

Social Support as a Determinant of Academic Achievement among Visually Impaired Students in Ilorin Metropolis

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Abstract: *The study looked at social support among students with visual impairments as a predictor of academic success. A descriptive design was adopted, population comprised all students, Forty students with visual impairments participated in the study. A self-created questionnaire that addressed the research topic and null hypotheses was the instrument utilized in this study to gather data. Results: Families, friends, and school administration provided a high level of social support to students with visual impairments. The amount of social support students with vision impairments receive affects their academic performance. Nevertheless, there was no statistically significant gender difference in the social support received. Recommendation made among which one; Proprietors and principals of schools in collaboration with the state and the federal government should sustain the provision of visual aids such as Braille to schools with special needs and inclusive education to enhance the performance of students with visual impairment.*

Keywords: Academic Success, Visual Impairments and Social Assistance

Introduction

A group of people with comparable interests, customs, and institutions make up society. Institutions including family, friends, and traditional, religious, economic, and political ones. Individuals create social networks within these organizations to support the growth of the institution and the welfare of its members. Social support is the perceived and actual care or aid one might receive from others, most commonly by being a part of a social network that is encouraging. Social support also includes advice and practical help that people receive to help them deal with the difficulties they encounter in their social interactions (Pavri and Monda-Amaya, 2001). Support can come from a variety of people and groups, including family, friends, classmates, neighbors, workplace, and the government. Social assistance can take the form of information, instrument, companions, or tangible. (Nadeau and Boyd, 2022; Scott 2016).

According to Atoum and Al-Shoboul (2018), emotional support is the need for assistance and stability through trying times, which leads to a personal sense of caring for others. The feelings of companionship, friendship, care, attention, love, and confidence others show toward the person and his or her sense of comfort and belonging when interacting with them constitute emotional support. Lack of emotional support for children can have disastrous effects, such as stunted growth, developmental delays, hyperactivity, aggression, depression, low self-esteem, running away from home, drug misuse, and a variety of other emotional illnesses (Ludwig and Rostain, 2009). This kind of assistance frequently includes listening and empathizing as well as providing physical comfort, like hugs or pats on the back. When you need emotional support, a friend or family member may offer you a warm hug and listen to your troubles while reassuring you that they have experienced the same things. Expressions of assurance or support serve as examples. Someone providing emotional support could highlight your abilities, or they might just express their confidence in you. This kind of support is provided by life coaches and many therapists to show their patients that they believe in them; this frequently encourages patients to have greater self-confidence (Scott, 2020).

The same goes for companionship support, which fosters a person's sense of social integration (and is also called belonging). This could be interpreted as the presence of company for joint social activities. It was formerly known as "esteem support" or "appraisal support," but these have now evolved into alternative types of support together with normative and instrumental support under the moniker "appraisal support" (Uchino, 2004).

The results of Olaseni's study from 2019 showed a substantial inverse relationship between perceived stigmatization and the emotional wellbeing of teenagers in South-West Nigeria. According to the results of her research, it is crucial that all people provide enough love and support to teenagers who have vision impairment. This would shield them from stigmatization and improve their emotional health, creating psychological equilibrium in them. In addition to the perceived stigmatization mentioned by Olaseni, it has been discovered that visually impaired students suffer a number of obstacles when pursuing their academic objectives. Their mobility around the university is hindered by issues like difficult access to lecture halls, tardiness and an excessive reliance on

guides, writing and reading difficulties, a lack of knowledge of Braille, slow dictation, an inability to see drawings on the chalkboard, and insufficient exam time (Wandera, Kibanja, and Mugagga, 2017).

According to Onalu and Nwafor (2021), people with disabilities face a variety of difficult situations in their daily lives, some of which are directly related to their condition and thus further impair their capacity for success and a happy existence. They claimed that persons with disabilities may be trained and have the intrinsic capacity to be productive, and that in order to realize these potentials, they need the functional social assistance of others. Additionally, they argued that social support for people with disabilities should go beyond providing them with information, emotional support, material gifts, or other tangible aids and should also include removing structural barriers like social exclusion, marginalization, and stigmas, to which they are particularly susceptible.

In their examination of vision impairment, Naipal and Rampersan (2018) argued that it continues to be a global concern and is projected to get worse as life expectancies rise. 90% of those who have visual impairment reside in poorer nations due to the lack of access to quality medical care. Childhood blindness and visual impairment are significant problems that affect healthy childhood development and typically have detrimental effects on children for the rest of their lives, according to Isawumi (2017) in her study on a population in South-West Nigeria that is underserved.

The most frequent preventable causes of blindness and visual impairment among them were refractive error and cataracts. Following cataract, primary glaucomas, retinal disorders, refractive error, corneal disorders, and macular illnesses as the top causes of visual impairment, Ajayi, Omotoye, Ajite, and Omotoso (2018) make this claim in their future investigations. The results of Olaseni's study from 2019 showed a substantial inverse relationship between perceived stigmatization and the emotional wellbeing of teenagers in South-West Nigeria.

