

## Investigating Special Education Curriculum for Visually Impaired Children in Solving Family Adjustment Issues in Pakistan

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to evaluate the curriculum with reference to special education for visually impaired children across Pakistan while solving their issues in family adjustment. In this study, family adjustment is a process through which a child, who by any means owns any disability attempts to adjust in his/her family through the moral and functional support of elders and siblings. This is a proven fact that Pakistan is one of those nations, which have the educational infrastructure for visually impaired children, yet it is still not entirely developed for visually impaired learners.

**Methodology:** Data collected by self developed questionnaire about the problem under investigation from a sample of 5 secondary schools of visually impaired children aged 15-20 years old in Lahore, Pakistan. These students are selected through stratified sampling according to age, gender, and educational level. The instrument, namely survey on the educational satisfaction level was utilized to collect the data. The researcher used simple descriptive statistical techniques such as mean and percentages to analyze the collected data.

**Findings:** Data showed that majority of visually impaired children were satisfied with the schools an educational system given to them. It is suggested that with the active participation of teachers can play a remarkable role in providing visually impaired children with provision of an effective learning environment to help them in adjusting in their families.

**Significance:** The study brings to light the importance with benefits visually impaired children in nurturing their educational concerns to adjust them in their families. Moreover, this research is significant to visually impaired children, their parents, teachers.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Family Adjustment, Special Education, Visually Impaired Children.

### Introduction

Special education (A set of formal education designed for disabled children) is a segment of the educational activity that focuses on exact, but restricted form of teaching and learning through involving a particular type of society. Informal education, on the other hand, is a type

of learning where an individual learns from his/her surrounding atmosphere. In addition, any kind of physical disability has always been considered as a hindrance in obtaining an effective education. The issue of educating children with visual impairment is even more serious concern in a country like Pakistan, where the education system, social approach, communal behavior and socioeconomic conditions of families are not in a position to support such children in a way that they deserve (Ahmed, Khan, & Nasem, 2011).

Visually impaired children are those, who are partially or completely blind. As far as curriculum is concerned, it is the responsibility of institutions. The purpose of this research is to investigate the curriculum with the reference to special education for visually impaired children and their issues in family adjustment across Pakistan. Family adjustment is a process through which a child, who by any means has any disability endeavors to adjust in his/her family through moral and functional support from the associated elders and siblings. It is widely recognized that Pakistan is one of those countries, where there exists an educational infrastructure for visually impaired children (Khan & Behlol, 2014). The education and practical learning of the visually impaired students is one of the significant features of the society and it can be considered very unfair if these spheres are overlooked by the respective administration (Ahmed, Khan, & Nasem, 2011).

The federal government of Pakistan has made a lot of efforts in protecting the visually impaired children from suffering and attaining a respectable position in the society. These credits are dilemma for the Pakistani visually impaired children because their disability influences the way these children receive formal and informal information about their surroundings and limit their chance of learning through observation in the special education curriculum (Mazurek & Winzer, 1994). This implies that in regular classroom lessons, children who are completely blind or visually impaired are required to learn focused and specialized abilities from their instructors. Such professional teachers are aptly proficient and trained to instruct these types of skills, for instance, as qualified teachers and orientation experts (Fatema, 2013). In this regard, besides formal special education, informal education also plays an important role in creating the feeling of socialization in a visually impaired child through communal interaction and social involvement (Farooq, 2012).

According to a report published by UNICEF (2003), the history of special education for the children with special Problems and needs dates back to the British era in the region of Indo-Pak subcontinent. In this regard, a school came into existence in Lahore during 1906 to deliver vocational and academic education to the adults and children with visual impairment. In this report, the chronological appraisal of the history of special education gives an outlook to understand the objectives and functions of this section of education (UNICEF, 2003). Moreover, according to a survey about the importance of special needs of Pakistani children by the World Health Organization in 1985, it was revealed that ten percent of the population in Pakistan had certain kinds of physical infirmity, such as visual impairment, emotional disability, hearing problems, physical disability, learning disability, mental retardation, and those with multiple disabilities. (UNICEF, 2003). This fact cannot be denied that visually impaired children in Pakistan, are observed with diverse socioeconomic status in the society since there are no controlled limitations for the pervasiveness of this disability in terms of terrestrial borders and social status. In the light of the special educational curriculum for

special education; this fact has been highlighted by some researchers (Yasmin, Minto, & Khan, 2010).

