positive attitudes towards individuals with visual impairment within the home, classroom, and broader society. Recognizing and appreciating the unique qualities of individuals with visual impairment at all stages of their education, as advocated by parents and educators, may contribute to enhancing their social development and overall well-being.

Csernák and Gombás (2023) carried out qualitative research sought to find answers to how young (aged 18-30) women with congenital or acquired blindness perceive their body image (BI), and how they get information about the appearance of others in Hungary. Findings confirm that feedback from important others, especially negative feedback, greatly influences young women with blindness in developing their BI, and that for many it is a concern to what extent they should internalize negative remarks which are related to their appearance. The study concluded that since feedback and verbal information from others are essential for women with blindness in trying to understand what they and others look like, it is important for professionals, parents and for the women themselves to understand how vulnerable they may be to the criticism of others.

Solihin, and Supriadi (2022) carried out a *qualitative research strategy. The study results indicated that visually impaired students who excel in sports activities such as swimming and athletics positively impact themselves, especially psychologically. The leading indicators of the psychological elements are confidence, motivation and emotional stability. Still, it needs cooperation between school officials and parents to support psychological peace, especially self-confidence, inspiration, and emotional stability of visually impaired students to get a good life in their environment.*

Heppe, Kef, and Schuengel (2020) carried out a study with the aim of identifying people with visual impairment who become lonely in later life, trajectories of perceived parent and peer support from adolescence to adulthood of young people with a visual impairment. 316 adolescents were selected for the study. They conclude that peer support is important to psychosocial wellbeing in a way similar to people without visual disabilities.Manitsa, and Doikou, (2022) conducted an integrative literature review to synthesize the results from 17 academic articles published during 1998 and 2018, which examined the topic of social support for students with visual impairments in educational institutions. They revealed that for students with visual impairments cooperation, empathetic behavior, and practical assistance are the main components of social support.

Papadopoulos and Papakonstantinou (2020) examined the association between social support from friends and depression in young adults with visual impairments. The study sampled forty young adults with visual impairments, ranging in age from 18 to 40 years. Quantitative data was collected by completing the 21-item Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-I) and a self-developed social support questionnaire. It was revealed that the respondents who received more positive practical social support from their friends reported fewer depressive symptoms.

Manitsa and Doikou (2020) synthesized results from 17 academic articles published during 1998 and 2018, which examined the topic of social support for students with visual impairments in educational institutions. The evaluation revealed that for students with visual impairments cooperation, empathetic behavior, and practical assistance are the main components of social support. Besides it was noted that support from staff members contributed to students' academic learning and social inclusion, whereas peers' social support enhanced their self-esteem and social acceptance.

In Kenya, a survey conducted by were (2020) employed a correlation design to investigate whether learners with low vision exhibited higher levels of self-concept compared to those who were completely blind. The research findings indicated the presence of significant differences in self-concept among visually impaired pupils in Kenya. In light of these findings, the study recommended that efforts be made to enhance the self-concept of totally blind pupils. This enhancement could be achieved through counseling and early intervention measures, aimed at helping these pupils embrace and accept their disability.

Mushimiyimana (2017) conducted a qualitative inquiry utilizing a case study approach to assess the challenges faced by women with visual impairments concerning the equalization of opportunities in Bugesera district, located in the Eastern province of Rwanda. The findings underscored the absence of specific strategies aimed at promoting awareness regarding social norms and equal rights in the context of various opportunities in Rwanda. This lack of awareness further compounded the challenges faced by

women with visual impairments. The study shed light on the substantial hurdles encountered by women with visual impairments when it comes to achieving equal opportunities in Bugesera district, Rwanda. The study's results pointed to the critical need for improved information access and awareness-building strategies to address these challenges effectively and work toward greater inclusivity and equalization of opportunities for this marginalized group.

In Zimbabwe, Manyumwa, (2018) carried out a qualitative study aiming to delve into the concept of inclusion and explore the psychosocial encounters of students with visual impairments within the confines of a Zimbabwean state university. The study selectively included six students with visual impairments, chosen purposively for their distinct experiences within the university setting. The primary mode of data collection employed in this research was the utilization of semi-structured interviews. These interviews provided a platform for the participants to share their perspectives and insights. The study's findings revealed that these visually impaired students had encountered positive experiences during their university journey. These positive encounters were attributed to several factors, including the support they received from both their peers and university staff. Additionally, assistance with the curriculum, the availability of convenient hostel accommodations, and the implementation of effective traffic regulations all contributed to their sense of confidence and security. The study underscored the significance of a supportive and accommodating university environment in enhancing the psychosocial well-being of students with visual impairments, ultimately fostering their confidence and a sense of security within the university community.