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According to Onalu and Nwafor (2021), people with disabilities face a variety of difficult situations in their daily lives, some of which are directly related to their condition and thus further impair their capacity for success and a happy existence. They claimed that persons with disabilities may be trained and have the intrinsic capacity to be productive, and that in order to realize these potentials, they need the functional social assistance of others. Additionally, they argued that social support for people with disabilities should go beyond providing them with information, emotional support, material gifts, or other tangible aids and should also include removing structural barriers like social exclusion, marginalization, and stigmas, to which they are particularly susceptible.

Similar to this, Manitsa and Doikou (2022) claimed that support from friends, parents, school staff, and support services have a significant impact on the students' emotional and mental well-being for overall academic success. This was part of their integrative review of social support for students with visual impairment in an educational institution.

Statement of the Problem

The lives of persons who experience vision loss, as well as the lives of their families, friends, and society as a whole, are profoundly affected. The total loss or degeneration of one's sight can cause a great deal of social unrest, forcing individuals who are affected to worry about their capacity to preserve their independence, pay their tuition, keep their entrance, do well in school, and eat properly. Students who are visually challenged sometimes struggle to meet their academic objectives. Some of these children struggle with reading difficulties, a lack of supplies, social isolation, a shortage of textbooks, movement issues, mobility issues, bad attitudes, academic competitiveness with other students, and being unable to focus in class due to noise from non-disabled students. It is widely accepted that young people with visual impairments frequently face additional challenges and disadvantages throughout their formative years and are excluded from activities that are age-appropriate.

The researchers found that students with visual impairment receive little to no support. They fail to participate in group tasks, keep to themselves, and fall behind academically. It has been noted that a lack of social support frequently leads to mortality, maladaptive behaviors, social marginalization, despair, anxiety, and anxiety, which in turn impacts other aspects of their lives. There will be an improvement in these students' academic performance if the family, peers, instructors, and society at large can help them. For this

reason, the researcher is interested in determining how the availability of social support affects the academic success of students with visual impairment.

Research Question

The following research question was formulated to guide this study:

1. Do students with visual impairment enjoy social support from parents, friends, and school administration?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between social support and the academic achievement of students with visual impairment.
2. There is no significant difference in social support among visually impaired students based on gender.

Methodology

For the study, a descriptive design was chosen. In the Ilorin Metropolis, forty visually handicapped kids were chosen. The study's instrument was the Social Support as a Determinant of Academic Achievement among Visually Impaired Students Questionnaire (SSDAAVISQ). It is a self-made instrument that is divided into Sections A, B, and C. According to the research questions created for the study, Section A measures the demographic information of the respondents, Section B contains 15 things for the students to answer, and Section (c) has 7 items to assess the students' degree of academic attainment. Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree will make up the four liker-scales (D). The questionnaire was given out and immediately collected by the researchers. Frequency, percentage, and the t-test were used to examine the collected data.

Results

Research Question

1: Do students with visual impairment enjoy social support from parents, friends, and school administration?

Table 2: Table showing the percentage and mean distribution do students with visual impairment enjoy social support from parents, friends, and school administration.

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN
1	My family really tries their best to support me in all ramifications	27(67.5)	8(20.0)	3(7.5)	2(5.0)	3.5
2	I get the emotional help and support I need from my family	15(37.5)	22(55.0)	1(2.5)	2(5.0)	3.3
3	I discuss most of my challenges with my family	15(37.5)	18(45.0)	5(12.5)	2(5.0)	3.2
4	My family is willing to help me make decision	7(17.5)	20(50.0)	7(17.5)	6(15.0)	2.7
5	My family provides my basic school needs	13(32.5)	11(27.5)	8(20.0)	8(20.0)	2.7
6	My friends are always there to help me	3(7.5)	19(47.5)	8(20.0)	10(25.0)	2.4
7	I have friends with whom I can share my joy and challenges with	9(22.5)	15(37.5)	7(17.5)	9(22.5)	2.6
8	My friends provide me with useful information that are not at my disposal	10(25.0)	15(37.5)	8(20.0)	7(17.5)	2.7
9	My friends allow me to participate in discussion and decision making	6(15.0)	18(45.0)	8(20.0)	8(20.0)	2.6
10	I have friends who assist me with school exercises and classwork	11(27.5)	18(45.0)	8(20.0)	3(7.5)	3.0
11	My teachers encourage me to participate actively during lessons and group project	16(40.0)	14(35.0)	8(20.0)	2(5.0)	3.1
12	The school provides facilities for ease of movement within the school premises	13(32.5)	11(27.5)	13(32.5)	3(7.5)	2.9

13	Materials such as Braille and text-to-speech are provided for learning activities within the school environment	8(20.0)	12(30.0)	13(32.5)	7(17.5)	2.5
14	There is someone I receive counsel from whenever I am having problems with school work	12(30.0)	14(35.0)	6(15.0)	8(20.0)	2.8
15	There is a non-governmental organization that caters to the need of visually impaired students in my school	9(22.5)	17(42.5)	8(20.0)	6(15.0)	2.7
WEIGHTED MEAN						4.27

