

Workplace Issues of Blind Employees in Pakistan: An Empirical Study

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Abstract--- *Social adjustment is indispensable to attain the basics in every field of life. In the scenario of economic crisis it is difficult for a normal person to make social and workplace adjustment. The people with disability have even more complications in this regard. The study is conducted to explore the social and work place adjustment problems faced by the visually impaired persons at workplace.*

The core objective of this study is to explore problems faced by blinds at work place regarding their adjustment in work settings. Population for this study is comprised of visually impaired employees. The data is collected from the twin cities; Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Snowball sampling techniques is used to collect data from 40 respondents. The findings of the study confirm the proposed relations between problems in communication and sense of inferiority. Findings also suggest that positive perception of coworkers escalate the performance of visually impaired employees.

Keywords--- *Communication, Inferiority, Performance, Social Adjustment, Workplace Adjustment*

I. INTRODUCTION

BLINDNESS continues to be a major health burden globally. Blindness, like most other chronic disorders, can cause psychosocial distress leading to maladjustment in work settings, if not mitigated. Blindness is known to create or aggravate many social handicaps for example; difficulty in getting educated, unemployment, street begging and poor quality standard of life of many blind people. (Brooke, McDonough & Hardy, 2006).

Sometimes people with disabilities are capable of functioning in the competitive environment due to their cooperative attitude and professional behavior. On the other hand the major disadvantages, which the disabled persons face, are low cooperation and difficulty in work place adjustment (Cooper, 1991). The major barriers still faced by disabled workers are the negative attitude and misconceptions of colleagues and employers. Over the past two decades, the rapid growth in the population of people with additional disabilities has brought about a new challenge in the area of employment. This challenge is directly linked to the absence of an available and appropriate vocational and rehabilitation services. It is very difficult to generalize the discrimination

between the experiences of disability for two individuals. Some individuals with disability can easily manage their work therefore some individuals with disability have severed effects and it depends on the severity of their disability and the work environment.

Davidson and Jaccard (1979) argued about visually impaired people that the absence of vision can lead to a detachment from both the physical and social world. Blind and visually impaired people may perform almost any job like a normal person e.g. lawyer, artist, accountant, teachers identifying workplace hazards; accessing written or electronic information (Capella-McDonnall & Crudden, 2009). Keeping in view these contradictions in the current literature this study is conducted. This study further aims to explore into the problems faced by blinds in work settings with special emphasis on problems of communication and its effect on the blinds psyche. This study further investigates how perception of coworkers about the blinds relate to the performance of blinds.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Blindness

Blindness is inability to see because of injury, disease, or a congenital condition. It imposes restriction on the ability to move about and control over self and the environment (Dubrow, 1965). Having low vision is similar to being neither fish nor fowl. It creates hurdles in the adjustment of the blind people (Martz, 2003). These hurdles further boost many social and psychological problems.

B. Problem in Communication

Facial expressions and body attitudes often give important clues to sighted indicating sarcasm, worry, humor and other emotions. The blind people lose the perception of these subtleties and fail to develop the ability to use them in their speech. As a result of this certain blandness in speech develops, for example they also fail to sense the visual cues which tell whose turn is it to speak. Because of this the conversation may be marked with unintentional interruptions or embarrassingly long pauses (Marcouiller, Smith & Bordieri, 1987).

Efficient uses of daily living skills for every visually impaired person for his day to day living are necessary. These are known as basic 'Survival Skills' and depend upon the ability in sensory training as well as mobility of the person. Some common daily living skills are eating, dressing, using toilet, shaving, cleaning place, taking medicines, maintaining body hygiene etc. (Walters & Baker, 1995). People with disabilities are capable of functioning in the competitive

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DOI: 10.9756/BIJMML1003

environment due to their cooperative attitude and professional behavior. Several employers prefer to recruit persons with disability. If disable persons are able to be selected for appropriate job with reference to their disabilities they gain fling of independence, usefulness, responsibility and mobility. On the other hand the major disadvantages which the disabled persons face are low wages, low employment rates and work place adjustment. They face problem of listening and understanding work instructions, directions and feedback at work place(Corn, 1983).