Conceptual Framework

This study developed a conceptual framework to diagrammatically show the relationship between self-concept of people with visual disability as depicted in Figure 1.
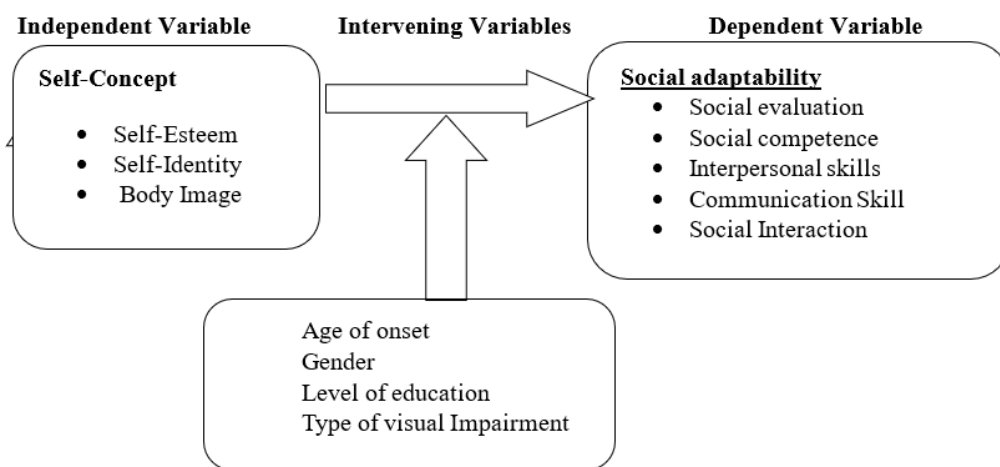

Figure 1. Relationship between self-concept and social adaptability of people with visual impairment

From the Independent Variables, Self-Esteem is a variable represents individuals' perceptions of their own worth and value. Higher levels of self-esteem may contribute to positive self-concept and enhance social adaptability among people with blindness. Individuals with higher self-esteem may feel more confident in social situations, leading to better social interaction and communication skills. Self-identity refers to the way individuals perceive themselves in terms of their characteristics, roles, and relationships.

On the dependent Variables, the social evaluation refers to individuals' perceptions of how they are judged or evaluated by others in social situations. It reflects the extent to which individuals feel accepted, respected, and valued by their peers. Higher levels of social evaluation may indicate positive social adaptability, characterized by successful social integration and acceptance within social networks.

On the intervening Variables, the age at which individuals experience blindness can influence their development of self-concept and social adaptability. Those who have been blind since birth (congenital

blindness) may have different experiences and coping mechanisms compared to those who acquire blindness later in life (acquired blindness), impacting their self-concept and social adaptability. Gender plays a role in shaping individuals' experiences, perceptions, and social roles. It may influence the development of self-concept and social adaptability differently for males and females with blindness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach research approach and specifically used a phenomenological research design. Qualitative data collection was done using open ended interview guides and then analysis, interpretation and presentation followed and the results were presented in a narrative form. This methodology is grounded in the idea of applying qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive in-depth understanding of the research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The phenomenological research design was used because, the primary purpose of this research design is to explain why phenomena occur and to predict future occurrences. A phenomenological research design study is an approach to inquiry that apply methods prioritizing the qualitative aspects of the phenomena and keeping the quantitative aspects away. Accordingly, this study emphasized on the qualitative approach to inquiry, and followed the qualitative framework only (Creswell, 2011). Qualitative data collection techniques were used with the aim of explaining or providing deeper meaning to the findings.

Target Population

The study target population for research was the people with blindness who comprised of the individuals who were blind or visually impaired. This population included people of varying ages, backgrounds, and experiences. The current total population of *persons with blindness in the disability according to Zimbabwe 2022 population and housing census report Harare province is shown is displayed in table 1.*

Table 1 2022 population and housing census report of Harare province

Location	Male	Female	Total
Harare Urban	5,075	6,580	11,655
Chitungwiza	1,260	1,796	3,056
Epworth	677	751	1,428
Provincial Total	**7,012**	**9,127**	**16,139**

Sample Techniques and Sampling Size

This study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques which led to the drawing of the final sample size for the study. These sampling techniques were used to arrive at the three districts of Harare metropolitan province which included Harare urban, Chitungwiza and Epworth. Creswell (2014) recommends that individuals, with similar characteristics can be purposively reached as well as be reached through referral by other participants (snow balling) and be used to provide data. A sample size should be neither too large nor too small, for sake of research cost, manageability, and generality (Creswell, 2012). Accordingly, the study purposively selected people based on high levels of social adaptability so as to obtain qualitative data. Participants who have been diagnosed with blindness, either congenital or acquired, who were/must be over the age of 18, were selected for the study.

