

## Prospects and Challenges of Visually Impaired Students and Teachers in the Public and Private Sectors Higher Education Institutions

Aleesha Khushboo Iqbal, Adeela Rehman,

<sup>1</sup> Graduate, Department of Sociology, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Corresponding Author's Email: [Adeela.rehman@fjwu.edu.pk](mailto:Adeela.rehman@fjwu.edu.pk),  
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8211-6338

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### Abstract

This study aimed to explore the prospects and challenges faced by visually impaired students and teachers in public and private sector higher education institutions. A qualitative research design was employed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 visually impaired participants, including students and faculty members, selected through snowball sampling. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed substantial variation in institutional support across higher education institutions. While some participants reported access to assistive technologies and supportive academic environments, others experienced limited accommodations and inadequate staff awareness. Assistive technologies facilitated learning and teaching, whereas barriers included inaccessible curricula, insufficient training, and infrastructural constraints. Participants also demonstrated strong interpersonal skills, resilience, and engagement in extracurricular activities. The study highlights the need for comprehensive institutional policies, inclusive teaching practices, and rehabilitation-oriented support systems to promote equitable access and participation for visually impaired individuals in higher education.

**Keywords:** Visually Impaired, Challenge, Prospects, Higher education, Disability, Student, Teacher, Assistive Technology

### Introduction

In today's quickly changing world, education is essential for personal development and societal advancement. However, not all people have equal access to educational opportunities, and this discrepancy is more apparent for visually impaired students and teachers in higher education institutions. The potential and problems that this marginalized group faces require special attention because they throw light on broader concerns of inclusion and accessibility in the educational landscape. For numerous compelling reasons, studying the possibilities and problems of visually impaired professors and students in higher education is critical. To begin with, education is a fundamental human right, and guaranteeing fair access to high-quality education for all is not just a moral prerequisite but also a legal requirement in many countries. The experiences of visually impaired students in higher education give vital insights into the efficacy of present policies and practices in promoting inclusion. For example, a study in Kentucky found that barely half of the visually challenged children used accessible technology, emphasizing the need for more teacher assistance and training (Gill, Sharma, & Gupta, 2017).

Students with visual impairments frequently struggle with emotional issues and have difficulty creating and sustaining social interactions. According to research, the social support offered to these

kids in educational institutions by staff members and their peers may have a favorable influence on their academic learning and socioemotional development (Manitsa and Doikou, 2022). Millions of people from many origins and cultures are impacted by the global public health problem of visual impairment. People with visual impairments deal with various difficulties that have an effect not only on them personally but also on their families, communities, and society as a whole. As a fundamental human right and a necessary component of daily life, education significantly determines one's destiny. Unfortunately, particularly in poor countries, there are still major barriers for visually impaired students to obtaining high-quality education and inclusive learning settings. Equal access to education for all students, regardless of their skills or impairments, is the goal of inclusive education, a growing concept that emphasizes the notion of equity. The move towards inclusive education signifies a paradigm shift in educational practices, recognizing the importance of diversity and advancing the idea that each student has special talents and viewpoints to contribute to the classroom. The atmosphere that inclusive education develops welcomes diversity and caters to the various needs of all pupils, including those who have visual impairments.

Additionally, Abner, 2002) said that parents' support and commitment are essential for the success of visually impaired kids in their academic endeavors. To better understand the needs of their visually impaired children and fight for their rights in educational settings, parents and caregivers need access to information and tools. It is possible to establish a nurturing environment that enables visually impaired adolescents to succeed academically and emotionally by fostering strong ties between schools and families. The socio-emotional health of visually impaired children should be taken into account in a comprehensive approach to inclusive education. A supportive learning environment where students feel included, respected, and encouraged to express their special skills and viewpoints can be created via peer support programs, mentorship efforts, and counseling services. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the current problems and opportunities for students and instructors with Visual Impairment (VI). By addressing these difficulties, our research contributes to larger efforts to promote inclusion and accessibility in higher education, eventually helping visually impaired students achieve their educational goals and live satisfying lives. The current research issue focuses on the enduring difficulties and impediments to inclusive education for visually impaired people in underdeveloped nations. There is a noticeable difference in the accessibility and quality of education accessible to people with visual impairments in these locations, despite the rising global acknowledgement of the need for inclusive education. Students who are blind or visually impaired are often marginalized and denied access to traditional educational opportunities in developing nations due to a lack of resources and infrastructure. The poor distribution of resources for inclusive education is one of the main problems causing this issue. Financial support for educational efforts aimed at students with visual impairments is restricted in many developing countries due to budgetary restrictions and competing priorities.

