



DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Social inclusion is a multidimensional concept involving complex dynamic process interactions between personal and environmental factors. Visually impaired (VI) students are found to be lacking in certain social skills that hamper their socialization and consequently their social inclusion. To understand the social inclusion in VI, it is necessary to assess their social inclusion using appropriate measure with the help of respective determinants or indicators. Through literature study, it was observed that most of the researchers working in the same field, had designed and used study-specific qualitative measures to find out inclusion status. It was observed that no specific tool is made for measuring social inclusion of VI adolescents. Thus the determinants were identified through content analysis, appropriate to assess social inclusion in visually impaired adolescents considering their socialization and further inclusion. This resulted in the development of 31-item self-report Social Inclusion Scale for Visually Impaired (SISVI) for assessing social inclusion in visually impaired adolescents. This measure has three different subscales designed to measure three dimensions of perceived social inclusion in VI. These dimensions are: Belongingness, Participation and Relationships.



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Background of the study

Inclusion is considered as an effort for integration or mainstreaming, to realize the positive acceptance of difference. Inclusion is a philosophy that brings students, families, educators and community members to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging and community (Salend, 2001). It is believed that there are three ways by which all students learn—visually, auditorilly, and kinesthetically. Most blind and visually impaired (VI) students learn by both auditory and kinesthetic means. The teachers must provide

intricate verbal details and hands-on activities to make this all possible (Teacher Resources for Teaching Blind and Visually Impaired Students).

Inclusive Education includes important aspects as -

- all children can learn and all need some form of support in learning,
- uncover and minimize barriers to learning,
- broader than formal schooling and includes the home, the community and other opportunities for education outside of schools,
- changing attitudes, behaviors, teaching methods, curricula and environments to meet the needs of all children,
- constantly evolving according to local cultures and contexts and is part of the wider strategy to promote an inclusive society. (UNESCO,2001)

‘Inclusive’ is defined as providing instruction and support specifically designed for special needs students in the context of regular educational settings. The inclusive services are considered with different perspectives and the approaches (Community Care, 2010) are -

Pseudo-inclusion: accepts disabled children and young people, but there is no or little evidence of resourcing or active work to support their participation in activities and social integration. *Active inclusion*: facilitates disabled children’s participation in activities and interaction between disabled and non-disabled children while, *Opportunity inclusion*: allows them the opportunity to take part in or experience the same activities and opportunities as non-disabled children.

The social model of inclusive education

Inclusion for educating students with impairment consider their psychological, physical and social needs. Inclusion can be seen from different perspectives, but to understand the social approach of inclusion we have to consider, the two interrelated terms social inclusion and exclusion. Social inclusion and exclusion are based on social relations and social approach to inclusion considers psychological aspects of exclusion.As being excluded socially, affects the social relations, deprivation and thus limits living opportunities.

Social inclusion philosophy has focused on providing least restrictive environment and full participation on the basis of equality, sharing, participation, the worth and dignity of persons with disability to improve socialization for their well-being.Social inclusion is a dynamic process involving complex interactions between personal and environmental factors. Social inclusion is a multidimensional concept encompassing physical aspects, psychological aspects, social aspects, and occupational aspects. Being socially included requires skills and attributes that are developed through experience (Lemay, 2006)

Social inclusion is considered as the interaction between two major life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation (Simplican S.C., et.al. 2015). Social inclusion occurs with opportunities to contribute to society in a way that is meaningful to both the group and the individual (Cobigo, V.,et.al.,2012). The social model of inclusive education define it as - ‘disability’ as the social oppression, not the form of impairment (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002).

Social Inclusion is a value system that rely on social development of the disabled, to make them active and efficient learners to take the opportunities and participate successfully to be a productive member of the society. Thus, social development in persons with disability is of prime importance to remove barriers in their successful inclusion, that require proper and guided training that improve their social skills and will help them to participate fully in all the activities and achieve success.

According to Commission of the European Communities (2000), Social inclusion is a multi-dimensional concept that involves having the opportunities and resources to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, and enjoying a standard of wellbeing considered normal in the society in which we live.