Data Collection tools.

The researcher used qualitative data collection method using a semi-structured interview guide whereby the interviews were conducted to gather in-depth qualitative data. These interviews allowed participants to share their personal experiences and perceptions in a more detailed and nuanced manner.

Data Analysis

Qualitative methods of data analysis were used to carry out the data analysis. The study being a phenomenological research design, the data analysis procedure was a systematic approach that involved qualitative data analysis content analysis and presentation methods. This qualitative content analysis involved analyzing textual or narrative data to identify themes, patterns, and meanings. Thematic analysis was also applied to extract key insights from the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the acquired all the necessary licenses and permissions to carry out the study. The researcher visited the participants and provided them with a description of the study in advance to obtain their informed consent from those who voluntarily wished to participate. The researcher also assured participants of confidentiality and privacy and warranted that the research would not elicit psychological issues, offering psychological debriefing after data collection. This was realized by dedicating more time at the end of data collection to help participants return to normalcy and prevent harm. All recorded research data and filled questionnaires were held back in safe custody and will later be destroyed at the appropriate time once the dissertation was approved by the University. Additionally, throughout the process, participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected, and a supportive and comfortable environment was created for them during data collection. Finally, the researcher cited all work of other authors and carried out plagiarism checks to avoid any instances of academic misconduct.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Strategies to be used to enhance self - concept of People with Visual Impairment

In this study the information regarding the strategies to be used to enhance self - concept of People with Visual Impairment was obtained through the open-ended interviews. The participants described the profound challenges they faced, especially as children and teenagers, in navigating a world designed for the sighted. The feelings of isolation, self-consciousness, and frustration at being "different" highlight the significant social and psychological hurdles they had to overcome. This underscores the importance of creating inclusive environments and support systems that can help individuals with blindness feel accepted and integrated.

Despite the initial difficulties, the participants emphasize how their parents' encouragement and refusal to coddle them played a vital role in shaping their resilience and independence. The emphasis on learning alternative skills, such as using a white cane and braille, empowered the participants to forge their own paths and develop a strong sense of self-reliance. This suggests that fostering independence and self-determination is crucial for cultivating a positive self-concept.

Further, the participants describe how their blindness has actually opened them up to unique sensory experiences and a profound appreciation for the world around them. They have developed a distinct perspective that sighted people often overlook, finding joy and fulfillment in tactile, auditory, and olfactory experiences. This shift in mindset, from viewing their disability as a limitation to seeing it as a source of strength and resilience, is a powerful testament to the importance of reframing disability in a positive light. Navigating a visually-oriented society has required the participants to hone their adaptability and problem-solving skills, which they now view as integral to their personal growth and self-concept.

The ability to find creative solutions to everyday challenges has fostered a heightened sense of agency and self-efficacy, further reinforcing their capacity for self-reliance and independence. The participants emphasize that their blindness is just one aspect of their multifaceted identity, and does not solely define who they are. They have developed a strong sense of self-worth that transcends their disability, recognizing the

unique strengths and perspectives it has brought them. This holistic view of identity suggests the importance of supporting individuals with blindness in exploring and celebrating the full breadth of their personhood. One of the participants when commenting about self-concept ofPeople with Visual Impairment in the interview noted:

"There were definitely times, especially as a teenager, where I felt different and isolated because I couldn't see things the way other people did. As a child born blind, I faced unique challenges in navigating a world designed for those with sight. The simplest tasks, like getting around my neighborhood or reading a book, required me to approach life in completely different way compared to my sighted peers. There were moments of frustration and self-consciousness, when I acutely felt my disability set me apart from others". (4ᵗʰ .01.2024).

The participant continued to state on the same issue that;

"I remember feeling left out at school when my classmates discussed visual experiences I couldn't relate to, or struggling to keep up in physical activities that relied on sight. It was isolating to realize how much of the world operated based on visual cues that I couldn't access. But my parents were amazing at helping me develop my other senses and encouraging me to be independent. They refused to coddle me or treat me as fragile. Instead, they pushed me to learn braille, use a white cane, and figure out innovative ways to accomplish everyday tasks. Whether it was cooking, playing sports, or exploring my surroundings, they empowered me to be self-reliant". (4ᵗʰ .01.2024).