A survey done by Abner and Lahm in 2002 among instructors for children with visual impairments in Kentucky indicated that barely half of the people utilized accessible technology, according to Gill, Sharma, and Gupta (2017). Despite having access to and using computer-based technologies, their teachers lacked the expertise to successfully teach their students. This conclusion emphasizes the need to provide instructors with strong abilities in fundamental technology applications as well as assistive technologies. University training and professional development programs should meet instructors' requirements for higher-level technological proficiency. Similarly, in another study described by Gill, Sharma, and Gupta (2017), a descriptive survey was undertaken in 2009 in three municipalities of the Brazilian state of São Paulo. The study sought to validate the use of assistive technology, particularly information technology, in the education of blind and low-vision children based on their instructors' perspectives. According to the findings, there are disparities in the specificity and applicability of assistive technology for blind and low-vision people, for whom particular computer programs are essential. Information technology has been shown to increase reading and writing abilities, promote

equal communication with the rest of the world, and improve the overall quality of life while improving the learning process. The fundamental reason for not embracing information technology, however, was a lack of planning for courses. The major prerequisites for efficiently adopting information technology in schools were recognized as having enough resources, including an acceptable quantity of computers for all students, advisors to assist and guide instructors, and pedagogical assistance. Although assistive technology has made it possible for people to access e-learning content, there are still restrictions and obstacles that must be solved. These devices may not be totally successful for all visually challenged kids, and their affordability remains a concern. Access to assistive technology might be difficult for certain impaired students due to financial constraints (Gill, Sharma, and Gupta, 2017).

In conclusion, the value of our research extends beyond academic inquiry and has real-world consequences for improving the inclusion and accessibility of higher education institutions for visually impaired students and faculty. This study can work as a catalyst for positive change by offering a comprehensive examination of the experiences and needs of visually impaired persons, enabling a more supportive, inclusive, and empowering learning environment for the visually impaired population in higher education.

## **Study Material and Methods**

### **Research Objectives**

- To identify the prospects of visually impaired teachers and students in higher education institutions.
- To explore the challenges that are confronted by visually impaired teachers and students in higher education institutions.
- To examine the government's steps to establish equal opportunity for visually impaired teachers and students in higher education institutions

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Critical Disability Theory (CDT) served as the theoretical basis for this investigation. Max Horkheimer established critical theory in 1937 in order to understand oppression and reform society in order to allow for human freedom (Hosking, 2008). CDT, in turn, came from critical theory fields and challenged dominant viewpoints on disability, notably medical and essentialist conceptions (Hosking, 2008). The medical model, which attributed the difficulties faced by handicapped people only to their medical condition, was the prevalent approach to understanding disability before the birth of CDT. It defined disability as an individual's handicap, whether mental or physical, and saw it as a defect that needed to be addressed or corrected. The essentialist paradigm supported this viewpoint by perceiving disability as a fixed and objective property of the person without taking into account the larger social environment. CDT, on the other hand, adheres to the social model of disability, which is founded on three fundamental principles: Disability is a social construct and not the result of an impairment. Disability is the interrelationship between impairment, a person's response to it, and the social environment. A physical, institutional, and attitudinal environment that fails to match the needs of people who do not meet the social expectations of normalcy results in experiences of social disadvantage. The first principle rejects the idea that disability is purely an inherent attribute of the individual, instead positing that it is the result of the interplay between impairment, the individual's response to it, and the social situation. CDT shifts the focus from repairing people to tackling societal barriers that hinder their full participation and inclusion by seeing disability as socially created. The second premise acknowledges that people spend their lives with many identities and affiliations. This multidimensionality enables structural analysis while keeping in mind that each group is made up of people with a variety of experiences and qualities. The third premise emphasizes that social disadvantage is caused by a mismatch between people's needs and the physical, institutional, and behavioral environments. Disability-related disadvantages do not come

from the impaired person's intrinsic deficiencies but rather from the environment's inability to accommodate their different requirements and preferences. Several aspects play an important role in identifying and managing disability-related issues within the CDT framework. These components include value diversity, rights, voice, language, and transformational politics. CDT emphasizes the significance of recognizing and respecting the variety that handicapped people offer to their communities. This acknowledgement promotes a better grasp of their self-identity, experiences, strengths, limits, and opinions. Society may strive towards greater inclusion and respect for each individual's unique contributions by appreciating and accepting variety.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative method was used in order to capture the rich and context-specific narratives of visually impaired students and faculty members, allowing for the examination of their distinctive views, coping methods, and support requirements. The research involved gathering first-hand testimonies from participants through interviews and observations.

### **Research Design**

The qualitative research design was suitable for this study because it explores the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of visually impaired students and faculty. Using open-ended interview questions, respondents can express themselves freely, generating rich narratives that capture the complexities of their experiences. The study examined emotional, psychological, and social aspects of being visually impaired in higher education through in-depth interviews, helping researchers better understand their challenges, coping strategies, support networks, and personal motivations for pursuing education and teaching careers. Before formal interviews, pilot testing was conducted. The study used a non-probability snowball sampling method, targeting visually impaired teachers and students in higher education institutions. Both males and females were included without gender restrictions. Additionally, qualitative research enables participants to share their stories in their own words, offering a sense of agency and validation. This interactive approach amplifies the voices of visually impaired individuals and highlights their unique insights; their stories can serve as powerful advocacy tools to raise awareness about their needs and aspirations.