Furthermore, it is also a fact that in the civilized and educated parts of Pakistani, the need for special education has been seen as a principal motive for training, rehabilitation and related support plans of all the children with special needs, especially those with visual impairment. In this regard, the current educational mechanism includes certain merits and some flaws as well. In 1982, the celebration of the Disabled Person Year under the banner of the United Nations, is a landmark for the cognizance regarding the needs, issues and views of the children with visual impairment (Ahmed, Khan, & Nasem, 2011).

### **Modification in the Curriculum for Visually Impaired Children**

The curriculum designed and planned for normal students is usually not suitable for visually impaired children. However, certain adaptations and changes need to be made to the learning materials and instructional techniques to better suit their learning needs and purposes. The curriculum must be balanced with proper attention given to the children's personal, intellectual, social, and emotional growth (Barbara, 2004). With this concern in mind, the teacher is expected to adopt a realistic, consistent, and supple approach in curriculum designing and its application. Visually impaired children are taught to learn things by using other senses (Sahin & Yorek, 2009). These special children are provided with specific books and related learning equipments, to stimulate their senses and develop their listening skills (Salisbury, 2007).

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate the curriculum of special education for visually impaired children in Pakistan.
2. To determine the family issues that visually impaired children face while adjusting with their families.

### **Significance of Study**

This study will be helpful to attract the attention of government bodies related to special education and its problems for visually impaired children. The study would be helpful for the parents of visually impaired children to understand the problems of their disabled children and to help them more in their educational and family adjustment problems.

### **Literature Review**

Special education is a kind of learning in the discipline of educational studies. It particularly outlines the approaches and learning demands as well as the adjustment of visually impaired children to their respective families. This common truth cannot be neglected that all children should be treated equally and they are similarly entitled to make use of learning opportunities and formal education in order to improve their psychological and intellectual potential to empower their personality (Awan, 2011). Khan, Hassan, & Arif (2013) stressed the importance of special education for all those children who are suffering from all kinds of physical weaknesses. Special education is a part of formal education which must be given equal importance (Khan, Hasan, & Arif, 2013). On the other hand, the situation of special education for the children with visually impaired problems, is quite unacceptable in Pakistan even in the big cities. The notion of "special education" denotes that in educating these special children,

a number of practices are necessary, including, the same special services, behavior and introductory techniques which are used for normal children. This can facilitate such learners to feel fit in overall formal education and as a consequence, get adjusted to their families quite easily (Khan, Hasan, & Arif, 2013).

Generally, the word “Special” cannot be accomplished with the support of certain provisions such as exceptional treatment and unusual amenities. In other words, special education is our ethical and dutiful obligation. Moreover, the parents of visually impaired children have to bend to a variety of psychological and emotional issues. This can range from, the moment, when confronted with the problems of their children to the anxiety, apprehensions and worries of their children. In Pakistan, the issues of special educational curriculum, specially designed to teach visually impaired children, is quite serious. To his end, “counseling” is considered as an important practical aspect, in the formal education of the visually impaired children (Khan, Hasan, & Arif, 2013).

The majority of visually impaired children are born with inborn difficulties. All Pakistani parents wish to teach their visually impaired children as much as they can and in this regard, they encourage these special children to participate in all kinds of social, educational, familial and practical activities (Stuen, et al., 2000). According to Fatema (2013), she emphasizes the importance of effective special education and targets the educational system for the children who have sight issues. So, there is a need for more specialized infrastructure for the special education of the visually impaired in Pakistan.