"And that; Over time, as I honed these alternative skills and strategies, I learned to navigate the world in my own way. I gained a unique perspective that sighted people couldn't access. Tasks that had once felt insurmountable became routine. And with each new challenge I overcame, my confidence grew. I realized that my blindness wasn't a weakness, but a source of strength and resilience. Though the journey wasn't always easy, I'm grateful for the support and encouragement that allowed me to develop my independence and self-assurance. My disability may have made me different, but it also gave me the opportunity to forge my own path and become the person I am today." (4ᵗʰ .01.2024).

On the same issue, one other participant continued to state that:

"I wouldn't say being blind defines who I am. It's a part of me, sure, but it doesn't limit me. From an early age, I realized that my lack of sight didn't have to confine me or dictate the course of my life. Instead, I saw it as an opportunity to discover the world in unique and profound ways. While I may have missed out on certain visual experiences that sighted people take for granted, being blind has opened me up to a wealth of sensory delights that I deeply cherish. The rich tapestry of sounds, textures, and smells that I've come to intimately know has given me a level of appreciation and connection to my environment that I believe many people with sight often overlook. The way the grain of wood feels beneath my fingertips, the nuanced flavors that dance across my tongue, the vibrant melodies that fill my ears - these are the sensations that bring me immense joy and fulfillment. (4ᵗʰ .01.2024).

I've found profound pleasure in pursuits like playing the piano, sculpting with my hands, and exploring nature through touch and sound. These tactile and auditory experiences have become a vital part of how I engage with and understand the world. My blindness has also forged me into a more resourceful and determined person. Navigating a visually-oriented society has required me to develop innovative problem-solving skills and a resilient mindset. I've had to learn to adapt, improvise, and find creative solutions to everyday challenges. And with each obstacle I've overcome, my confidence and sense of agency have grown. Rather than viewing my disability as a limitation, I've come to see it as a wellspring of personal strength and unique perspective. It has shaped me into a more empathetic, adaptive, and appreciative individual - qualities that I believe enrich my relationships, my work, and my overall approach to life. So no, being blind does not define me. It is simply one facet of the multifaceted person I've become - a person who embraces the world

through senses beyond sight, and who finds joy, purpose, and a profound sense of self-worth in the journey." (4th .01.2024).

These finding concur with Harris & Orth (2020) who noted that, some studies suggest that People with Visual Impairment, particularly children and adolescents, may experience lower self-esteem compared to sighted peers. This could be attributed to the societal emphasis on vision and the challenges they face in navigating a world largely designed for sighted individuals. Th findings further align with the research by Simonsmeier et al. (2020) who suggested that, children born blind might have a lower self-identity compared to those who lose vision later in life. This could be due to the lack of a reference point for sight and the need to develop self-perception based solely on non-visual experiences.

However, the findings deviate from other studies which challenge the notion of a universally lower self-concept. For example, it deviates from the research by Craig et al. (2018) who found no significant difference in self-esteem between children with visual impairments compared to sighted peers. This suggests that factors like social support and a strong sense of self-efficacy can play a crucial role. Interestingly, some studies indicate thatPeople with Visual Impairment might even have a more positive self-perception in certain areas.

Further, the findings contradict the study by Hermans, (2023) who found that adolescents with visual impairments rated themselves as strong as their sighted counterparts. This highlights the possibility that individuals with blindness may develop a unique sense of self based on their strengths and accomplishments. The research also suggests that the timing of vision loss can influence self-concept. Moreover, Brunes et al. (2019) found that young adults with low vision reported lower self-evaluation than those who were completely blind. This could be due to the challenges of adjusting to vision loss later in life.

The data from the current study indicates that the participants may possess a somewhat balanced or moderate locus of control, not strongly leaning towards either the internal or external end of the spectrum. The analysis of self-image and self-esteem components reveals a generally neutral to slightly positive self-perception among the respondents. These findings align with Sacks, (2021) seminal work on locus of control suggests that individuals can be characterized as having either an internal or external locus of control, with those exhibiting a more internal locus feeling a greater sense of control over their lives. The findings are also consistent with the multidimensional nature of self-concept as discussed in the work of Bourne et al. (2021), who proposed that self-concept encompasses various facets, including academic, social, and physical self-concepts, which can vary in their levels of positivity or negativity.

The data suggesting resilience and optimism among the participants aligns with the concept of "psychological capital," which encompasses positive psychological states such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Bibault et al. 2019). The elevated mean scores for items related to overcoming challenges and maintaining a positive outlook indicate the presence of these desirable psychological resources within the sample. On the other hand, the findings regarding self-criticism and insecurity are in line with the concept of "contingent self-worth," where individuals' self-esteem is heavily dependent on the approval and evaluations of others (Balagangadhara, 2018). The heightened scores for items related to self-dissatisfaction and social comparison suggest that some participants may struggle with maintaining a stable and positive self-image.

