

Psychological and social adaptation of students with visual impairment and blindness at Mu'tah University

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the level of psychological and social adaptation of students with varying levels of visual disabilities at Mu'tah University and the effect of gender on it. To achieve these aims, the researcher prepared and used a psychological and social adaptation scale to collect data from twelve students with visual impairment or blindness (both male and female). The results showed that the levels of psychological and social adaptation were moderate. Further, there were no statistically significant differences between students with visual impairment in psychological and social adaptation levels due to gender, only in psychological adaption favoring males. One of the most important recommendations of this study was to provide psychological support and counseling services to students with visual impairment or blindness at the university's student counseling office.

Keywords: Psychological adaptation, social adaptation, visual impairment, blindness, Mu'tah University; Jordan.

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1. Introduction

Visual impairment and blindness are conditions in which individuals lose the ability to use their sense of sight effectively, which negatively affects their performance and development (Hadidi, 2011). These conditions impact a person's psychological and social adaptation, and these effects are related to society's attitude and acceptance (Ishtiaq et al., 2016; Ueda, 2018). These attitudes toward them are important and necessary to help them adapt to living in a society and obtaining various services (Kef, 2002; Altarawneh, 2018). The role of a person with a disability in society is determined by how others perceive them. The term "disability" refers to the role of social institutions and the difficulties and social adjustment they psychologically impose on people with disabilities due to their attitudes toward them (Hadidi, 2011). Jordan signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and ratified it in 2008; the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) was established in 2007, and the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 31 of 2007 was issued, which was changed in 2017 (Ceroni et al., 2020).

Articles 21 and 22 of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 20 of 2017 affirm that no one may be denied admission to higher education institutions or the right to study any specialization based on or because of disability. In collaboration with the Council, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and its affiliated educational institutions will carry out the following: a) incorporate requirements for disabled students' access to higher education institutions into all relevant policies, strategies, plans, and programs, including reasonable accommodations, formats, and accessibility to ensure that people with disabilities have access to all available specializations; and b) contribute a proportion of higher education fees to ensure the provision of reasonable accessibility for students with disabilities in institutions of higher education, provide a sign language interpreter to work with hearing impaired students, and provide a sighted guide to work with visually impaired students (Altarawneh, 2018). Furthermore, rules have been developed to admit students with disabilities to higher education institutions that ensure respect for their choices and interests and the absence of any form(s) of disability discrimination (Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (HCD), 2017).

1.1. Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

Mu'tah University established a special division to provide psychological support to students with disabilities and help improve self-acceptance and self-confidence. Despite this, students with disabilities face significant challenges in higher education institutions, including negative attitudes of faculty toward such students, as well as lack of understanding of their needs or inability to communicate with them (Al- A'dra, 2016; Altarawneh, 2018; Al-Louzi & M'ani, 2003; Abu- Hamour, 2013; Al-Hmouz, 2014; Wray, 2011; Marshak et al., 2010; Kendall, 2016; Cheong et al., 2012; Fatima et al., 2014), the teaching methods and educational courses provided are not suitable for them (Fatima et al., 2014; Otyola et al., 2017; Kapur, 2017), economic challenges related to university fees (Altarawneh, 2018; Amin et al., 2021), and environmental issues associated with difficulty accessing universities, lectures, computer laboratories, libraries, or public university facilities (Amin et al., 2021; Al- A'dra, 2016; Altarawneh, 2018; Al-Louzi, 2005; Al-Hmouz, 2014; Kendall, 2016; Emong & Eron, 2016; Kapur, 2017; Cheong et al., 2012; Fatima et al., 2014). Difficulty obtaining the equipment and devices for learning (Fatima et al., 2014; Kapur, 2017).

