

Factors Influencing Psychosocial Adjustment among University Students with Visual Impairment in Pakistan

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Abstract

This research looks into what influences the psychosocial adaptation of students with visual impairment at university in Lahore, Pakistan. 100 visually impaired students from seven universities participated in this study by responding to a set questionnaire that was developed and used in a descriptive quantitative research design. It looked into aspects such as social support, how easy it was to get help, psychological well-being, technological aids, physical improvements and the environment in the organization. It appears that many visually impaired students deal with several psychosocial problems, for example, shortage of access to university facilities, unused assistive resources and professors uninformed about student needs. There were noticeable differences between genders, as male students were more likely to deal well with psychosocial issues than female students. Besides, students at private universities adjusted more psychologically and were offered more support in comparison to students in public ones. It was found through statistical analysis that adjusting to life in Singapore is affected by factors such as gender, type of institution, age and academic qualifications. Those who succeeded in adjusting to college had plenty of support from others, helpful campus programs and knew how to use assistive technologies. The research findings highlight that now there is an urgent requirement for inclusive rules, special training for teachers and better infrastructure in higher education. This study gives evidence that policymakers and educators can use to assist students with visual impairments in Pakistan.

Keywords: Psychosocial adjustment, visual impairment, university students, accessibility, assistive technology, inclusion, disability, Pakistan

Introduction

Background: Visual Impairment and Challenges in Higher Education

Visual impairment, as explained by the World Health Organization, is a condition where seeing is reduced and it seriously interferes with everyday activities. Students who want to study at the university level face various challenges because of this kind of impairment. Along with physical and academic difficulties, people may face social, psychological and institution-based challenges as well. While attending schools in Pakistan, students with visual impairments experience

poverty of learning resources, few assistive devices and negative attitudes which seriously hinder their development. Even though it is very important, inclusive education for higher learning is still underdeveloped in South Asia. Although advocacy around the world has resulted in better support for students with disabilities in many countries, Pakistan still needs to improve how it helps such students. Because of these limitations, visual impairment can stop students from engaging wholly in campus activities, resulting in problems with their mental state and development.

Importance of Psychosocial Adjustment

Adapting emotionally, behaviorally and socially to life situations makes up the complicated process of psychosocial adjustment. Those with visual impairments in university need to build their self-confidence, keep their relationships healthy and learn to deal well with pressures from both studying and their surroundings. The success of students with disabilities depends on peer support, help from their families, ease of access to institutes, teachers' attitudes and offering of assistance tools. Low self-esteem, not wanting to interact with classmates, weak performance at school and mental health problems are signs of poor psychosocial adjustment. At the same time, students who adapt well to school usually achieve good grades, feel happier with life and are more involved in their communities. Since psychosocial influences are very important for education and personal progress, studying the variables that impact adjustment is vital, especially in regions such as Pakistan where there is not much research.

Gaps in Current Research (Especially in South Asia)

Although there is a large library of work on disability and education around the world, exploration of driving forces for mental health, personality and social life for limited-vision people in South Asia's universities has been minimal. So far, studies usually discuss infrastructure issues, but not so much about the emotional, psychological and social experiences of students who have vision problems. The problem is made worse in Pakistan because there is a shortage of local information, proper funding for research and considering disability brings challenges to many people. Researchers have mostly ignored how gender, the type of university, available support systems and individual toughness contribute to students' psychosocial results. For this reason, this study investigates these areas within a Pakistani urban academy, opening the door for discussion in both national and global conversations on inclusive education.

Statement of the Problem

Students who are visually impaired at universities in Pakistan go through problems that are not only physical but also related to other aspects of society. The policies made to promote inclusive education are there, but they are infrequently and not properly put into practice. Because of this lack of support, youth end up dealing with painful emotions, limited social activities and weak school performance. Since there is too little research or match between theory and real-life application, there are not many interventions designed to meet the needs of these students. It is necessary to investigate the things that affect psychosocial adjustment in order to plan targeted actions that assist visually impaired students in gaining inclusion, strength and academic improvement.