The data suggesting a disposition towards an external locus of control, as reflected in the high mean score for the statement "There's a lot of truth in the saying 'What will be, will be'," is corroborated by research on the relationship between locus of control and various outcomes, such as academic achievement and well-being (Golec de Zavala et al. 2020). Finally, the findings related to emotional maturity, coping strategies, and interpersonal connections are in line with the broader literature on self-concept, social adaptation, and psychological well-being. Scholars have emphasized the importance of these aspects in facilitating healthy self-development and successful social functioning (Leslie et al. 2020: Danforth et al. 2018: Brucks, & Levav, 2022)

These findings align with the studies by Abadali et al. (2021) and Ackerman, (2019). They observed a similar trend, where individuals with blindness displayed a range of self-concept evaluations, from indifference to either very positive or negative self-perceptions. This variability highlights the importance of considering individual experiences and coping mechanisms. One key strength of study is capturing the positive aspects of blindness reported by participants. The interviews revealed themes of improved interpersonal skills, empathy, and resilience. This resonates with Al-Kenani, (2022) research suggests that individuals with blindness can develop stronger social connections and a heightened sense of self-reliance due to their unique experiences.

The emphasis on support groups and positive mindsets in study aligns with research by Banoo & Vaida, (2019) they found that effective coping strategies and social support networks play a crucial role in fostering self-esteem and overcoming challenges for individuals with visual impairments. While the study offers valuable insights, it's important to consider limitations. The research by Awinii, (2021) highlights the influence of age of onset on self-concept. Future studies could explore how age of blindness onset interacts with self-concept in the Zimbabwean context. Additionally, including a control group of sighted individuals could provide a clearer picture of potential differences in self-concept between the two groups.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In this study the information regarding the strategies to be used to enhance self - concept of People with Visual Impairment concluded that, the participants described the profound challenges they faced, especially as children and teenagers, in navigating a world designed for the sighted. The feelings of isolation, self-consciousness, and frustration at being "different" highlight the significant social and psychological hurdles they had to overcome. This underscored the importance of creating inclusive environments and support systems that can help individuals with blindness feel accepted and integrated.

The study concludes that, emphasis on learning alternative skills, such as using a white cane and braille, empowered the participants to forge their own paths and develop a strong sense of self-reliance. This suggests that fostering independence and self-determination is crucial for cultivating a positive self-concept. Further, the participants describe how their blindness has actually opened them up to unique sensory experiences and a profound appreciation for the world around them. They have developed a distinct perspective that sighted people often overlook, finding joy and fulfillment in tactile, auditory, and olfactory experiences.

The study also concludes that, the ability to find creative solutions to everyday challenges has fostered a heightened sense of agency and self-efficacy, further reinforcing their capacity for self-reliance and independence. The participants emphasize that their blindness is just one aspect of their multifaceted identity, and does not solely define who they are. They have developed a strong sense of self-worth that transcends their disability, recognizing the unique strengths and perspectives it has brought them. This holistic view of identity suggests the importance of supporting individuals with blindness in exploring and celebrating the full breadth of their personhood.

The study concludes that, the participants may possess a somewhat balanced or moderate locus of control, not strongly leaning towards either the internal or external end of the spectrum. The analysis of self-image and self-esteem components reveals a generally neutral to slightly positive self-perception among the respondents.

The also concludes that, a disposition towards an external locus of control, as reflected in the high mean score for the statement "There's a lot of truth in the saying 'What will be, will be'," is corroborated by research on the relationship between locus of control and various outcomes, such as academic achievement and well-being.

Recommendations

The study made some recommendations on the strategies to be used to enhance self - concept of People with Visual Impairment in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe. One of the ways to deal with the issues of blindness in Harare Metropolitan province, Zimbabwe is to adopt individualized Support and Recognition of Diversity. This can be achieved through:

Tailored Interventions: The study underscores the importance of individualized approaches. Social workers, educators, and support professionals should consider the unique experiences, strengths, and challenges of each person with blindness when developing support plans. This may involve a combination of strategies drawn from the recommendations above, customized to address the specific needs of the individual.

Promoting Inclusive Communities: Efforts to raise awareness and educate the broader community about blindness can help to create a more inclusive and understanding environment. This can reduce social isolation and empower individuals with blindness to participate fully in social interactions.

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