### **Research Techniques and Methods**

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary research method in this study. The interview guide was carefully developed to address various aspects of participants' experiences, including demographic details, academic and non-academic activities, human and social interactions, and institutional policies. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of participants' stories while ensuring consistent coverage of key themes across interviews. It also encouraged respondents to share their personal experiences and opinions openly, facilitating free expression of their thoughts and feelings. Since the questions were open-ended, participants provided detailed, context-rich answers, which offered deeper insights into their experiences as visually impaired students and faculty members.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Thematic analysis was conducted on data gathered from the interviews. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in qualitative data. The researcher coded the data, categorized responses into themes, and examined relationships and variations across individuals during the analysis. Thematic analysis was appropriate for this study because it enables a thorough investigation of the data while also providing a disciplined and rigorous process for identifying essential themes and insights. The method ensures that the conclusions are grounded in

respondents' experiences and are indicative of the collected data. For the analysis, the software ATLAS TI was used to develop themes and analyze the data through thematic analysis.

### Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical concerns were of the utmost significance. Before beginning the interviews, each participant provided informed permission, ensuring that they were completely aware of the study's objective, potential risks and benefits, and the use of their replies. The consent process also included alerting participants of their freedom to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. Throughout the study procedure, confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously preserved. To preserve the privacy of the participants, personal identifiers were deleted from the data, and all data was securely kept to avoid unauthorized access. The study follows ethical rules and research principles involving human subjects, guaranteeing that the respondents' dignity and well-being are respected and protected.

### Results & Discussion

**Table1. Demographic information of faculty members:**

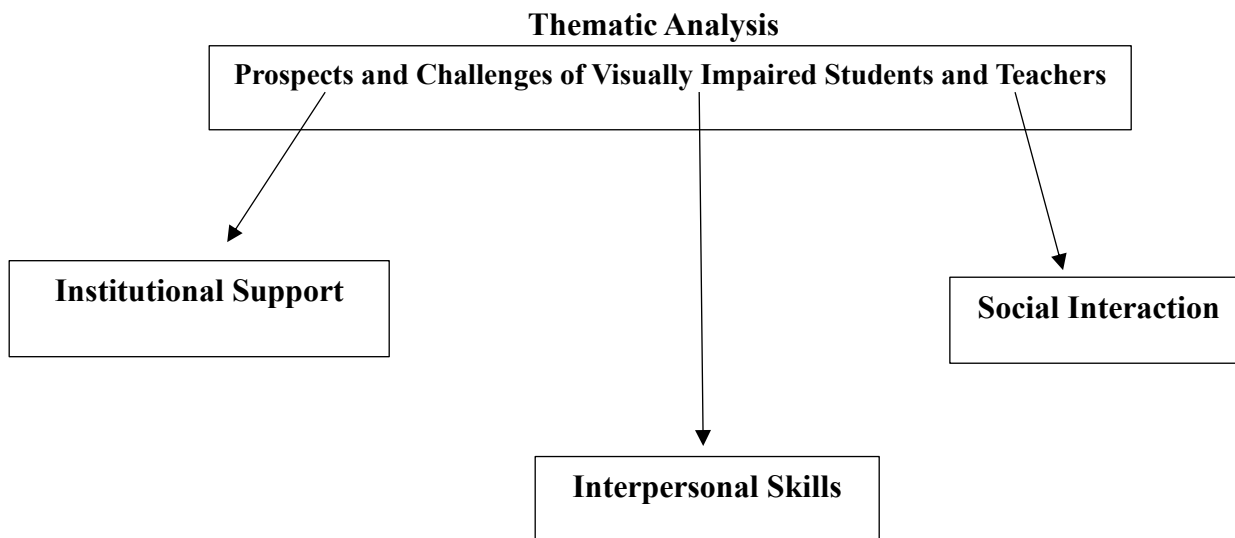
Participants	Participant (F1)	Participant (F2)	Participant (F3)	Participant (F4)	Participant (F5)
Marital Status	Married	Widow	Married	Married	Never Married
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Occupation	Teacher	Associate Professor	Teacher/ Trainer	Lecturer	Lecturer
Educational Background	MS in history	PHD Doctor of Philosophy	MS in Health & Physical Education	MS in Education	MS in Urdu
Family Background	03 siblings, Nuclear Family System	03 siblings, Nuclear Family System	Nuclear Family system	03 sisters and 1 brother, Joint family system	06 siblings 3 are visually impaired.
No of Friends	200-300 Friends	Numerous Friends	Numerous Friends	2 Friends	2 to 3 Friends
Visual Difficulty	Completely Blind	Completely Blind	Partially Blind	Completely Blind	Completely Blind
Traveling	Public Transport	Independent mobility	Public Transport	Public Transport	Local traveling
Devices	White Cane	Yes	Yes	No device	No device
Smart Phone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Map Navigation	Yes, Google Maps	On and off	Yes	Not Rarely	Rely on humans

This research is based on the prospects and challenges of visually impaired people in institutions. The demographic question is asked by each participant before conducting the formal interview. The majority of the blind faculty members are married, and one of the faculty members was never married. The educational background of faculty members was MS/MPHIL, and one of them was a PHD doctor. The occupations of respondents were teacher, lecturer, and associate professor; the family background of the majority of participants is a nuclear family system, and one of them belongs to a joint family system. The visual difficulty of participants is complete blindness, and all of them have a good circle of friends. They prefer to travel by public transportation and sometimes in their personal cars, and they are all gadget users, such as mobile phone users, knowing the functions and applications of phones.