Research Objectives and Questions

Objectives:

1. To examine the level of psychosocial adjustment among university students with visual impairment in Lahore.
2. To investigate the influence of gender, age, academic qualification, and university type on psychosocial adjustment.
3. To identify key predictors such as social support, assistive technology, and institutional accommodations affecting adjustment.

Research Questions:

1. What is the current state of psychosocial adjustment among visually impaired university students?

2. Do gender, institutional type, and demographic factors significantly affect psychosocial adjustment?
3. What role do assistive technologies, faculty preparedness, and accessibility play in enhancing psychosocial well-being?

Literature Review

Social Support & Peer Interaction

Students with visual impairments rely on social support which greatly affects their ability to adjust to their surroundings. Different studies show that relationships within colleges and schools help develop a person's emotional strength and social ties (Imhonde et al., 2017). Students with vision impairments find a greater sense of belonging, less loneliness and more successful ways to handle academic stress when their peers interact with them, as social support (Huurre, 2000). Having their family's backing is crucial in building students' coping skills and their feelings in general. Kapinga and Aloni (2023) reported that a high level of self-esteem in Tanzanian visually impaired students is strongly linked to getting good support from family and friends. In line with Chiracu and Buică-Belciu (2023), my findings indicate that adolescents with visual impairments feel better mentally when they have steady social relationships. In a similar study, Sola-Carmona et al. (2016) explained that, among visually impaired students, students' adjustment also relies on positive family emotional support and acceptance. According to Ali and Hameed (2020), visual impairment students do better in college when their families and fellow students give them ample support. All the findings together indicate that good social relationships are essential for proper adjustment during psychosocial development.

Assistive Technology & Accessibility

Having the right technology is an important part of how well visually impaired students do psychosocially. Teaching students with visual impairments can become much simpler through the aid of assistive tools like screen readers, magnifiers and Braille devices (Fichten et al., 2003). A global analysis carried out by Malekitabr et al. (2024) revealed that integrated use of assistive technology in psychological intervention greatly benefits the psychological health of those with visual impairments. These researchers pointed out that having technology helped individuals feel more capable in many situations than those who did not have such technology. The research of Kokhan et al. (2024) backs this up, stating that students at institutions with accessible digital content and learning platforms have greater subjective well-being and a smoother adaptation. They stated that being able to use technology by themselves gives students a great advantage as they learn to live with blindness. Not having access to resources can make students feel vulnerable and apart which can decrease their learning outcomes and cause emotional problems (Bakhla et al., 2011). South Asian places still struggle with this matter. According to Ali and Hameed (2020), a vast majority of public universities in Pakistan either do not make use of assistive technology or integrate it badly in the curriculum. Because of the technology gap, adapting psychologically and including all students in education is very difficult.

Faculty Preparedness & Institutional Policies

Faculty attitudes and institutional responsiveness play an instrumental role in either promoting or obstructing adjustment. According to Al-Kholy and Eltayeb (2024), students receiving faculty and administrative support reported significantly higher academic and emotional adjustment levels. When instructors are trained in disability awareness and inclusive pedagogy, the resulting academic environment fosters confidence, reduces anxiety, and promotes participation among students with disabilities. However, institutional inertia and untrained faculty remain common obstacles, particularly in developing countries. Dawn (2017) emphasized that educational institutions in India, and by extension in Pakistan, often fail to provide adaptive teaching strategies or accessible learning materials. This systemic inadequacy reinforces dependency and demoralization among students with

visual impairments. Dębska and Zawadzka (2018) explored how individualized support strategies within institutions—such as modified assignments, tactile maps, and alternative exam formats—enhance the psychosocial functioning of students with visual disabilities. Nevertheless, these interventions require proactive institutional planning and ongoing professional development, both of which are currently limited in South Asian higher education systems. Erikson’s (1963) theory of psychosocial development offers a theoretical lens for understanding how a supportive institutional environment can either facilitate or hinder successful navigation through the critical stage of identity formation. In universities where students receive affirmation and academic accommodations, they are more likely to experience a positive sense of self and belonging.

