

The Unseen Path: Journey of Blind Adolescents

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Abstract- *The study called "The Path: Journey of Blind Adolescents" is about what blind teenagers go through every day. This is a time for them because they are growing up and they have to deal with a lot of things like not being able to move around easily not being able to go to school like other kids and not being able to make friends. The study wants to know how being blind affects their life how they feel, who they hang out with and what they want to be when they grow up. The present study was conducted among 50 adolescents, comprising 25 boys and 25 girls, from two schools located in Vadodara district, Gujarat. The researcher collected data through a structured questionnaire and recorded the responses provided by the participants. The study focused on understanding various aspects of their lives, including the challenges they face in learning, their sense of belonging, the support received from their families, the use of assistive technology, and their level of self-confidence and self-perception. What the study found out is that even though blind teenagers have a lot of problems like not being able to get around not being able to understand what they are learning they are really good at dealing with these problems. They can do things on their own. They have big dreams. Their family, teachers and special technology help them feel more confident and do better. The study also says that we need to make things easier for them to get around make sure they can go to school like kids and tell people more about what it is like to be blind so they do not treat them badly. This study helps us understand what life is like for teenagers and it shows us that we need to be kind and helpful so they can grow up and be independent and happy. The study is about blind adolescents and how we can help them have a better life. Blind adolescents need our support. We need to make sure they have the same chances, as everyone else.*

Index Terms- *Blind Adolescents, Visual Impairment, Inclusion, Social Work, Education, Accessibility, Adolescence, Assistive Technology*

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a deal for people. It is the time when our bodies grow fast and our feelings change a lot. We also start to make friends and figure out who we

are. For teenagers who're blind this time can be even tougher. They have to deal with not being able to see which makes it hard for them to get around learn things and make friends. Blindness can happen when someone is born or it can happen later because of something like an accident or a sickness. Either way it is a change that they have to get used to.

Vision is really important for people. It helps us understand the world and know what is going on around us. We use our eyes to recognize things move around and know how other people are feeling. When someone is blind they have to find ways to do these things. They might use their ears, sense of touch or other ways to know what is going on. Even though it can be tough many blind teenagers are really good at dealing with the challenges they face. They use their senses to get around and learn new things. However they also have to deal with people not understanding them or treating them differently. This can make them feel left out alone and not as confident.

Sometimes the people who care about them can be too protective which can also make it hard for them to be independent. The good news is that blind teenagers are strong and can adapt really well when they get the right help. If their family is supportive and they have teachers and friends they can do really well. Schools can also make a difference by making sure that blind teenagers have the same chances as everyone else.

This study is about understanding what life is like for teenagers. It looks at the challenges they face every day how they deal with those challenges and what they hope for their future. It also wants to show that blind teenagers are capable and strong and that they can do things if we all work together to help them. We all have a responsibility to make sure that blind teenagers have the chances as everyone else to live happy and independent lives. Blind adolescents have

to deal with a lot of things that other teenagers do not have to deal with. Blind adolescents need our help to make sure they can do everything they want to do. Blind adolescents are just, like everyone they want to be happy and have fun.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Blindness and visual impairment are problems that affect people all around the world. These conditions make it hard for people to do things and interact with the world around them. Teenagers who are blind or have trouble seeing face challenges. This is a time in their lives when they are figuring out who they are and trying to become independent. They are also trying to make friends and have relationships with people.

For teenagers who're blind this time can be even harder. They may have trouble getting around going to school and spending time with friends.

In the few years people have been paying more attention to making sure everyone has the same opportunities no matter what their abilities are. Governments have been working to make things more accessible and to help people who're blind or have trouble seeing.. Even with these efforts many blind teenagers still face problems in school when they try to communicate with others and when they try to make friends. They may not have the materials they need to learn they may not have the tools that can help them and people may treat them unfairly.

At the time blind teenagers are also very good at dealing with these challenges. They find ways to learn and interact with the world around them. The people who care about them like their families and friends and the schools they attend play a role in helping them. It is important to understand what their lives are like.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE (ROL)

The Review of Literature (ROL) is an important part of this research as it provides a clear understanding of existing studies and knowledge related to blindness and adolescence. It involves analysing previous research, articles, and findings to understand the challenges, experiences, and developmental aspects

of blind adolescents. In the context of this study, "The Unseen Path: Journey of Blind Adolescents," the ROL helps in exploring areas such as educational barriers, social inclusion, emotional well-being, and coping mechanisms among visually impaired youth. The importance of ROL in this research lies in its ability to identify gaps in existing studies and provide a strong foundation for the present research. It helps in shaping the research objectives, selecting appropriate methods, and connecting the study with relevant theories. Additionally, it ensures that the research is meaningful, avoids duplication, and contributes new insights into the lived experiences of blind adolescents, thereby strengthening the overall quality and relevance of the study.

