



# The lived experience of students with visual impairment from living with sighted mothers: A qualitative study

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## Abstract

**Aim:** Visual impairment is one of the problems that make the interaction of a child with visual impairment with family members, especially the mother. The purpose of the present study was the phenomenology of the lived experience of students with visual impairment from living with sighted mothers. **Method:** The approach of this research was qualitative and based on the phenomenological method. The research population included all students with visual impairment and sighted mothers in Isfahan province in the academic year of 2021-2022, of which 14 were selected using a purposive sampling method. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the seven-steps Claisen method. **Results:** In this study, 7 main categories including acceptance of the child by the parents, acceptance of the parents by the child, independent life, leisure time, affections and emotions, education and learning, and orientation and mobility, and also 19 subcategories were extracted. The main categories included acceptance of the child by the parents, acceptance of the parents by the child, independent living, leisure time, emotions and emotions, education and learning, and orientation and movement. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings of this study, factors such as acceptance, independence, leisure, emotion, education and movement skills of students with visual impairment are very importance and have a positive impact on their quality of life. As a result, implementing appropriate educational programs based on the extracted categories for this group of students and their parents can help improve their interaction. **Keywords:** *lived experience, phenomenology, sighted mothers, visual impairment.*

## Introduction

Undoubtedly, vision is very important in daily life and visual impairment creates many challenges for people (Damin, Steven, & Silverasti, 2020). From the legal point of view, visual impairment is placed in the two classes of low vision and blindness. In this classification, visually impaired people are those who have a small amount of vision and can benefit from the rest of their vision with the help of rehabilitation devices such as glasses and magnifying glasses; On the other hand, blind people can only perceive light, and for learning and teaching, they must use alternative methods of vision such as Braille (Varma et al., 2015). Visual impairment is one of the most common sensory disorders, as it is estimated that approximately 36 million people in the world are blind, and 217 million of them have moderate to severe visual impairment (Bourne et al., 2017). In general, understanding how visually impaired people feel about themselves and their surroundings is of considerable importance (Duta, 2022).

Visually impaired students often experience emotional problems and face problems in establishing and maintaining social relationships (Manitsa & Doiko, 2022). Considering the destructive effect that a child's visual impairment has on the quality of life of family members, especially sighted mothers (Asghari et al., 2020), researches have focused on identifying the impact of visual impairment on people with visual impairment. Based on the existing research gap, it seems necessary to explore the experiences of students with visual impairment along with their sighted mothers. Therefore, the aim of the present study is the phenomenology of the lived experience of visually impaired students of living with sighted mothers. In this research, we try to answer the question, what are the experiences, perceptions and feelings of students with visual impairment in living with their sighted mothers?

## Method

The approach of this research was qualitative and based on the phenomenological method. The research population included all students with visual impairment and sighted mothers in Isfahan province in the academic year of 2021-2022, of which 14 were selected using a purposive sampling method. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the seven-steps Claisen method.

## Results

In this study, 7 main categories including acceptance of the child by the parents, acceptance of the parents by the child, independent life, leisure time, affections and emotions, education and learning, and orientation and mobility, and also 19 subcategories were extracted. The main categories included acceptance of the child by the parents, acceptance of the parents by the child, independent living, leisure time, emotions and emotions, education and learning, and orientation and movement. Based on the findings of this study, factors such as acceptance, independence, leisure, emotion, education and movement skills of students with visual impairment are very importance and have a positive impact on their quality of life. As a result, implementing appropriate educational programs based on the extracted categories for this group of students and their parents can help improve their interaction.

### **Conclusion**

According to what was said, it seems that the way to deal with the challenges in interactions between students with visual impairment and their sighted mothers is of great importance. In this way, if a mother accepts her child with visual impairment and is aware of his potential capabilities, she can better help his social, academic and psychological growth and take an effective step in developing his capabilities. Obviously, this cannot be achieved by focusing only on the mental health of the mother and the child, and it is necessary for mothers to acquire special skills to adapt to their conditions along with their children with visual impairment. Only then can they have a more realistic view of their child's disability and take the correct path of education.

The current research was faced with limitations. One of the most prominent limitations of the current research is that only semi-structured questions and in-depth interviews with a Claesian method were used to collect data. The second limitation of the current research is that conditions were not provided to conduct in-depth interviews with mothers and fathers or even siblings of visually impaired students in order to achieve a deeper analysis. Other limitations are related to the level of visual impairment of students and their study conditions in different schools. In this regard, the research proposal is to use other methods such as observation and questionnaire both for needs assessment and for a better understanding of the challenges. It is necessary to pay attention to the degree of visual impairment and education in a normal (combined) or exceptional school (specially for blind students). In addition, thematic analysis or other qualitative methods can be used to review and analyze information. It is suggested that for a more detailed analysis of the issues and problems of visually impaired students, their fathers, siblings, and siblings should also be interviewed. One of the practical suggestions of the current research is to use the extracted main and subcategories to inform the education officials, special schools for the blind and integrated schools. At the same time, these findings can be used to inform parents of visually impaired people and other sighted people. Other organizations and institutions that provide services to visually impaired people, such as the welfare organization, can also use the results of this research in order to provide better services.

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