**Table 2. Demographic information of students:**

Participants	Participant (S1)	Participant (S2)	Participant (S3)	Participant (S4)	Participant (S5)	Participant (S6)
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student
Educational Background	BS in English	BS in Islamiyat	BS in Chemistry	BS in Pol Science	BS in Urdu	BS in Sociology
Family Background	05 siblings, Nuclear Family system	06 siblings, Nuclear Family system	05 Siblings Nuclear Family system	03 siblings Nuclear Family System	05 siblings Nuclear Family System	04 Siblings Nuclear Family System
No of Friends	Many friends	Many Friends	Many Friends	01 Best Friends	2 to 3 Friends	Many friends
Visual Difficulty	Completely Blind	Partial Blind	Partial Blind	Completely Blind	Completely Blind	Completely blind
Traveling	Public Transport	Public Transport	Public Transport	Public Transport	Self-Mobility	With Brother
Devices	White Cane	Yes	Yes	White Cane	Yes	White Cane
Smart Phone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Map Navigation	Yes, Google Map	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

This research is focused on the prospects and challenges of visually impaired people in institutions. The demographic question is asked by each participant before conducting the formal interview. The visually impaired students were Single. All the students were enrolled in the BS program and belonged to a nuclear family system. The visual difficulty of participants is complete blindness, and all of them have a good circle of friends. They prefer to travel through public transportation and sometimes with their family members. They are all gadget users, such as mobile phone users, and know all the functions and applications of mobile phones.



## **Institutional Support**

The interviews yielded the first theme: "Institutional Support." The participants discussed their experiences and thoughts on the various degrees of help offered to visually impaired people by educational institutions. This subject emphasizes the critical role that institutions play in promoting equitable access and opportunity for visually impaired students. The interviews indicated a range of institutional assistance for visually impaired people. One member was pleased with the support offered by their institution. "The institution provides me with a laptop installed with screen-reading software, which enables me to access course materials and participate in academic activities effectively." Conversely, another respondent (S1) expressed a different experience, stating, "There's no class accommodation, especially provided by the institution to me, even though you can say I snatched my rights from the institution."

This demonstrates the variations in support services between universities, implying that not all schools prioritize the needs of visually impaired students equally. It is clear that institutional assistance is critical to influencing the educational experience of visually impaired students. Institutions that actively engage in assistive technology and foster a supportive atmosphere allow visually impaired students to participate fully in academic activities, enhancing their overall success and well-being. The absence or lack of assistance, on the other hand, may create roadblocks and impede the academic advancement of visually impaired people, leaving them to argue for their rights and accommodations. This discrepancy in institutional assistance emphasizes the relevance of raising awareness about the needs of visually impaired students and promoting inclusive educational settings. Institutions must take proactive steps to meet the different learning requirements of visually impaired students and offer equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Institutional Support emphasizes the crucial role that educational institutions play in influencing the educational path of visually impaired people. Institutions may contribute to a more inclusive and empowered higher education system for everyone by recognizing the various levels of support and actively addressing the needs of visually impaired students. The examination of literature emphasized the difficulties that visually impaired students encounter in obtaining information, course materials, and accommodations in educational institutions (Ali, 2015). It also emphasized the importance of assistive technology in the learning process and the necessity for faculty training to effectively accommodate visually impaired students. Participants in the interviews discussed their own experiences with institutional support, giving additional evidence of the differences in aid offered by different educational institutions. Some participants were pleased with the assistance they got, such as access to laptop computers with screen-reading software, which considerably improved their capacity to engage in academic events. This excellent experience aligns with the literature review recommendations, emphasizing the necessity of employing assistive technology to meet the unique requirements of visually impaired students (Zezelew, 2018). In order to discuss institutional supports such as class accommodation and assistive technology, the participants said that they do not have any class accommodation or assistive technology in their institutions. The majority of the participants said that audio recording of lectures is allowed in the institutional policies. The participants said that the challenge of having a normal education system for the normal and the visually impaired is difficult to manage. On the other hand, the participants show their satisfaction with having a manageable workload and classes in a day. As per the majority of participants, they have 3–4 maximum classes on a daily basis. And a few of the respondents said that they have 5–6 classes on a daily basis. Further, the students' participants complained about the power access to the library and the assignments. One of the faculty members said that whenever he designs papers and assignments for the students, he needs to appoint one of the students to check for mistakes. Moreover, the majority of the participants said that it was challenging to study the normal curriculum with normal students. Participants addressed the fact that the lack of access to computer labs in the institution is problematic. That the participants cannot properly focus on their academic demands.