Table 2 showed do students with visual impairment enjoy social support from parents, friends, and school administration. The following shows do students with visual impairment enjoy social support from parents, friends, and school administration as follows: My family really tries their best to support me in all ramifications (3.5), I get the emotional help and support I need from my family (3.3), I discuss most my challenges with my family (3.2), My family is willing to help me make decision (2.7), My family provides my basic school needs (2.7), My friends are always there to help me (2.4), I have friends with whom I can share my joy and challenges with (2.6), My friends provide me with useful information that are not at my disposal (2.7), My friends allow me to participate in discussion and decision making(2.6), I have friends who assist me with school exercises and classwork (3.0), My teachers encourage me to participate actively during lessons and group project (3.1), The school provide facilities for ease of movement within the school premises(2.9), Materials such as Braille, text-to-speech are provided for learning activities within the school environment(2.5), There is someone I receive counsel from whenever I am having problems with school work(2.8) and There is a non governmental organization that caters for the need of visually impaired students in my school(2.7). The weighted mean was 4.27, which mean that the calculated mean was greater than the fixed mean (2.5). This implies that students with visual impairment enjoy a high level of social support from parents, friends, and school administration.

Ho1: there is no significant relationship between social support and the academic achievement of students with visual impairment.

Table 3: Summary of PPMC showing the relationship between social support and the academic achievement of students with visual impairment.

Variables	N	Mean	Std Deviation	R	Df	Sig	Decision
Social support	40	42.38	6.26				
Academic Achievement	40	19.03	3.73	0.53	38	0.00	Sig

Table 3 showed a summary of PPMC showing the relationship between social support and the academic achievement of students with visual impairment. It was revealed that social support had mean 42.38 and standard deviation 6.26 while academic achievement had mean 19,03 and standard deviation 3.73, the r_{cal} was 0.53, degree of freedom 38, and significant level of 0.00 ($P > 0.05$). This implies that there was significant relationship between social support and academic achievement of students with visual impairment. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between social support and academic achievement of students with visual impairment was rejected.

Ho2: there is no significant difference in social support among visually impaired students in Ilorin metropolis based on gender.

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Ho2: there is no significant difference in social support among visually impaired students in Ilorin metropolis based on gender.

Table 4: Summary of t-test results showing the social support among visually impaired students in Ilorin metropolis based on gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	F	Df	Sig	Decision
Social support	Male	12	42.17	6.83	0.13	0.01	38	0.89	Not Sig
	Female	28	42.46	6.13					

Table 4 showed the summary of the t-test result showing the social support among visually impaired students in Ilorin metropolis based on gender. It was revealed that male students had mean score 42.17 and standard deviation 6.83 while female students had mean score 42.46 and standard deviation 6.13, the t was 0.13, degree of freedom 38, F was 0.01 and significant level of 0.89 ($P > 0.05$). This implies that there was no significant difference in social support among visually impaired students in Ilorin metropolis based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there was no significant difference in social support among visually impaired students in Ilorin metropolis based on gender was not rejected.

Discussions of Findings

The answer to research question one showed that parents, friends, and school administration provide social support to students with vision impairment. Families are there to support them and meet their basic needs in difficult times. Friends provide companionship. Teachers make sure they participate in classwork. Counselors are readily available in schools to listen to students' concerns and offer appropriate advice. The school administration also provides resources like Braille to support their educational needs. This result supports Datter and Palmer's (2015) finding that kids with visual impairments receive social support from a variety of sources, including teachers and family friends.

The null hypothesis, which claimed there was no connection between social support and academic success for students with visual impairment, was disproved. This suggests that kids with visual impairments' academic success is greatly influenced by their social support. This finding is in line with that of Egheosase and Ugwu (2016), who found that, among other things, social support had an impact on students' academic success. Additionally, according to Nees and Berry (2013), the usage of in-school assistive technology has improved the academic achievement of those with visual impairments by making the learning process more accessible to them.

The second null hypothesis, which claims that there was no discernible gender difference in social support among visually impaired pupils in the city of Ilorin, was also left unchallenged. This implies that social support for visually challenged pupils, whether male or female, is the same. This result is in line with the findings of numerous earlier studies, including those by Oppedal, Roysamb, and Sam (2004), Undheim and Sund (2005), Hadidi and Al Kaheeb (2014), and Oppedal, Roysamb, and Sam (2004), which did not find any appreciable gender differences in the level of social support received by adolescents with visual impairments.

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrated that the sample of visually impaired kids reported higher levels of social support from friends, family, and the school administration. Additionally, it was discovered that a significant element influencing children with visual impairments' academic success is their level of social support. However, there is no discernible difference in the amount of social support received by visually impaired male and female students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Proprietors and principals of schools in collaboration with the state and the federal government should sustain the provision of visual aids such as Braille to schools with special needs and inclusive education to enhance the performance of students with visual impairment.
2. Families of visually impaired students should provide and cater to the emotional, physical, and financial needs of their children or ward.
3. Teachers should encourage visually impaired students to participate in school activities and urge peers to show empathy towards them.

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