In the relevant intellectual research on the issues regarding special education of visually impaired children and their adjustment with their families. Visually impaired children have to face inappropriate and hostile behaviors of society and they have less social experiences as compared to the sighted people (Beaty, 1994). According to French (1999), visually impaired children face isolation and feelings of shame in their daily life conflicts with less acceptance from their sighted peers. In addition, lack of confidence and unwillingness of taking responsibility, expressed from these visually impaired children (Gurb, 2000). Many visually impaired students face adjustment problems with their sighted peers in their classes and they suffer inadequate social abilities (George & Duquette, 2006).

### **Methodology and Procedure**

The purpose of this study was to investigate special education curriculum for visually impaired children solve family adjustment problems. For this purpose the researcher investigated educational satisfaction levels of visually impaired children by descriptive research. All visually impaired institute of District Lahore was constituted as target population for this study. 52 visually impaired children from District Lahore were selected by stratified sampling. The purpose of the study was to explore the satisfaction level of visually impaired children about their special education curriculum to help them in adjusting in their family. The researcher used one self developed questionnaire to collect the data about the problem under investigation. The questionnaire was constructed in English language on the base of content validity of the literature review. The questionnaire covered 11 items-scales with the content, reliability of 0.707. Content validity is a significant research approach, which refers to how accurate an examination measures the content for which the research has been conducted. Content validity is often distinguished by depending on the information of the participants,

who are aware of the construct being examined. The questionnaire was developed in English language, but translated in Urdu language by the researcher to help visually impaired children to understand the statements. The responses of the respondents were captured in 5-point Likert scales. The questionnaire composed of 11 questions followed by options based on the Likert-Scale. The options are Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Not Sure, Disagree & Strongly Disagree. Simple descriptive statistical techniques such as means, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the collected data.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In this section, data analysis and interpretation of data is presented. Firstly, the results of reliability analysis are presented with 11 items and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.707. Secondly, frequency analysis is interpreted with age, gender and education. Finally, educational satisfaction level is presented in a table.

### Results of Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.707	11

The Cronbach Alpha for the questionnaire, which refers to the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.7, which counts as a good scale for reliability.

### Frequency Analysis

The data collected from responses were analyzed by calculating the frequencies of participant's scores.

Table 1:

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
	6-10	26	52.0	52.0	62.0
	10-15	13	26.0	26.0	88.0
	15-20	7	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows frequency of the age of visually impaired children.

This table shows that there were 6 students between the age of 0-5 years, 26 between the age of 6-10 years, 13 between 10-15 years, and 7 between 15-20 years.

Table 2:

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	38	76.0	76.0	76.0
	Female	14	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows frequencies presenting the Gender of the visually impaired children

This table shows that there were 38 male and 14 female students whose parents responded.

Table 3:  
Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Starters	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
	Grade 1-3	23	42.0	42.0	66.0
	Grade 4-6	17	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 presents the frequency of Education level of the visually impaired children.. This table shows that the students who were taken into account were 12 in the starter Grade, 23 among Grade 1-3, and 17 among Grade 4-6.

Table 4:  
*Educational Satisfaction Level of Visually Impaired Children about Special Education Curriculum in Solving Family Adjustment Issues*

Item No	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Special children are active members	3 6%	8 16%	4 4%	32 64%	5 10%	52
Parents favor normal children over special children	4 8%	23 46%	7 14%	14 24%	4 8%	52
Teachers favor normal kids over special	8 16%	24 48%	4 4%	10 20%	6 12%	52
Ordinary schools are fit for special children	1 2%	8 14%	5 8%	21 42%	17 34%	52
Adequate curriculum	1 2%	7 14%	6 8%	21 42%	17 34%	52
Are teachers skilled?	6 12%	3 4%	9 16%	19 38%	15 30%	52
Teachers use different modes of communication	2 4%	5 10%	7 10%	14 28%	24 48%	52
Teachers give guidelines for home behavior	5 10%	3 6%	7 10%	19 38%	18 36%	52
Exam system is adequate	5 10%	6 10%	17 32%	18 36%	6 12%	52
Parents & students are satisfied	4 8%	6 12%	11 18%	21 42%	10 20%	52
Teachers make lesson plans	10 20%	9 18%	7 10%	17 34%	9 18%	52