Psychological problems related to psychological issues or being socially maladaptive (Marshak et al., 2010; Altarawneh, 2018), administrative obstacles related to inappropriate registration procedures (Al- A'dra, 2016; Altarawneh, 2018; Al-Hmouz, 2014; Wray, 2011), and ineffective "Students with

Disabilities" divisions at universities (Marshak et al., 2010; Altarawneh, 2018; Al-Hmouz, 2014) add to student woes. Other obstacles are related to obtaining educational degrees, barriers associated with the administration of examinations and assessments, the inability of students with disabilities to compete with their peers who do not have their disabilities (Al-A'dra, 2016; Altarawneh, 2018; Al-Hmouz, 2014; Kendall, 2016; Wary, 2011; Fatima et al., 2014; Kapur, 2017; Otylo et al., 2017), the lack of computer laboratories for students with visual disabilities, or inaccessibility (Altarawneh, 2018). Also, there are negative attitudes toward students with disabilities (Al- A'dra, 2016; Altarawneh, 2018; Al-Louzi & M'ani, 2003; Al-Hmouz, 2014; Wray, 2011; Marshak et al., 2010; Kendall, 2016).

During the Corona pandemic (COVID- 19), Students with visual impairment and blindness have faced many challenges; among these challenges: Changes in teaching courses (Alrashdan & Almeqdad, 2022; Correa- Torres & Muthukumaran, 2022), The lack of appropriate electronic books for students with visual disabilities or blindness and the lack of educational and explanatory activities during distance learning (Alsedalani & Alslmi, 2021). not obtaining a lot of information in the courses due to the difficulty of using software such as Teams and Moodle, financial challenges related to the problem of providing modern technologies for distance learning, difficulty in giving computerized exams, weakness on the Internet and this affects distance learning (Alshyab, et al., 2020). Also, study indicated that the problems of students with disabilities in universities were psychological and social, such as low motivation, self-regulation, low mood, and lack of direct communication. In addition, technical issues are also in communication difficulties via the Internet and distance learning platforms (Denisova, Lekhanova & Gudina, 2020). Students with visual impairment blindness also have faced many challenges during the Corona pandemic, including financial challenges, access to universities, peer acceptance, and challenges related to distance learning (Amin et al., 2021). These challenges may impact the psychological and social adaptation of students with blindness or visual impairment. Additionally, it may affect academic performance and social competency. As a result, students with disabilities discontinue their university studies (Altarawneh, 2014; Altarawneh, 2018; Cheong et al., 2012).

1.2. Study Questions

This study aimed to understand the level of psychological and social adaptation of students with visual impairment or blindness at Mu'tah University. The study questions were as follows.

First, what is the psychological and social adaptation level among Mu'tah University students with visual impairment or blindness?

Second, are there statistically significant differences in the levels of psychological and social adaptation among students with visual impairment or blindness due to gender?

2. Method and Materials

2.1. Research Model

This study is descriptive and analytical to determine the level of psychological and social adaptation for students with visual impairment and blindness at Mu'tah University and the effect of gender on that.

2.2. Study Participants

The study participants included 12 Mu'tah University students with visual impairment or blindness who agreed to participate in the study. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Study Participants

Parameter		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	6	50%
	Female	6	50%
Age	<30	9	75%
	≥30	3	25%
Degree of Vision Loss	Blindness	9	75%
	Low Vision	3	25%

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

The scale of psychological and social adaptation:

The researcher prepared a scale consisting of 49 negative and positive items and four parts to measure the psychological and social adaptation of students with visual impairment and blindness (Appendix). The content validity and reliability were measured using Cronbach's alpha equation. Table 2 shows the reliability of the scale.

Table 2. Reliability of the Scale by Cronbach's Alpha Equation

Parts of the Scale	Number of Items	Reliability Value
Part 1: Psychological adaptation	18	0.843
Part 2: Dealing with other students	11	0.727
Part 3: Dealing with faculty members	7	0.810
Part 4: University life and environment	13	0.714
Total	49	0.924

2.4. Data Collection Process

The scale consisted of 49 items divided into four parts:

Part one: psychological adaptation (18 items).

Part two: dealing with other students (11 items).

Part three: dealing with faculty members (7 items).

Part four: university life and environment (12 items).

Students with visual impairment or blindness were asked to choose an answer from the following options: highly true, moderately true, slightly true, and never true. An enlarged version of the scale was shown to visually impaired students on their smartphones. For the blind, the researcher read out the scale via telephone.