The interview findings highlight the importance of assistive technology and teacher training in creating an inclusive and empowering educational environment for visually impaired students. Technology integration and extensive teacher training can assist institutions in addressing the obstacles presented by visually impaired students and providing equitable access to educational opportunities. Institutions may establish an atmosphere in which visually impaired students can succeed academically and personally by adopting assistive technology and providing instructors with the required training. These approaches are consistent with Critical Disability Theory concepts and the urge for transformational policies that promote inclusion and fairness for all students, regardless of ability. The courses and curriculum chosen also have an impact on the academic experience. Another person (F5) indicated interest in her favorite topic, stating, *"My favorite subject for teaching and studying is Urdu." And in Urdu, my subject is poetry.*" This demonstrates visually challenged people's resolve to pursue their academic pursuits despite potential obstacles. The participant's enthusiasm for learning Urdu, especially poetry, demonstrates the persistence and passion of visually impaired people to follow their academic interests and overcome any difficulties. This component of the topic "Institutional Support" explains how a well-designed curriculum and a welcoming educational environment may play an important role in supporting the academic advancement and personal development of visually impaired students. The participant's excitement for learning Urdu and poetry demonstrates the value of academic inclusion. While vision impairment might make learning more difficult, it does not decrease visually impaired people's various interests and skills. Visually impaired kids, like their sighted classmates, have a diverse set of academic interests and ambitions. Educational institutions may guarantee that visually impaired students can explore and participate in topics that match their interests and skills by providing a curriculum that caters to varied subjects and disciplines.

Visually challenged people must have equal access to education. There must be accessibility and a stipend for exceptional students so that they may handle their educational expenses, such as notes, books, and transportation costs. Furthermore, the Sports Committee needs to open its eyes and make changes in Pakistan, as well as strive to improve the talents of Pakistanis, so that we may win numerous medals within a year. The government needs to take this initiative. The participant's enthusiasm for learning Urdu and poetry illustrates the tenacity, determination, and unique abilities of visually impaired people. It emphasizes the significance of academic inclusion, accommodating varied interests, and establishing a supportive atmosphere that fosters the interests of visually impaired students. Institutions may empower visually impaired students to succeed intellectually and creatively by providing a curriculum that caters to individual preferences and honors varied academic interests, breaking down barriers, and making important contributions to the academic and cultural environment. The comment on the participant's favorite topic and academic endeavors underscores the major elements identified in both the literature review and the theoretical framework. It emphasizes the value of inclusive education, creative expression, emotional well-being, and supportive institutions in assisting visually impaired students' academic achievement and personal growth. Educational institutions may create a more equal and empowering atmosphere for all students by identifying and embracing the different interests and skills of visually impaired people in accordance with the concepts of inclusive education and Critical Disability Theory.

Another participant (F4) praised and said:

The government improved a lot. And when I got admission to this institution, the teachers did not know how to deal with me. So, they must know how to deal with a special student, they must facilitate them, and they shouldn't feel under pressure after having the admission of visually challenging students in their institute.

However, the participant (F5) said:

The government needs to utilize the special person and assign them roles according to their abilities. Indulge them in practical life. They can even design more disabilities. When they design policies, they

need to enroll the disabled person, so that at least that person knows the difficulties of the disabled person. When I visited Awan e Saddar, I asked several people to give me some suggestions that could be helpful for those who really needed them. And I wrote many suggestions there.

The other participants (F1) said, "*There must be equal job and education opportunities for the visually impaired. One more participant said, " I think the government should take some initiatives for the visually impaired students."* One more participant said, (F2), "*There must be serious focus on IT and accessibility of computer labs*". The last participant (F3) said that they need to offer courses such as computer courses, language courses, and others that would be beneficial for us in excellence centers and universities, too.

The participants' perspectives on government assistance and policies shed light on the problems that visually impaired people experience in obtaining equal opportunities in school and work. It also represents the participants' hopes for a more inclusive and accepting society that recognizes and makes use of the particular qualities of visually impaired people. Let us go over each point in detail: One participant recognizes the government's progress and challenges in aiding visually impaired people, particularly in the context of schooling. This acknowledgement demonstrates that some progress has been made in developing an inclusive educational environment. However, the participant's comment about teachers not understanding how to deal with visually challenged children when they were admitted indicates a recurrent issue. It emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts to educate educators about the needs of visually impaired children and to provide them with the necessary training and resources to guarantee effective inclusion. On the other hand, the participant's notion of utilizing the abilities of visually impaired people and incorporating them into practical life reflects the desire for a more inclusive and varied workforce and society. This remark emphasizes the necessity of recognizing visually impaired people's abilities and potential in addition to their handicap. Employers and governments may tap into the unique talents and perspectives that visually impaired people can contribute to many sectors and businesses by allocating responsibilities that fit their abilities and providing appropriate accommodations.