**Findings**

*Educational Satisfaction Level of Visually Impaired Children*

Almost 75% of the participants acknowledged that students with visual impairment can develop as active members of the community. 64% participants were in agreement, whereas 10 % were in strong agreement in response to the item-scale asked. A total of 64 % students with visual impairment were of the view that most of the teachers prefer students without

any disability over them; however, all the teachers denied this assertion, which seems to be a natural feedback, but the measurement criteria for this research study were the students. This is the glimpse of standard social attitude as in Pakistani communities, there are only a few job openings for special applicants. In this milieu, the normal children enjoy more and more consideration of their teachers and parents as compared to the children with visual impairment. All the parents asserted that they pay equal attention to their children, which once again depicts parents love and their way of care, but the response rate of more than 50% children claimed that due to their visual impairment, they are overlooked at home and this is the biggest reason that they feel uncomfortable while adjusting at home. This also reflects the sensitivity of such kids, where they notify even small aspects ignored by their sibling in the normal home routine. About 56 % percent visually impaired children asserted that due to their disability, they feel inferiority complex among their normal brothers and sisters and harsh behavior of their siblings prevents them to adjust in a familial setting. 28% children were not sure what to say, once again depicting their mind frame, where the results do assert that all such children are extra sensitive and find themselves out of the league. More than 75 % parents and their children felt that the special schools suit the best for the children with visual impairment since there are certain arrangements in special schools for their disability.

Almost 38% of the visually impaired children disagreed that teachers plan their lessons in accordance with their special needs. Results also found that 10% of the students were not sure about what to answer and about 52% agreed with the lesson plans sorted by the teachers. On the other hand, in answering the next question, 45% of the parents and 75% of the teachers claimed that the current special education curriculum is consistent with the competencies of all the students, though it needs certain improvements. 95% of the teachers asserted that they were quite skilled in dealing with the students with visual impairment. Other findings is that 85% of the teachers stated that they used a variety of techniques to communicate with the visually impaired children and make the lessons as comprehensible as possible. In addition, almost 35% of the parents answered that their visually impaired children did not learn how to behave at home, whereas almost every teacher asserted that they focused on the learning behaviors to be practiced at home. 76% of the students mentioned that they did not face problems while taking notes in the class and whenever, they faced any issue, the teachers cooperated with them. 52% of the visually impaired students held the view that there must be a change in the present structure of the examination system. For the last question, almost all the visually impaired children expressed that the curriculum of special education should be changed. Finally, more than 60% of the children and the majority of the parents were satisfied with the schools and the educational systems provided for them.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The main objectives of this research were to investigate and examine the special education curriculum for visually impaired children and the way to solve family adjustment problems in Pakistan. With this concern in mind, it can be suggested that visually impaired children can benefit from the nurturing condition, when they are free from attitudinal and psychological obstacles and socioeconomic hazards (Asch, 1989). This reality cannot be denied; though there are numerous educational institutes that play a pivotal role in providing professional education to the children with visual impairment. However, the existence of certain threats deprives these special children from their elementary privilege in terms of "Education". These

special institutions, with the active participation of expert teachers can play a remarkable role in providing visually impaired children with effective learning involvements.

Moreover, this research was an endeavor to describe the feelings of these students while studying in different educational institutes. Their teachers' and parents' perceptions about this concern, were also esteemed to apprehend the phenomenon regarding the issues faced by visually impaired children in special schools in Pakistan. This is widely accepted that the ordinary schools are not restricted to accommodate students with disabilities, especially those with visual impairment, but present their substantial facilities to this community. Furthermore, it requires a resilient political assurance to bring revolutionary changes in the curriculum of special education for visually impaired children. To this aim, media can play a significant role in supporting and cognizing this move in connection with the glitches faced by children with the disability of visual impairment. Difficulties faced by these children must be carefully observed for the purpose of overcoming the obstacles and improving the situation. Necessary measures should be taken into consideration to revolutionize the current curriculum of the special education in Pakistan for visually impaired children; and optimistic results can be expected for their adjustment in their families and positive role-playing in the society.

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