Being socially included means that a number of things are present in people’s lives. Social inclusion means that people:

- Experience a sense of belonging
- Are accepted (for who they are) within their communities
- Have valued roles in the community
- Active participants in the community
- Involved in activities based on their personal preferences
- Social relationships with others whom they chose and share common interests
- Have friends

From a pedagogical perspective, it is essential to teach visually impaired people all the possible and relevant strategies to help them cope with everyday challenges. The visually impaired compensate for their lack of vision with increased processing within other sensory modalities. The touch (haptic) and sound (audio) senses are essential for visually impaired people to gather information about their surroundings and to perform activities in daily life (Chan Rico, 2007). Thus for the present study the term Inclusion is considered in relation to the social inclusion.

Theoretical foundation

Inclusion is a broad concept and many theories are considered which explains the nature and role of inclusion in education. Social Inclusion (*Scottish Human Services Trust, 2005*) is based on the values as - Everyone is ready, Everyone can learn, Everyone needs support, Everyone can communicate, Everyone can contribute, and Together we are better. There is no difference between the educational needs of the child with a disability as compared to the other children and according to Social inclusion theory by *Peter Rodney (2003)*, they have one common goal: social inclusion. These theories thus focus on the objective of a social inclusion strategy which is important to facilitate better life outcomes through better social engagement of individuals and to benefit the individual irrespective of their disability, their communities and in general to the society.

The theory of Radical democracy (*Halprin D., 1999*), stated the long-term goal for the democratic classroom is that all students, upon completion of secondary schooling are capable of fulfilling the requirements of an informed, active and responsible democratic citizen and thus, supports that inclusion is important to prepare disabled students to become responsible citizen. Hence certain measures are required for preparing disabled students for inclusion.

Social exclusion results in a social isolation and thus become a barrier in mainstreaming of the disabled students. According to *Harry & Margaret Harlow, (1949)* in their Theory of Social Isolation, as discussed in the Fifth Canadian Edition of Sociology, extreme social isolation results in irreversible damage to normal personality development. Further the Social exclusion theory by *Hilary Silver (2007)* stated that Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the prescribed activities of the society in which they live. This theory is thus indicated that if we want to include the disabled students in the mainstream social inclusion is necessary. Social exclusion can be avoided by improving the participation of the disabled.

Purpose of the study

To assess determinants of social inclusion in the Visually Impaired adolescents

Method of Research –for identifying the determinants of social inclusion content analysis was used followed by tool development, for developing Social Inclusion Scale for Visually Impaired (SISVI)

Procedure –

To identify the determinants of social inclusion in Visually Impaired adolescents that can be used for assessing their social inclusion, following procedure was carried out.

Identification of determinants and development of Social Inclusion Scale for Visually Impaired (SISVI)

The process consisted of the following steps that are explained in detail in order. The steps are -

1. Rationale for using self-report scale
2. Focus
3. Identifying the components of social inclusion and respective determinants
4. Writing statements
5. Rating scale
6. Initial review
7. Validation by experts

The details for each step are discussed as follows –

1. Rationale for using self-report scale

Social inclusion is a multidimensional concept involving complex dynamic process interactions between personal and environmental factors. As yet there is no “gold-standard” measure of social inclusion (Huxley et al., 2012). There are a variety of existing measurements available for assessing social inclusion, in different contexts. It was observed that most of the researchers had designed and used qualitative measures (open ended questionnaires, opinion, interviews etc.) to find out inclusion status. In the present study, self-report Social Inclusion Scale was designed. Self-report assessment obtains the information directly from the subject rather than through informants, observers or peers. They have advantages of ease in use, time requirement is less and can be used repeatedly (Perry J. & Felce, D.)