### **Interpersonal Skills**

The interviews indicate a wide range of additional abilities and talents exhibited by visually impaired people. A participant (S1) mentioned, "*Singing is my best motivation, and the legendary singers, just like Mehdi Hassan Khan and Noor Jahan Sahiba, are the best motivation for me as my hobby is singing.*" This emphasizes the extra talents and interests outside of academics that serve as sources of motivation and resilience. As demonstrated by the interviews, the emergence of varied abilities and interests among visually impaired people demonstrates the depth and variety of their personalities beyond academics. The participants' choice of singing as their most motivating factor, as well as their appreciation for renowned singers such as Mehdi Hassan Khan and Noor Jahan Sahiba, demonstrates the significance of creative activities as a source of inspiration and strength. This illustrates that visually impaired people have a diverse set of interests and activities that contribute significantly to their personal development and emotional well-being.

This observation suggests that encouraging and supporting extracurricular interests and abilities is critical for the overall development of visually impaired people. Creativity, such as singing, may bring a sense of purpose, achievement, and joy. It acts as a source of encouragement, assisting visually impaired people in overcoming obstacles and adversity in their everyday lives. Furthermore, hobbies such as singing provide a form of self-expression, allowing visually impaired people to share their feelings and tales with the rest of the world. The importance of recognizing and encouraging these varied skills goes beyond personal development. It can also improve social connections and inclusion. Participating in extracurricular activities can help visually impaired people interact with others who have similar interests. This promotes a sense of belonging and community, minimizing feelings of loneliness and encouraging social contact. Furthermore, recognizing and appreciating visually

impaired people's abilities in other sectors, such as the arts and music, may challenge preconceptions and encourage a more inclusive approach. By recognizing their accomplishments in a variety of fields, we can dispel myths about the limitations of visual impairment and build a culture of tolerance and inclusion. The discovery of new abilities and interests among visually impaired people emphasizes the significance of comprehensive assistance that extends beyond academics. Encouragement and support for extracurricular activities such as singing and other creative endeavors can improve personal development, resilience, and social connections. Society must recognize and celebrate the unique capabilities of visually impaired people, contributing to a more inclusive and empowered environment in which everyone's abilities are recognized and cherished. Butler et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of providing complete assistance for visually impaired students, which includes recognizing and supporting their extracurricular interests and talents, in their literature review. According to Butler et al.'s study, the participants' remarks on singing as a motivating element highlight the importance of creative activities for personal growth and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the Critical Disability Theory (CDT) theoretical framework emphasizes the necessity of confronting society's assumptions and stereotypes concerning disability (Manitsa and Doikou, 2022). Participants' admiration for renowned singers such as Mehdi Hassan Khan and Noor Jahan Sahiba exemplifies how, as suggested by CDT, recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of visually impaired individuals in various fields, including arts and music, can challenge preconceptions and foster a more inclusive approach. In addition, according to the research study, sponsoring extracurricular activities and hobbies might help visually impaired people build social relationships and a sense of community (Ali, 2015). The participants' observation that singing and other artistic endeavors may lead to interactions with like-minded people underlines the value of building social relationships through extracurricular engagement, as highlighted in Ali's study.

The literature study additionally stresses the importance of artistic activities for visually impaired people in terms of self-expression and personal fulfillment (Pereira and da Silva, 2018). The participants' mention of singing as a pastime that provides a feeling of purpose and joy coincides with Pereira and da Silva's study, which suggests that hobbies can serve as sources of encouragement and emotional well-being. Furthermore, respondents' engagement in extracurricular activities varies. A respondent (F5) stated, "*Some sports festivals.*" While another one mentioned, "*a specific interest in archery, stating, I would love to play archery, and it's my favorite sport.*" These examples demonstrate the different interests and abilities of visually impaired people. As seen by the interviews, the broad participation of visually impaired respondents in extracurricular activities demonstrates each participant's distinctiveness and unique interests. While one person described participating in "some sports festivals," showing a general interest in sports without naming a specific activity, another participant revealed a tremendous enthusiasm for archery, describing it as their favorite sport. These diverse examples demonstrate the wide range of interests and talents possessed by visually impaired people, reflecting their diverse personalities and preferences.

This observation shows that visually impaired people, like any other group, have a diverse range of interests and abilities that are not primarily characterized by their visual issues. The inclusion of "some sports festivals" by the participant implies a willingness to engage in a variety of sporting events, implying a broad love for physical activity. The respondent's unique interest in archery, on the other hand, demonstrates a more focused enthusiasm for a certain sport, exhibiting devotion and aptitude in that area. The importance of these many interests stems from the opportunities they provide for personal development and social engagement. Participating in extracurricular activities promotes physical fitness, self-confidence, and a sense of success. Furthermore, it provides opportunities to interact with people who have similar interests, providing a sense of camaraderie and support. Participating in sports festivals or following a favorite activity, such as archery, provides stress reduction and pleasure for visually impaired people in the same way that it does for everyone else.