There are other problems of reading and interpreting workplace related documentation, such as prescribed programs and writing to address audience needs, such as forms, case notes and reports. Interpreting the needs of internal/ external clients from clear information and feedback. Applying basic numeracy skills to workplace requirements involving measuring and counting. Sharing information with other staff, working as part of an allied health team. Negotiating responsively regarding own work role and/or conditions, possibly with clients all these skills are very useful while communicating at workplace (Braxton, Milem&Sullivan, 2000). At the same time these visually impaired people lack these skills due to their disability. This creates the feeling of inferiority among the visually impaired workers as they do not meet up the requirements of the effective communication. It also serve the basis for problems in their social adjustment at work place (Corn, 1983).

C. Perception of Coworkers towards Visually Impaired Employees

People with visual impairment often experience the feelings of shame and failure. Professionals in the field of blindness and visual impairment have suggested that attitude of friends, family and specially the colleagues have the most significant impact on developing the self-image of the visually impaired person and the positive attitude of the coworkers helps the blind person to maintain a positive outlook of his performance (Green& Brooke, 2001). In the most important aspect of social support, after the family comes the role of friends and colleagues. Social support to the blind from coworkers may include: accepting them as a useful part of society, encouraging them to participate in social functions, providing them proper guidance and advice giving them physical assistance by sharing their tasks, helping them regain their self-esteem and relieving them of their attitude of self-pity etc. All this support helps them accept their disability with dignity and makes them socially amicable, psychologically adjustable and educationally sound(Hall, 2002).Hall, (2002) also suggested that a push from rehabilitation agencies for the inclusion of the developing of social attitude and providing the service structure to visually impaired person for their adjustment in sighted world can lead the high performance of the blinds worker. Further Capella-McDonnall (2005) explained that educating the people and counseling the members of the society and work place to develop the positive attitude towards blind help the blinds to believe in themselves which may increase their performance. Meyerson (1998) coined this argument by amending the concept of self-efficacy and called it as other's efficacy. Meyerson (1998) further

explained that if the beliefs of coworkers are positive and they perceive that blind coworker can perform better than the performance of blinds will improve at work place. Considering the above in-depth review of literature and studying the Pakistani context where research work on this aspect of blind is lacking following research objectives are formulated.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the socioeconomic characteristic of blinds.
- To identify the role of perception of co-employees in context of performance of blinds at work place.
- To examine the relationship of problems in communication and the feeling of inferiority in binds at work place

From these research objectives following research questions are devised.

Research Questions

- To what extent problems in communication creates the feeling of inferiority in binds at work place?
- What is the perception of co-employees in context of performance decline of blinds at work place?

Hypothesis

H₁: Positive perception of co-employees increases the performance of blind employees at work place.

H₂: Problems in communication create the feeling of inferiority in blind employees at work place.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The current research used the mixed approach as both qualitative and quantitative techniques are used. This cross sectional study is conducted in non-contrived environment. Data are collected through questionnaires and interviews from blind employees. The blind employees are selected as a population for this study. Snowball sampling technique was used for sampling of population.40 blind employees were located as a sample for the study. SPSS was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics are provided in the start. Later mean values, frequency distribution; and chi square are used to analyze the data and hypothesis testing.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts the socio economic characteristics of the respondents results show that 15 respondents were from (21-25) age groups, 15 respondents were from (26-30) age groups, 7 respondents were from age group (31-35), 3 respondents were from age group (35 above). Further there were 30 male and 10 female respondents. Moreover this research has also analyzed the qualification level of blinds. 2 respondents have education till middle level it accounts for (5%) of respondents while 1 respondent (2.5%) had the qualification level equivalent to matric. Moreover 3 respondents (7.5%) were educated till intermediate level. Furthermore 6 respondents (15.0%) were from bachelors, and 28 respondents (70.0%) were from master's levels of education.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age of the Respondent</i>		
21-25	15	37.5
26-30	15	37.5
31-35	7	17.5
35+	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	30	75.0
Female	10	25.0
Total	40	100.0
<i>Education</i>		
Middle	2	5.0
Metric	1	2.5
Intermediate	3	7.5
Bachelor	6	15.0
Master	28	70.0
Total	40	100.0
<i>Occupation</i>		
Administrator	9	22.5%
Accountant	2	5.0%
Teacher	28	70.0%
Any other	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%
<i>Family Type</i>		
Joint	29	72.5%
Nuclear	8	20.0%
Extended	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Respondents were asked questions regarding their occupation in order to get information regarding respondent's socio-economic background. 9Blinds were related to administration. Whereas 2 blinds were accountants. On the other hand (28) respondents were teachers and remaining 1 respondent was lawyer (any other). It is found that most of blind persons were engaged in teaching. The family type in which majority 29 respondents (72.5%) were living in joint family system and 8 respondents (20.0%) that is second highest percentage of the respondent were living in nuclear family type whereas rest of them were living in extended family system. Hypothesis formulated for the study are tested as follows.