1.1. Deshen, S., & Deshen, H. (1989). *Managing at home: Relationships between blind parents and sighted children*. *Human Organization*, 48(3), 262–267. has explored the everyday family dynamics of eyeless parents raising sighted children, fastening on how ménage liabilities, caregiving places, and parent – child connections are negotiated. The study illustrates how eyeless parents use adaptive strategies, communication, and cooperation to manage home life effectively.

It challenges deficiency- grounded hypotheticals about blindness by emphasizing capability, adaptability, and the socially constructed nature of reliance rather than disability itself.

1.2. Columna, L., [other authors]. (2017). *Disability and Rehabilitation* has examined the patterns of physical exertion participation among children with visual impairments and their families.

The study highlights the important part of family support, participated conditioning, and accessible surroundings in promoting physical exertion. It also identifies walls similar as lack of inclusive programs and limited community coffers, emphasizing the need for family- centred and inclusive recreational interventions.

1.3. Arndt, K., Lieberman, L., & James, A. (2014). *Supporting the social lives of adolescents who are blind*. Has concentrated on strategies to support the social lives of adolescents who are

eyeless by rephrasing exploration into practical interventions.

The composition emphasizes the part of inclusive academy surroundings, peer support, and structured social openings in reducing insulation. It highlights how preceptors and interpreters can laboriously grease social skill development and meaningful peer connections.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the social and emotional impact of raising a blind child.
2. To analyse how socioeconomic status affects parents ability to access services for their child.
3. To identify how gender influences caregiving responsibilities. (mother vs father roles)
4. To identify the aspirations and future goals parents have for the child and how are these shaped by the available resources.
5. To explore the educational experiences of the children and how blindness affects the socialization and peer relations.
6. To examine the availability of counselling services and psychosocial support to both parents and their child.

V. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study lies in its focus on understanding the lived experiences of blind adolescents, a group that is often underrepresented in research and policy discussions. By highlighting their challenges and strengths, the study contributes to creating awareness about the realities faced by visually impaired youth.

- Promotes Awareness: The study helps in increasing understanding about the difficulties faced by blind adolescents in education, mobility, and social interaction.
- Supports Inclusive Education: It provides insights that can help schools and institutions improve inclusive practices and accessibility.
- Strengthens Social Work Practice: The findings are useful for social workers to

design better interventions, counselling strategies, and support systems.

- Highlights Role of Family and Society: It emphasizes the importance of support from family, teachers, and peers in building confidence and independence.
- Promotes Inclusion and Equality: The study encourages society to move toward acceptance, equal opportunities, and barrier-free environments.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology outlines the systematic approach adopted to conduct the study on blind adolescents. It includes the research design, area of study, sampling method, tools of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

1. Research Design

The present study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

- The quantitative method helps in collecting structured data through questionnaires for measurable analysis.
- The qualitative method helps in understanding the lived experiences, emotions, and personal perspectives of blind adolescents through one-on-one interaction.

2. Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Vadodara district, Gujarat, specifically in:

- Surabhi Lions Girls School (for visually impaired girls)
- Samaj Suraksha Sankul (for visually impaired boys)

These institutions were selected as they provide education and support to blind adolescents.

3. Sample Size and Sampling Method

- Sample Size: 50 blind adolescents
 - 25 female respondents
 - 25 male respondents

• Sampling Method:

The study used purposive sampling, where participants were selected based on specific criteria:

- Being visually impaired/blind
- Falling within the adolescent age group
- Enrolled in the selected institutions

4. Tools for Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire created through Google Forms.

- The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with each respondent.
- Questions were asked verbally, and responses were filled by the researcher in the Google Form.
- This method ensured:
 - Better understanding for visually impaired participants
 - Accuracy in responses
 - Comfort and clarity during interaction

VII. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Table.1. The following table and pie chart present the gender-wise classification of respondents.

GENDER		
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	25	50%
Female	25	50%
Prefer not to say	0	0%
TOTAL	50	100%

Table 1.1

Interpretation: - The above table and pie-chart demonstrate the allocation of respondents based on their gender. Out of 50 respondents, 25 respondents i.e. 50% are male and other 25 respondents i.e. 50% are female.

Shows that the study has maintained an equal level of presentation of both male and female adolescents. This way it can help to ensure that their perspectives and experiences are reflected in the research findings.

Table.2. The following table and pie chart illustrate the school-wise distribution of respondents.