To break down preconceptions and foster diversity, it is critical to recognize and appreciate these various interests and skills. By recognizing the diverse extracurricular activities of visually impaired people, society may welcome their unique contributions while challenging any preconceived notions about their limits. This inclusive approach can result in a more supportive and understanding workplace, allowing visually impaired people to thrive and attain their full potential. The different participation of visually impaired individuals in extracurricular activities illustrates the group's distinctiveness and diversity. Their interests range from general sports participation to specialized passions such as archery, emphasizing the necessity of recognizing and nurturing their diverse abilities. Encouraging and facilitating involvement in extracurricular activities can contribute to personal growth, social integration, and a more inclusive society that values the talents and potential of visually impaired people.

The majority of participants were interested in Archery and cricket. The dimensions of playing cricket change for each player; some recreation play, while others play to relieve stress via sports. Fewer people are interested in sports. They stated that it is a leisure activity and that they are not interested. The participant's determination to participate in archery, despite the limitations of distance from home, demonstrates their love for the activity. Their resolve to engage in cricket, inspired by a real passion for the game and the pleasure of joining others in the game, illustrates the positive influence of sports as a source of friendship and joy for visually impaired people. It is worth emphasizing that, while the majority of participants are enthusiastic about sports, some people are not. Their view of sports as a leisure activity implies that they may prefer other types of amusement or have interests other than sports. This spectrum of interests emphasizes the significance of offering a variety of extracurricular alternatives, not only athletics, to satisfy the many likes and hobbies of visually impaired kids. Based on these observations, it is clear that sports play an important role in the lives of visually impaired people, not only by offering physical exercise and recreational possibilities but also by encouraging social contacts and a sense of belonging. Participation in sports at all levels illustrates visually impaired persons' tenacity and talents in overcoming hurdles and thriving in a variety of professions. Overall, the interviews show that visually challenged people have a wide range of abilities and interests outside of academia. Participating in extracurricular activities and hobbies promotes not just personal development but also social relationships and general well-being. Recognizing and encouraging these abilities and interests can help create a more inclusive and empowering environment for visually impaired students and teachers in higher education. To guarantee that visually impaired people may live meaningful and enriched lives, it is critical to continue offering opportunities for the development of interpersonal skills and the cultivation of varied abilities. The findings show that the majority of visually impaired teachers and students are willing to play different sports as per their interests, and their institutions are enrolling them in sports now.

### **Social Interactions**

The subject of social interactions throws light on visually impaired people's self-sufficiency and independence. The participant's satisfaction with the institution's helpful behavior and the encouragement received from the department chairman demonstrate how good interactions with the academic environment led to their self-actualization. This implies that when institutions create a welcoming and inclusive environment for visually impaired students, they feel more encouraged to achieve their academic and personal objectives, generating a sense of belonging and self-assurance. A participant stated, *"I am satisfied with the supportive behavior of the institution. Most of the time, I faced encouragement from the chairman of the department."* This demonstrates how good interactions with the institution aid in their self-actualization. Another responder emphasized their self-reliance in coping with difficult conditions, stating, *"I tried to share my worries with my friend, and sometimes I start crying or stay quiet."* This shows how vision-challenged people overcome obstacles on their own. Furthermore, the emphasis on self-reliance in dealing with difficult situations emphasizes

visually impaired people's perseverance. The openness of the participant to communicate their concerns with a friend, as well as their ability to cope with emotions such as sobbing or being silent, indicates their ability to manage hurdles autonomously. This self-sufficiency is a key trait that allows individuals to overcome adversity and tackle the obstacles provided by their visual impairment with fortitude and persistence. Based on these findings, it is clear that the quality of social interactions and support systems inside educational institutions has a substantial influence on the well-being and overall academic experience of visually impaired students. Positive interactions, support, and understanding from instructors and peers help them grow emotionally and psychologically, promoting acceptance and confidence. Their capacity to manage challenging situations autonomously, on the other hand, demonstrates their perseverance and flexibility. The consequences of these findings imply that educational institutions should prioritize building a friendly and inclusive atmosphere that recognizes and accommodates visually impaired students' particular requirements. Providing emotional support, establishing pleasant connections, and supporting self-advocacy may all help them grow and succeed. Additionally, staff and student awareness and sensitivity training may build empathy and understanding, improving social interactions and lowering stigma.