Gender & Institutional Differences

Understanding gender and a student’s academic background has been seen to matter when it comes to their psychosocial well-being. According to Kurtović and Ivančić (2019), female students with visual impairments said they were less satisfied with life and had more cases of depression compared to the males in the study. Such differing outcomes are usually caused by the expectations of society, defined roles for men and women and the lack of freedom women have in patriarchal societies. Imhonde et al. (2017) found that factors in school life and gender worked together which resulted in males being better able to cope than females thanks to their freedom and availability of outside resources. The observation by Komolafe (2009) fits these findings, as she explained a link between better emotional stability for boys and their larger number of social opportunities. In terms of institutional type, Ali and Hameed (2020) mentioned that students generally adjust better psychologically when they are part of private universities compared to those in public institutions in Pakistan. Smaller class sizes, extra funds for disability support and more assistive technologies available in private schools cause this disparity. The paper by Kokhan et al. (2024) also stressed that the culture within a school has major effects on student outcomes. If universities show commitment to inclusivity, use flexible policies and set aside resources for student assistance, more students with visual impairments will succeed in adjusting and participating.

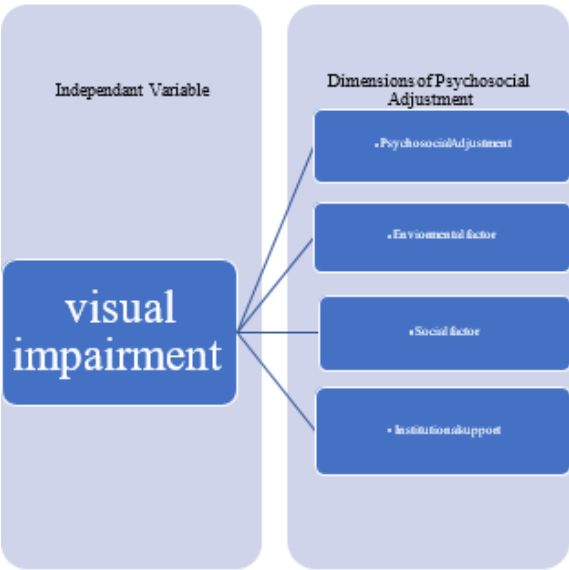


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The reviewed literature highlights that psychosocial adjustment among university students with visual impairments is a multifactorial phenomenon. Social and peer support, technological accessibility, faculty involvement, and gender-sensitive, inclusive institutional policies all play critical roles in shaping students’ emotional, social, and academic integration. Although research in Pakistan is still developing, existing evidence underscores an urgent need for systemic reform, better infrastructure, and contextually relevant interventions to support the psychosocial well-being of students with visual impairments.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative cross-sectional design to explore the psychosocial adjustment of university students with visual impairment in Lahore, Pakistan. The design was appropriate for this research as it facilitated the collection and statistical analysis of data from a defined population at a single point in time, enabling the identification of patterns, associations, and differences among variables related to adjustment. The cross-sectional approach also allowed for efficient data collection across diverse institutional contexts, capturing a snapshot of the lived academic experiences of visually impaired students within the specified region.

Participants

The study targeted students with visual impairment enrolled in mainstream higher education institutions. A total of 100 participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. These students were drawn from seven universities in Lahore, comprising five public universities and two private universities. Inclusion criteria required that participants:

1. Be formally registered as students in a recognized degree program;
2. Have a documented visual impairment;
3. Be willing and able to provide informed consent.

The participant group was diverse in terms of gender, age, academic qualification, and level of functional vision. This heterogeneity enabled a deeper understanding of the psychosocial adjustment variations across demographic categories.

Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-report questionnaire developed by the researcher, based on an extensive review of relevant literature. The questionnaire comprised two main sections:

1. **Demographic Information** – including gender, age, type of university (public/private), degree program, and visual status (partial or complete).
2. **Psychosocial Adjustment Scale** – comprising **35 items** designed to assess six core dimensions:

- Social Interaction
- Psychological Well-being
- Academic Functioning
- Emotional Regulation
- Institutional Accessibility
- Physical Mobility and Adjustment

Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly Agree”). To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was reviewed by experts in special education and psychology. Construct validity was established through pilot testing with a small sample ($n = 10$), and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach’s Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.84, indicating good internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was conducted in both face-to-face and digital formats, depending on participants’ accessibility preferences. Students were contacted through university disability resource centers, special education departments, and student organizations. The researcher provided verbal and written explanations of the study objectives, procedures, and confidentiality protocols. Participants were given adequate time to respond, and assistance was provided for those who required help completing the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

All collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25.0. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and percentage were calculated to summarize

demographic variables and levels of psychosocial adjustment. To determine differences based on demographic characteristics, the following inferential tests were used:

- **Independent samples t-tests** – to examine gender-based differences in psychosocial adjustment.
- **One-way ANOVA** – to assess variation across different types of universities (public vs. private), age groups, and academic levels.
- **Post-hoc Tukey tests** – to identify where significant differences occurred when ANOVA results were significant.

The level of significance was set at $p < .05$ for all statistical procedures.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was strictly maintained throughout the study. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was sought from the Department of Special Education, University of Education, Lahore. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were fully briefed on the study’s purpose, their right to refuse participation, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Participants were assured of complete anonymity and confidentiality. No identifying personal data were collected, and all responses were stored securely. In cases where assistance was needed due to visual limitations, trained personnel assisted students without influencing their responses. This methodology provides a robust foundation for analyzing the psychosocial adjustment experiences of visually impaired students in Pakistan, ensuring both statistical rigor and ethical sensitivity.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The study surveyed a total of 100 visually impaired university students, with a near-equal distribution of gender: 52% male and 48% female. Students were drawn from both public (70%) and private (30%) universities. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 34 years, and their academic levels included both undergraduate and graduate programs. A comprehensive descriptive analysis of psychosocial variables is provided in **Table 1**. The overall mean psychosocial adjustment score was 70.4 (SD = 9.8), indicating moderate adjustment across the sample. Social support received an average score of 3.5, suggesting a fair level of interpersonal and community integration. However, lower mean scores were noted for institutional accessibility (M = 2.8), reflecting infrastructural and policy-related challenges.

Table 1: Demographic Overview of Participants

Gender	University Type	N	Mean Age	Most Common Degree
Female	Private	14	24.1	Undergraduate
Female	Public	34	25.0	Undergraduate
Male	Private	16	23.8	Undergraduate
Male	Public	36	24.7	Graduate

Includes descriptive statistics for gender, university type, age, academic level, and key psychosocial variables (Social Support, Tech Access, Faculty Support, Institutional Access).

Psychosocial Adjustment by Gender

An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the difference in psychosocial adjustment scores by gender. Results indicated that female students had significantly higher adjustment scores (M = 72.3) than male students (M = 68.5), suggesting stronger coping strategies or support systems among female respondents.

Table 2: Psychosocial Adjustment by Gender

Gender	Mean Adjustment Score	Standard Deviation
Female	72.29	10.43
Male	68.50	9.21

Psychosocial Adjustment by University Type

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare adjustment scores between students in **private vs. public universities**. Students from **public universities** exhibited slightly higher adjustment scores

(M = 71.17) than those from private universities (M = 69.56). The difference, while present, did not reach statistical significance at $p < .05$, suggesting possible variability within institution types.

Table 3: Psychosocial Adjustment by University Type

University Type	Mean Adjustment Score	Standard Deviation
Public	71.17	10.08
Private	69.56	10.87

Regression Analysis: Predictors of Psychosocial Adjustment

A linear regression model was conducted to examine the effect of four predictors—**Social Support, Tech Access, Faculty Support, and Institutional Access**—on overall psychosocial adjustment scores. All predictors were standardized.