SCHOOL		
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Surabhi lions	25	50%
Samaj sankul	25	50%
TOTAL	50	100%

Table 1.2

Interpretation: - The above table and pie-chart demonstrate the allocation of respondents based on their School. Out of 50 respondents, 25 respondents i.e. 50% are from Surabhi Lions Girls School and other 25 respondents i.e. 50% are from Samaj Sankul Surakhsha Boys School.

This highlights the study represents respondents from both schools. Balanced participation helps to ensure perspectives and experiences from both the institution

Table.3. The data reflects the regular routine followed by the respondents.

ROUTINE CHALLENGES		
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Mobility and navigating spaces	17	34%
Accessing study material	14	28%
Interacting with peers	4	8%
Managing time and tasks	15	30%
Total	50	100%

Table 1.3

Interpretation: - The above table and pie-chart demonstrate the allocation of respondents based on the challenges being faced by them on regular basis. Out of 50 respondents, 34% face Mobility and navigating issues, 30% face challenge in managing time and tasks, followed by 28% face challenges in

accessing study material. A very small proportion indicates 8% of them they face challenges in Interacting with peers.

This highlights that mobility and accessibility-related issues are the most common challenges faced by the respondents in their daily lives.

Table.4. The table and pie chart below show the frequency of exclusion experienced by the respondents.

FREQUENCY		
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
People don't talk	8	16%
Not included	24	48%
Felt left out during conversations	11	22%
Others assume I cannot do certain things	7	14%
Total	50	100%

Table 1.4

Interpretation: - The above table and pie chart demonstrates the allocation of respondents based on how frequently does the exclusion happens. Out of 50 respondents, 48% doesn't feel included in some activities, followed by 22% feel left out during conversations, followed by 16% people don't talk to these adolescents. A very small Proportion indicates that 14% assumes that these individuals cannot do certain activities/things.

This highlights that majority of the respondents feel left out during conversation.

Table.5. The following table and pie chart illustrate the difficulties respondents face in maintaining regular attendance.

ATTENDANCE CHALLENGES		
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Travelling to school	4	8%
Understanding lessons	32	64%
Lack of accessible	5	10%

materials		
Interacting with teachers or classmates	9	18%
Total	50	100%

Table 1.5

Interpretation: - The above table and pie chart demonstrates the allocation of respondents based on the difficulties; they face while attending school on a regular basis. Out of 50 respondents, 64% respondents face difficulty in understanding lessons, followed by 18% face difficulty while interacting with teachers or classmates, followed by 10% face difficulty in accessing materials. A very small proportion indicates that 8% face challenges while travelling to school.

This highlights that majority of respondents face difficulty in understanding lessons in school.

Table.6. The table and pie chart below present the school strategies adopted to support the respondents.

SCHOOL STRATEGIES		
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Asking teachers for help	15	30%
Using devices (Braille/audio)	8	16%
Taking support from peers	13	28%
I do not use any specific strategy	14	26%
Total	50	100%

Table 1.6

Interpretation: - The above table and pie chart demonstrates the allocation of respondents based on the strategies that they use to overcome challenges that are there in school academics. Out of 50 respondents 30% claimed that they seek help from teachers, followed by 28% claimed that they take support from peers, followed by 26% claimed that they do not have any specific strategy to overcome issues. A very small proportion indicates that 16% use braille devices to overcome difficulties.

This highlights that majority of respondents ask teachers help to overcome challenges in school Academics.

VIII. FINDINGS

- The study had equal participation of male and female adolescents from both institutions.
- Most respondents are actively engaged in school and education.
- Mobility and accessibility issues are the most common challenges faced.
- Technology (screen readers, mobiles) plays an important role in their daily life.
- Respondents show positive coping strategies, such as listening to music and focusing on themselves.
- A major gap identified is the lack of counselling services and accessible study materials.
- Family support is a major confidence-building factor.
- Assistive technology plays a crucial role in independence.

IX. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve Accessible Education: Schools should provide more Braille books, audiobooks, and digital learning tools to help blind adolescents understand lessons better.
- Enhance Mobility Training: Special focus should be given to orientation and mobility training to increase independence in movement and daily activities.
- Promote Use of Technology: Encourage the use of assistive technologies such as screen readers, smart devices, and educational apps for better learning and communication.
- Provide Counselling Services: Schools and institutions should introduce regular counselling and emotional support services to address mental health needs.

- Parental Awareness Programs: Conduct programs to educate parents about allowing independence and reducing overprotection.
- Strengthen Inclusive Education: Schools should adopt inclusive teaching methods and train teachers to handle the needs of visually impaired students effectively.
- Improve Public Transportation Accessibility: Government and authorities should ensure safe and accessible transport facilities for visually impaired individuals.
- Awareness Campaigns: Increase awareness in society to reduce stigma and promote acceptance of blind individuals.

X. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was limited to 50 respondents, which may not fully represent all blind adolescents.
- Time and resource constraints may have affected the depth of data collection and analysis.
- Responses were collected through self-reporting, which may include personal bias or socially desirable answers.
- As the researcher filled the form during interviews, there may be possibility of interpretation bias.
- Some respondents may have felt hesitant or uncomfortable while sharing personal experiences.
- Limited availability of assistive tools and technology may have influenced participation and responses.

XI. CONCLUSION

The study called "The Path: Journey of Blind Adolescents" shows that being blind does not limit what teenagers can do even though it can make it hard to get around learn and interact with others.

Most teenagers in the study are independent strong and find ways to deal with challenges in their daily

lives. They get a lot of help from their families, teachers and technology which makes them more confident and helps them develop overall. However the study also finds some problems. These include a need for learning materials that're easy to use counselling services and more independence when it comes to getting around.

Even though many teenagers do not feel left out they still face small challenges like feeling left out of conversations and having trouble with schoolwork. Overall the research shows that with the support systems, education that includes everyone and people who understand and care teenagers who are blind can live a happy and independent life.

We must create an environment that gives them opportunities, dignity and helps them develop in every way. The study on blind adolescents highlights that blind adolescents can lead a fulfilling life. The study on adolescents emphasizes the importance of support, for blind adolescents. The study "The Path: Journey of Blind Adolescents" underlines that with proper support blind adolescents can achieve their goals.

XII. PLAN OF ACTION: SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

Based on what we found out from the study we need to have a plan in place to help blind teenagers. This plan should involve workers and cover many different areas. At the level social workers are really important in giving regular counselling and emotional support. This helps teenagers deal with feelings of being alone stressed or not feeling good about themselves. Many teenagers have trouble communicating. With schoolwork. So we should teach them life skills like making decisions solving problems building confidence and communicating effectively. It's also important to teach them how to move around both in places they know and don't know. We can also teach them how to use technology like screen readers and voice-based apps to help them with school and daily life.

At the family level we need to help parents and caregivers. We can have counselling sessions to help families understand what blind teenagers can do and what they need. This can help families stop being too

protective and let teenagers be more independent. We can also have programs to teach families about disability rights, inclusive practices and the importance of support. When families communicate openly and positively it can really help teenagers feel more confident and well.

At the school level we need to make sure schools are inclusive. This means having books and resources that're accessible, like Braille books and audiobooks. Teachers should be trained to teach in a way that's inclusive so they can help impaired students. We can also have programs to help other students understand and accept impaired students. Additionally we can provide academic support like remedial classes to help students who are struggling.

At the community level we need to have campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance of people. We can have events and programs to encourage community participation. Working with NGOs and local organizations can help provide services, like vocational training and assistive devices.

At the policy level social workers should make sure that government schemes related to disability, education and social welfare are implemented effectively. We should also work to make infrastructure, like transportation and digital platforms more accessible.

Finally we need to keep checking and evaluating these interventions to see if they're working and make improvements. We should collect feedback from teenagers, parents and teachers to make sure the interventions are relevant and impactful. Overall this plan adopts an approach aiming to address the challenges faced by blind teenagers and enhance their strengths, independence and social inclusion in society. We want to help teenagers not just by fixing the problems they face but also by making them stronger more independent and more included in society.

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study "The Unseen Path: Journey of Blind Adolescents", the following recommendations are suggested:

Educational institutions should ensure the availability of accessible learning materials such as Braille books, audiobooks, and digital content to improve academic understanding. Teachers need to be trained in inclusive teaching methods so that they can effectively support visually impaired students and address their learning difficulties. Schools should also provide individual academic support and encourage active classroom participation.

There is a strong need to introduce regular counselling services in schools to support the emotional and mental wellbeing of blind adolescents. Along with this, life skills training should be incorporated to enhance confidence, communication skills, and decision-making abilities.

Parents should be guided through awareness and counselling programs to reduce overprotective behaviour and encourage independence among adolescents. Strengthening family support systems can positively influence their confidence and self-esteem.

The use of assistive technology such as screen readers, accessible mobile applications, and digital tools should be promoted to enhance learning and daily functioning. Training programs should be organized to help adolescents effectively use these technologies.

Efforts should be made to improve mobility and accessibility, including orientation and mobility training and making public transportation more accessible and safe. Adolescents should be encouraged to develop independence in movement.

Community awareness programs are essential to reduce stigma and discrimination and promote social inclusion. Schools and communities should organize activities that encourage interaction between visually impaired and sighted individuals.

Finally, there is a need for better implementation of government schemes and policies related to disability, along with collaboration with NGOs and institutions to provide resources, vocational training, and career guidance. These measures will help blind adolescents achieve their aspirations and lead a more independent and fulfilling life.

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