Hypothesis H₁: Positive perception of co-employees increases the performance of blind employees at work place.

Table 2 explains the bi-variate analysis of an independent variable (perception of coworkers) and its effect on dependent variable (performance of blinds) at work place by using chi-square technique. 15(37.0%) of the respondents strongly disagree that the blinds are weak to perform task, 2(5.0%) disagree, 1(2.5%) of the respondents were neutral, 0(.0%) were both agree and strongly agree that blinds are weak to perform task. 5(12.5%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the misconception of co-employees towards blinds, 1(2.5%) of the respondents were both agree and disagree, 0(.0 %) of the respondents were neutral and strongly disagree.

Table 2: Perception of Co-employees Reduces Performance of Blind Employees at Workplace

Employee perception	Performance at workplace					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
Blinds are weak to perform task	15(37.0%)	2(5.0%)	1(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	18(45 %)
Misconception of co-employees	5(12.5%)	1(2.5%)	0(.0%)	1(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	7(17.5%)
Sympathetic behavior of co-employees	1(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	1(2.5%)	3(7.5%)	0(0.0%)	5(12.5%)
Blind do not perform like other healthy persons	0(.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(5.0%)	1(2.5%)	3(7.5%)
Lack of motivation	0(0.0%)	1(2.5%)	1(2.5%)	1(2.5%)	4(10.0%)	7(17.5%)
Total	21(52.5%)	4(10.0%)	3(7.5%)	7(17.5%)	59(12.5%)	40(100%)
Chi-square:41.875	DF:16				Significance level: (SL):.000	
Gamma:.820	Standard Error:.607				Approx T:7.490 (SL):.000	

Majority of the respondents 3 (7.5%) agree that behavior of co-employees towards blinds is sympathetic, while 1(2.5%) strongly disagree and neutral, and 0(.0%) of the respondents were disagree and strongly agree. 2(5.0%) of the respondents agree that the blinds do not perform like other healthy persons, 1(2.5%) of the respondents strongly agree, while the other 0(.0%) strongly disagree, disagree, and neutral. Moreover, majority of the respondents 4(10.0%) strongly agree with lack of motivation in blinds, 0(.0%) strongly disagree and 1(2.5%) disagree, neutral and agree. The value of chi-square is significant (41.875) which shows that due to positive perception of coworkers blinds perform better. Results support hypothesis H₁.

According to DeLoach(1994) there are five major barriers to getting a good job and adjusting it in work settings for the visually impaired person, first is the negative attitude of employees toward blindness; secondly, diminished self-concept; third employer reluctance to hire because of misconceptions or fears concerning blindness; fourth

transportation difficulties; and the last poor career planning and inadequate ethical developing of all the employees. It is suggested that personal observations of visually impaired workers can provide educational and rehabilitation professionals with illustrations of effective career and socialization counseling and adjustment services. The attitude of employers and fellow workers tend to create a greater barrier than any physical barriers. At the same time work place blinds have so many problem due to multiple task and work with different co-employees. Misconceptions regarding their blindness are wrong that they cannot perform like healthy co-employees and they are poor; need their help for doing job. Blind persons are independent related to any kind of task in daily life.