2.5. Data Analysis

The scale had 19 positive and 30 negative items, which were corrected as follows: highly true = 4, moderately true = 3, slightly true = 2, and never true = 1 for positive items; and highly true = 1, moderately true = 2, slightly true = 3, never true = 4 for negative items. The scores were interpreted as follows:

(1–1.99): Low levels of psychological and social adaptation.

(2–2.99): Moderate levels of psychological and social adaptation.

(3–4): High levels of psychological and social adaptation.

3. Results

To answer the first question, the mean and standard deviation of the scores on the scale and its parts were calculated, which are exhibited in Table 3.

Table 3. Means and standard deviation of the scores on the scale and its parts

Parts of the Scale	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Psychological adaptation	12	3.67	0.23	High
Dealing with other students	12	3.72	0.21	High
Dealing with faculty members	12	3.49	0.30	High
University life and environment	12	2.98	0.39	Moderate
Total	12	2.91	0.10	Moderate

The results in Table 3 presents that the level of psychological and social adaptation for students with visual impairment and blindness at Mu'tah University was generally moderate. For individual parts of the scale, the level of psychological adaptation was high, and the social adaptation related to dealing with other students and faculty members was high. The part related to life and social environment was moderate.

To answer the second question, the means and standard deviations of the students' visual impairment or blindness scores were calculated according to gender. Table 4 shows that.

Table 4. The Means and Standard Deviations of the Students with Visual Impairment or Blindness Scores According to Gender

	Gender	N	Means	Standard Deviations
psychological adaptation	Male	6	3.80	0.14
	Female	6	3.55	0.25
Dealing with other Students	Male	6	3.73	0.22
	Female	6	3.71	0.22
Dealing with faculty members	Male	6	3.43	0.38
	Female	6	3.55	0.21
University life and environment	Male	6	3.1	0.4
	Female	6	2.9	0.4
Total	Male	6	2.9	0.08
	Female	6	2.88	0.1

Table 4 shows that the means between males and females are unequal. There are apparent differences between them. To determine if these differences were statistically significant, the researcher used the Mann–Whitney test (U).

Table 5. Results on Mann–Whitney (U Test)

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	Mann- Whitney U	Sig
psychological adaptation	Male	6	8.50	51	6	0.50*
	Female	6	4.50	27		
Dealing with other Students	Male	6	6.50	39	18	1
	Female	6	6.50	39		
Dealing with faculty members	Male	6	6	36	15	0.613
	Female	6	7	42		
University life and environment	Male	6	7.42	44	12.5	0.378
	Female	6	5.58	33.5		

Total	Male	6	7	42	15	0.631
	Female	6	6	36		
P ≤ 0.05						

Table 5 shows that while there are no statistically significant differences between students with visual impairment and blindness in the psychological and social adaptation level due to gender, psychological adaptation favors males.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicated that the level of psychological and social adaptation for students with visual impairment and blindness at Mu'tah University in general was moderate. Regarding the parts of the scale, the level of psychological adaptation was high, and the social adaptation related to dealing with other students and faculty members was high. The part related to life and the social environment was moderate. These results disagree with those of previous studies (Ahmad, 2016; Salahat & Bani Hamad, 2018; Altarawneh, 2018). The reason for this difference may be the difference in sample, instruments, and location in which the studies were conducted. The Altarawneh study (2018) was focused on students with disabilities in general at Mu'tah University. The current study was conducted with students with visual impairment or blindness at the same university. In general, study participants told the researcher that they faced many problems at university, which affect their psychological and social adaptation. Therefore, the level of adaptation in the current study was average. For students with low vision, the problems faced include unlit corridors, buildings, and stairwells during the daytime and unlit roads in the evening and embarrassment when using assistive aids such as canes or magnifying lenses. Furthermore, faculty members lack an understanding of the needs of such students. They do not believe students have visual impairment when there are no visible eye deformities. In the absence of a computer lab for students with visual impairment, faculty members do not magnify the exam questions and forbid the usage of smartphones to zoom in because it is considered cheating. Extracurricular activities at the university are not always appropriate for students with visual impairment or blindness. Such students are also not allowed to record audio lectures and some courses in the study plan are inadequate.