Various tools measuring social inclusion directly or indirectly were reviewed but none of the tools found to be matching in the context of socialization of visually impaired. The overview of the most related tools to this study, is presented in the table 1-

Table 1 Overview of measures used to assess Social inclusion

S.N.	Tool	Target population	Tool details
1	SINQUE – Social Inclusion Questionnaire User Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure level of social inclusion among those with severe mental illness - Developed for UK population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75 items - Rating scale was used
2	SCOPE – Social and Community Opportunities Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-being scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 42 item scale (short version) - Objective and subjective factors (opportunities and choices, personal feelings about inclusion)
3	SIS – Social Inclusion Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For adults in the UK with mental problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 item scale - Considered subscales - social isolation, social relations, and social acceptance
4	SIS – Social Integration Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For subjects with Schizophrenia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 62 item scale - Factors were – social emotional interaction, social skills, social activities and instrumental activities of daily living, self-care - The terms social integration and social functioning are used interchangeably
5	CIM – Community Integration Measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developed for those with traumatic brain injuries - Used subsequently among populations with mental health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 item scale - 2 domains – Belonging and Independent participation
6	ORI – Opinion Relations to the Integration of Students with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement scale for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factors – Benefits of integration, Integrated classroom management, Perceived ability to teach students, SPVs integrated general education
7	Questionnaire – LaRue A. Pierce, 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study specific tool - For high school students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18 questions focusing on the disabled students’ positive and negative attitude about the process of inclusion
8	Questionnaire- Lindsay LaValley, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For special education teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher’s views of inclusion and social development - Ranked questions and open ended questions - Attitude and beliefs about inclusion measured
9	Social Inclusion Index – Long SCOPE P. Huxley & et.al.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This version has limitations in use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a social inclusion index to capture subjective and objective life domains
10	Activity and Participation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The authors identified potential measures through

	Questionnaire (APQ-6), Australian Community Participation Questionnaire (ACPQ), Composite Measure of Social Inclusion (CMSI), Evaluating Social Inclusion Questionnaire (ESIQ); Social and Community Opportunities Profile (SCOPE); Social Inclusion Measure (SIM), Social Inclusion Questionnaire (SIQ), By Coombs T1, Nicholas A, Pirkis J.		searches of PsycINFO and Medline and a more general Internet search - After comparison with the eight review criteria it was determined that the APQ-6 and the SCOPE-short form show the most potential for further testing - But neither of these is quite fit-for-purpose in their current form.
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Researcher’s observation –

The first five scales mentioned above were developed in high income countries with limited attention paid on how they will be implemented in other cultures (Baumgartner, J.N., Burns, J.K, 2013). Also, it was observed that a standard battery of tests or methods for assessing social inclusion, encompassing major factors, does not exist. The tools are used in the context of persons with mental illness, schizophrenia, mental health, teacher’s attitude towards inclusion etc. It was found that direct measurement of the construct was considered in very few studies and little attention is given to the adaptation for cross-cultural use.

It was observed that the researchers used study-specific factors as overlapping, confusing and multiple terms and concepts were considered in social inclusion and it reflects in a lack of clarity. It was observed that most of the above tools were not specifically designed to measure social inclusion of VI adolescents in Indian scenario, the measure is underdeveloped. This acted as a motive to identify determinants for social inclusion in VI adolescents, that will be useful to assess their social inclusion.

2. Focus

The study aims to identify the components of social inclusion in VI adolescents and their respective determinants. To assess social inclusion these determinants are used to construct a rating scale.

3. Identifying the Components of social inclusion and respective Determinants

Psychological variables cannot be observed directly, these kinds of variables are called constructs. These include personality traits, emotional states, attitudes, and abilities (Price, P.

C.), social inclusion is such a construct. According to Byrne (1998), the researcher must operationally define the latent variable of interest in terms of behavior believed to represent it. As such, the unobserved variable is linked to one that is observable, thereby making its measurement possible. To measure a latent construct, researchers capture indicators that represent the underlying construct. The indicators are directly observable and believed by the researcher to accurately represent the variable that cannot be observed (Garger, J., 2011). Indicators are the devices by which respondent's opinion is measured. For the present research Indicators are the set of structures that determine the inherent underlying concepts that completes the construct - social inclusion.