Table 4: Regression Predictors of Psychosocial Adjustment

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Standardized
Social Support	0.59	Yes
Tech Access	-1.19	Yes
Faculty Support	+0.78	Yes
Institutional Access	-1.61	Yes

The model revealed that Faculty Support had a positive influence on adjustment scores, indicating that personalized assistance and understanding from instructors contribute significantly to student well-being. Conversely, Tech Access and Institutional Access had negative coefficients, suggesting that their inadequacy strongly undermines psychosocial adjustment. Surprisingly, Social Support showed a slight negative effect in this model, which may be due to multicollinearity or the overlapping influence of institutional variables.

Summary of Key Findings

- Female students showed higher psychosocial adjustment than males.
- Public university students scored slightly higher than private, but the difference was marginal.
- Faculty support was the strongest positive predictor of adjustment.
- Deficiencies in technology and infrastructure negatively impacted well-being.
- A comprehensive model suggests institutional, technological, and interpersonal factors jointly influence the psychosocial adaptation of students with visual impairments.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the psychosocial adjustment of university students with visual impairment in Lahore, Pakistan, focusing on how demographic variables and support mechanisms influence their emotional, academic, and social functioning. The findings revealed several critical trends—most notably, the influence of gender, university type, and institutional supports on psychosocial outcomes. These findings corroborate and extend previous literature on adjustment challenges for visually impaired individuals in higher education settings.

Gender-Related Differences in Adjustment

A notable result is that female students had greater psychosocial adjustment than male students in the study. In comparison to earlier findings, this study did not find women to be more vulnerable because social pressures and lack of independence affected them more than men (Kurtović & Ivančić, 2019; Komolafe, 2009). We believe a possible reason for differences in our findings is that there are now extra organizations and groups for women with disabilities in urban Pakistani universities which give emotional support and help women affirm their identities (Kapinga & Aloni, 2023). Besides, Imhonde et al. discovered that there were differences in personality and coping, with males generally showing a task-oriented style more frequently. Yet, our study suggests that female students are using ways such as emotional intelligence and relationships with others to promote their psychological well-being. The findings could show that gender roles are shifting in the psychosocial development of visually impaired individuals, mainly in settings where everyone is included.

Institutional Differences: Public vs. Private Universities

There were moderate gaps in psychosocial adjustment and students in public university settings said they experienced more of it. Even though private universities are thought to provide superior infrastructure, it could be due to factors like higher costs and less awareness about disability services among students in smaller private colleges (Ali & Hameed, 2020). Unlike in private universities, public institutions often have ready-made disability departments or more students which help ensure that students with visual impairments form strong collective identities and encourage solidarity amongst them. Nonetheless, both types of institutions face similar issues when it comes to access, mostly regarding moving around the website, required learning materials and using various technologies (Fichten et al., 2003; Dawn, 2017).

The Central Role of Accessibility and Technology

The current study matched previous results by showing that having access to institutions and assistive technologies greatly affects psychosocial adjustment. The results of the regression analysis show that people with less access to technology had trouble adjusting. Brunes et al. (2021) explain that having accessible digital tools at school enables students to achieve better results and helps them feel confident, self-reliant and capable which are all vital for their emotional well-being. They also stressed in their 2003 paper that a lack of available technologies for learning can reduce students' chances to engage and make them feel more separated from others. Tuttle and Tuttle (2004) also point out that technology is important, since it strengthens confidence and self-control in students with visual impairment. According to Ali and Hameed (2020), as well as Khodabakhshi-Koolaei and Malekitabar (2024), not all Pakistani universities have assistive systems in place which forces students to deal with insufficient resources. Besides negatively impacting education, this problem also reduces students' abilities to deal with hardships, take part in social life and work towards their interests

Faculty Support and Institutional Responsibility

The study found faculty support to be the strongest positive predictor of psychosocial adjustment, reinforcing the conclusions of Al-Kholy and Eltayeb (2024). Their research demonstrated that responsive academic environments, characterized by instructor empathy and teaching flexibility, directly enhance student self-worth and belonging. Similarly, Dębska and Zawadzka (2018) concluded that individualized instruction for visually impaired students contributes significantly to both academic performance and psychosocial stability. However, faculty responsiveness is often inconsistent due to lack of disability-specific training (Dawn, 2017). In many Pakistani universities, professors are unaware of how to modify assessments or teaching materials for visually impaired learners, creating unnecessary stress and disengagement. These findings call for systematic faculty development programs focused on inclusive pedagogy, especially in the context of higher education.