Hypothesis H₂: Problems in communication create the feeling of inferiority in blind employees at workplace

According to table 3 (17.5%) of the respondents strongly disagree that the lack of confidence in blinds is due to problem in communication in society, 2(5.0%) of the respondents disagree, while 1(2.5%) of the respondents were neutral and 0(.0%) of the respondents were both agree and strongly agree. 9(22.0%)of the respondents were neutral about blinds do not have ability of social contact, 2(5.0%) of the respondents strongly disagree and 0(.0%) of the respondents disagree, agree and strongly agree. Moreover, 4(10.0%) of the

respondents strongly disagree with blinds have lack of learning capacity, 2(5.0%) were neutral and 1(.2.5%) disagree agree and strongly agree. 3(7.5%)of the respondents agree with lack of communication skills in blinds, 2(5.0%) percent strongly agree, on the other hand 0(0%) were neutral and 1(2.5%) strongly disagree and disagree. 2(5.0%) of the respondents strongly disagree with blinds do not participate in social life, 1(2.5%) of the respondents were neutral and 0(0%) respondents were strongly agree, agree and disagree.

Table 3: Problems in Communication Creates the Feeling of Inferiority in Blind Employees at Workplace

	Feeling of inferiority in comparison of healthy person					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
Lack of confidence	7(17.5%)	2(5.0%)	1(2.5%)	0(.0%)	0(0.0%)	10(25.0%)
Problem in social contact	2(5.0%)	0(0.0%)	9(22.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	11(27.5%)
Lack of learning capacity	4(10.0%)	1(2.5%)	2(5.0%)	1(2.5%)	1(2.5%)	6(15.0%)
Lack of communication ability	1(2.5%)	1(2.5%)	0(0%)	3(7.5%)	2(5.0%)	10(25.0%)
No participate in social life	0(.0%)	0(0%)	1(2.5%)	0(.0%)	2(5.0%)	3(7.5%)
Total	14(52.5%)	4(10.0%)	13(32.5%)	4(10.0%)	5(12.5%)	40(100%)
Chi-Square:38.662DF:16 Level of Significance (SL):.001						
Gamma:.517Standard Error:.143Approx T:3.311						(SL):.001

The value of chi-square is significant (38.66) which shows that blind feel inferiority in comparison to co-employees at work place due to above mentioned problems in communication. The results supports hypothesis H₂.

V. CONCLUSION

Social adjustment is an effort made by an individual to cope with standards, values and needs of a society in order to be accepted. It involves coping with new standard and value. In the technical language of psychology "getting along with the members of society as best one can" is called adjustment. It is important that to tackle the problem of blinds at work place and see the root cause of problem faced by blind in social mobility ,at work place, which create social adjustment problem for blinds. From the findings of the study it is concluded that lack of socialization and negative behavior of coworkers towards disable result into performance decline. Further the study also concluded that problem in communication may affect the psyche of the blinds by increasing their inferiority complex.

The size of the sample can limit the scope of this research as it was very difficult to locate blind employees. For future research it is suggested that to increase the sample size in order to increase the generalizability of the results. Further, the span of the area may be increased to whole country as sampling from more areas will depict more detailed pictures of the problems of the blinds in their workplace adjustment. Moreover, this research treated the blinds of different socio economic characteristics as a single unit, future research may examine the workplace adjustment problems from every aspect of demographic characteristics separately. Despite these limitations this study is among the first few to investigate blind employees' issues and opens a new avenue for future research.

Recommendations

In the light of findings from results this study suggests the following recommendations.

- Attitude of coworkers and community must be positive towards blind person. Better socialization enhances the abilities of blind person at every field of life.
- Working environment must be designed according blind person, so they can move easily.
- Working environment must be friendly for all employees.
- In addition to Blind persons other employees should also be trained and develop to support the visually impaired people in order to enhance the organizational success.
- Do not neglect the blinds due to their disability in communicating rather they should be treated well to reduce their inferiority complex at work place.

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