The results also indicated that there were no differences in social adjustment, dealing with other students, faculty at the university, or life and university environment due to gender. These results agree with those of Al-Hattab (2015). There are differences in psychological adjustment in favor of males, which is consistent with the results of previous studies (Musa'a & Selman, 2010; Ahmad, 2016). This outcome may be logical, given the limited mobility of girls and women with visual impairment who do not have a sighted guide to accompany them permanently when they go out. When a sighted guide is not available, access to universities and other activities is restricted. This could be based on the fear that girls and women with disabilities, in general, will be harassed, raped, or exploited (Altarawneh et al., 2013).

5. Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that the level of psychological and social adaptation of students with visual impairment and blindness is moderate. Accordingly, the researcher recommends improving the level of psychological and social adjustment by ensuring the following:

- 1- Redesigning the university environment and lecture halls to suit students with visual impairment and blindness.

- 2- Providing psychological support and counseling services to students with visual impairment or blindness at the university's student counseling office.
- 3- Educating faculty members on dealing with students with disabilities.
- 4- Explaining the conditions and needs of students with disabilities to faculty because some students feel awkward about doing so.
- 5- Encouraging student initiatives to record audiobooks or courses for students with visual impairment and blindness.
- 6- Working on and implementing special activities for students with disabilities at the university.
- 7- Reconsidering study plans for students with disabilities and replacing courses that are not suitable with other courses that are better suited for them.

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Appendix

The scale of psychological and social adaptation:

First: Person Information:

Gender: Male Female.

Age: Years.

Disability degree: Blind Low Vision.

Family Income: JD.

University Specialization: Academic Year:

GPA: Rank:.....

Residence Place: City Village

Marital status: SingleMarriedothers

Work: Yes No.

Second: The Items of the scale:

Part1: Psychological adaptation					
#	Item	Highly True	Moderately True	Slightly True	Never True
1	I feel comfortable in the lecture hall.				
2	I am ashamed to participate in the discussion in the lecture.				
3	I have friends and colleagues in every lecture.				
4	I belong to my university.				
5	I prefer to sit alone, away from other students.				
6	I am satisfied with myself.				
7	I feel nervous during the lecture period.				
8	I find it difficult to express myself.				
9	I find it difficult to make relationships and friendships.				
10	I feel like an outcast among my peers.				
11	I feel that I am inferior to others.				
12	I'm in the wrong place.				
13	My outward appearance makes me feel embarrassed.				
14	I rely on myself to meet my daily needs.				
15	The happiest moments of my life in university are when I am alone.				
16	I Accept criticism from colleagues and faculty.				
17	Colleagues, faculty, and others pity me.				
18	I feel like an important person in the university.				
Part 2: Dealing with other students					
1	I prefer that my colleagues are with disability.				
2	I find it difficult to study with other students who do not have a disability.				
3	My colleagues at the university are not cooperating with me.				

4	I feel pity from my colleagues.				
5	The other students treat me well.				
6	My university colleagues accept my disability.				
7	I am loved by my colleagues.				
8	My colleagues respect me.				
9	I feel appreciated by my colleagues and friends who do not have a disability.				
10	My colleagues understand my special circumstances and help me as much as possible.				
11	I feel like my colleagues are being forced to help me.				
Part3: Dealing with faculty members					
1	The faculty at the university is not very understanding of my special circumstances.				
2	The university's faculty members assign me tasks beyond my capabilities.				
3	Whatever I do, I won't get grades like the other students.				
4	I feel loved by the faculty members at the university.				
5	The faculty members at the university pity me.				
6	I am ignored in lectures by faculty members at the university.				
7	The university faculty treats me with respect.				
Part4: University life and environment					
1	I avoid participating in activities inside the university.				
2	I feel that students with disabilities at the university are not served.				
3	The university provides us with facilities related to paying fees and registering for courses.				
4	I am having difficulty taking exams at the university.				
5	I am having difficulty obtaining the prescribed material for each course or exam.				
6	I have good relations with all the people in the university.				
7	Being in university makes me feel lonely.				
8	I am exposed to situations in which I feel insulted at the university.				
9	I wish to quit studying at the university.				
10	My disability does not prevent me from participating in any activity at the university.				
11	I feel like a desirable person in the university.				
12	Using some aids in university makes me embarrassed.				
13	Difficult to reach some places in the university.				