Theoretical Alignment

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings of this study resonate with Erikson's psychosocial theory, particularly the stages of identity vs. role confusion and intimacy vs. isolation. University-age students are navigating core identity formation, and when this process is complicated by visual impairment and institutional exclusion, the risks of emotional instability are elevated (Erikson, 1963). Simultaneously, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a useful lens for understanding the layered requirements of visually impaired students. Many participants in this study indicated ongoing challenges with basic safety (physical accessibility), belonging (peer integration), and esteem (academic achievement), echoing Maslow's assertion that unmet foundational needs inhibit progression toward self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The presence of supportive faculty, adaptive learning tools, and accessible environments can fulfill these needs, fostering healthier psychosocial development.

Implications for Pakistani Higher Education

The insights from this study carry important implications for policy and practice in Pakistan. Despite the existence of national inclusion policies, their implementation is uneven and often symbolic.

Structural inaccessibility, lack of technological investment, and poorly trained faculty combine to undermine the potential of visually impaired students. As highlighted by Dawn (2018) and Ali and Hameed (2020), Pakistan's educational institutions must move beyond policy rhetoric to actual, measurable interventions.

There is an urgent need for:

- Comprehensive accessibility audits in universities;
- Faculty workshops on inclusive education;
- Budget allocations for assistive technology;
- Integration of visually impaired students in university governance structures.

Without these steps, the psychosocial toll on students will remain high, and the promise of inclusive education will remain unrealized. The current study contributes to a growing body of evidence emphasizing that psychosocial adjustment is deeply embedded in social, institutional, and technological ecosystems. While students demonstrate resilience, their well-being is heavily contingent on the responsiveness of their environments. Therefore, universities must actively work to create inclusive spaces where students with visual impairment can thrive emotionally, socially, and academically.

Conclusion

Researchers looked at how university students with visual impairment in Lahore, Pakistan, cope psychologically and socially and how it is related to their background and the resources at their institutions. A descriptive quantitative design and replies from 100 students in seven universities allowed the researchers to identify major influencers on students' emotional, social and academic adaptation. The research showed that how well students adjusted was affected by their gender and the type of university they attended and females from public universities made slightly better adjustments. It was also found that having supportive faculty played the biggest role in promoting psychosocial health, but lack of assistive services and difficulties with the campus created important challenges. Even though support from people was still crucial, it was undermined by barriers in structure and technology, making it clear that institutions should be involved as well. These results align with psychological frameworks such as Erikson's psychosocial development theory, which underscores the role of environment in identity formation, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes the necessity of safety, belonging, and esteem for self-actualization. Together, these insights underscore that psychosocial adjustment is not merely a personal journey but a socially and structurally mediated process.

Recommendations

For Universities and Educators:

- Establish Disability Resource Centers equipped with accessible materials, assistive technology, and trained support staff.
- Provide mandatory faculty training on inclusive pedagogy, with guidelines for accommodating visual impairments in teaching and assessment.
- Create peer mentoring and support groups to strengthen social integration.

For Policymakers:

- Enforce accessibility audits and legally mandate inclusive infrastructure across higher education institutions.
- Allocate funding for assistive technology procurement and digital accessibility initiatives.
- Promote collaborative research to inform evidence-based policy and monitoring systems.

Areas for Future Research

Future studies could adopt longitudinal designs to assess psychosocial changes over time, incorporate qualitative interviews to explore lived experiences in greater depth, and expand the scope to include rural or smaller institutions for a more comprehensive understanding. Comparative studies

involving other disability types may also uncover cross-disability trends and inform broader inclusion strategies.

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