The topic of social interactions highlights the importance of supportive and pleasant connections in the lives of visually impaired people. A supportive academic atmosphere that encourages self-reliance and independence supports personal growth and equips students to succeed in the face of adversity. By recognizing the importance of social relationships, institutions may provide an inclusive and empowering environment, allowing visually impaired students to achieve academically and enjoy satisfying lives. The findings on social interactions among visually impaired people are consistent with the ideas mentioned in the literature review and theoretical framework. The research emphasizes the relevance of a supportive academic environment and pleasant connections with the institution and peers. In studies, creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for visually impaired people has been found to increase self-esteem and academic success (Sharma et al., 2016). The participant's satisfaction with the institution's supportive behavior and the encouragement received from the department chairman demonstrate the positive influence of such interactions on their self-actualization and general well-being. Furthermore, the focus on self-reliance and coping with challenging situations among visually impaired people is consistent with the empowerment and resilience ideas mentioned in the theoretical framework. Critical Disability Theory (CDT) highlights the significance of identifying and appreciating persons with disabilities' talents and characteristics, particularly their potential for self-reliance and resilience (Manitsa and Doikou, 2022). The openness of the participant to express their concerns with a friend, as well as their capacity to manage emotions on their own, indicates their resilience and adaptability in negotiating the hurdles given by their visual impairment. These findings underscore the necessity for educational institutions to prioritize creating a friendly and inclusive environment for visually impaired students. Institutions can improve the emotional and psychological growth of visually impaired students by developing good connections and understanding among teachers and peers (Butler et al., 2017). The findings on social interactions among visually impaired people highlight the importance of a strong academic environment and positive relationships in their lives. We can understand how establishing inclusive and empowering settings that recognize individual talents and promote self-reliance can help the well-being and academic achievement of visually impaired students by tying these findings to the literature review and theoretical framework. Educational institutions may help create such settings by emphasizing the significance of empathy, understanding, and support in assisting visually impaired students to prosper and lead satisfying lives (Sharma et al., 2016).

The experiences and views of the participants on family support and institutional behavior represent the complexities and problems experienced by visually impaired students in higher education. These findings are consistent with the discussion of the challenges and possibilities faced by visually impaired students in the literature review, as well as the principles of the Critical Disability Theory

(CDT) theoretical framework. Understanding and addressing the social and environmental issues that affect visually impaired people allows educational institutions to build an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes academic performance and emotional well-being for all students. The literature analysis and theoretical framework offer useful insights into the obstacles and possibilities that visually impaired students encounter in higher education. Barriers noted in the research include concerns with accessibility, a lack of staff training, and a non-inclusive physical setting. The Critical Disability Theory (CDT) concepts emphasize the need for inclusive practices, the respect of disabled people's voices, and the need to overcome structural barriers in order to establish a helpful educational environment. Furthermore, both the literature and the participants' remarks emphasize the importance of family support in developing emotional well-being and academic achievement for visually impaired kids. Institutions may better promote the academic and personal progress of visually impaired students in higher education by identifying and resolving these issues, as well as building supportive social and educational environments.

The research also supports the necessity of social support from family and institutions for visually impaired people. Positive relationships with instructors, classmates, and family members, as evidenced by the interviews, contribute to their emotional well-being and academic performance. The findings of this study add to the body of knowledge by offering a complete grasp of the experiences and obstacles experienced by visually impaired students in higher education institutions. Policymakers, educators, and institutions trying to build a more inclusive and supportive environment for visually impaired students can benefit from the themes of institutional support, interpersonal skills, and social connections. The study emphasizes the importance of more extensive institutional policies and teacher training programs to accommodate the special requirements of visually impaired people. Furthermore, the efficient use of assistive technology, as well as the acknowledgement of varied abilities and interests, can contribute to a more enriching learning experience for these children. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of social contacts and support structures in promoting personal growth and resilience in visually impaired people. This emphasizes the need to foster a healthy and inclusive social atmosphere in educational institutions. In conclusion, the findings of this study contribute significantly to the fields of inclusive education and disability studies by providing insights into the experiences and needs of visually impaired students in higher education. This research provides a basis for building more effective and inclusive policies and practices to help visually impaired students in their academic journey by bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and empirical findings.

## **Conclusion**

This study gives insight into the experiences and obstacles that visually impaired students confront in higher education. A thorough examination of institutional support, interpersonal skills, and social interactions yielded useful insights to create greater knowledge of the unique path of visually impaired students and instructors. The interview findings offered a compelling story, emphasizing the crucial role of institutional assistance in molding the educational experience of visually impaired people. From assistive technology to teacher training, creating a conducive learning environment has proven critical to enabling visually impaired kids to succeed academically and psychologically. Moreover, the participants' investigation of interpersonal skills revealed a rich tapestry of abilities and interests outside of academics. These many interests serve as sources of motivation as well as possibilities for social engagement and personal improvement, emphasizing the complex character of visually impaired people. Furthermore, the assessment of interpersonal skills by the participants revealed a complex tapestry of abilities and interests outside of academics. These many interests serve as sources of inspiration as well as opportunities for social participation and personal growth, highlighting the complex nature of visually impaired people. It emphasizes the significance of developing comprehensive policies and practices that promote equitable access, accommodation, and

participation for visually impaired students in higher education. Finally, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge in the field of disability studies by providing valuable insights that can help policymakers, educators, and institutions create a more inclusive and empowering educational environment for visually impaired students and teachers. This study concluded that a collaborative effort between policymakers, educational institutions, and the broader community is required to ensure that visually impaired people can fully participate, prosper, and enrich our society through their unique talents and perspectives. We can jointly strive towards a future where every individual, regardless of visual ability, may prosper and contribute to a more varied and peaceful society by adopting the ideals of inclusion, accessibility, and empathy.

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### **Disclosure of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no competing interests associated with this study.

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