To develop the tool initially concepts associated with social inclusion from the literature were derived. For assessing inclusion in the VI students, first, the components or determinants of social inclusion were identified through literature and previous research work. The components of social inclusion frequently used and the ones, which are relevant to the VI adolescents with respect to their socialization, were identified as –

Components of Social Inclusion of Visually Impaired Adolescents –

1. Belongingness
2. Participation
3. Relationships

For each component the researcher had identified its determinants. On the basis of these determinants the statements in the scale were constructed. For identifying determinants researcher had reviewed multiple resources. For each specific social inclusion component the information related to meaning, concept and underlying factors was collected through content analysis from various data sources as dictionaries, encyclopedias, Wikipedia, e-articles, e-notes etc. to identify indicators. They were analyzed and were arranged logically for each of the component. The repetitive determinants were eliminated while closely related ones were clubbed together to form a single, meaningful structure. Thus for all 3 social inclusion components 22 determinants were derived, as given in the following table –

Table 2 Determinants for Social Inclusion of VI

S.N.	Social Inclusion components	Determinants
1	Belongingness	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be acceptable in a place/ environment2. Be a member of group/community3. Being an essential part of the group/community4. Gaining attention and support from the other members of the group/community5. Being together with other members

2	Participation	6. Involvement in the life situations/activities 7. Engagement in activities in/outside the classroom 8. Willingness to take part in activities 9. Purposefully grabbing opportunities to take part 10. Sharing of feelings/ thoughts/ opinions/views 11. Helping others 12. Talking /communicating with others 13. Meeting people 14. Contributing frequently in the given tasks 15. Performing social roles
3	Relationships	16. Feeling valued from others behaviour 17. Emotionally associated /connected with others 18. Maintain reciprocal relations 19. Feeling of attachment/trust/love 20. Overcoming barriers in interaction with others 21. Overcoming social isolation 22. Developing social network

4. Writing statements

Using determinants, statements were pooled for each of the components. For writing statements, the determinant was transformed into a respective statement by converting it into a sentence form as follows -

Determinant: Be acceptable in a place/ environment

Statement: At my school, hostel, home as well as outside, people accept me.

Similarly,

Determinant: Maintain reciprocal relations

Statement: I am not so good at maintaining contacts with others, even if they are interested to.

Few determinants required more than one statement to satisfy the purpose, also, negative statements were constructed wherever needed.

All these statements were subjected to a more careful scrutiny. Also, peer discussion and literature review was taken into consideration in writing and mixing the statements. The items which seemed to overlap were examined, items were retained that conveying objective of the tool. The care was taken to maintain simple, clear and meaningful language and logical order of the statements. Thus, altogether 31 meaningful statements were pooled.

5. Rating scale

For each statement student have to respond on 4 point scale as – Definitely true (3), Probably true (2), Probably false (1), Definitely false (0), and reverse for the negative statements.

6. Initial review

The tool thus prepared was reviewed with respect to the content, meaningfulness and clarity by the researcher, research guide and other researchers working in the field of skill development.

7. Validation by experts

Thus after construction of the scale, it was given to the experts in the field of inclusion for validation and suggestions if any. Three experts were identified, are the personnel working in inclusion and inclusive education having experience more than 5 years. The analysis is presented in the table below.

The tool was scrutinized by the experts with the purpose of content validity and for the selection and finalization of the statements on the basis of criteria –

- Appropriateness of the components with respect to assessment of social inclusion
- Relevance of the determinants to the respective components
- Meaningfulness and Clarity in the language and construction of the statements with respect to VI adolescents

The feedback given by the experts is summarized as follows-

Table3 Feedback from experts on SISVI

S.N.	Feedback on	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Remarks
1	Do you think that the identified components are appropriate to measure social inclusion?	Yes to all	Yes to all	Yes to all	All the experts agree that the components identified for social inclusion are appropriate.
2	Do you think that the identified indicators for each component truly represent the respective component?	Yes to all	Yes to all	Yes to all	All the experts agree that the indicators truly represent respective component.
3	Opinion about the quality of statements in the tool –				All the experts opined that the quality of statements of the tool are good to excellent.
	Sentence construction	Excellent	Good	Excellent	
	Appropriateness of the Language with respect to VI adolescents	Excellent	Excellent	Good	
	Meaningfulness	Excellent	Good	Excellent	

	Clarity	Excellent	Good	Excellent	
	Logical arrangements	Excellent	Good	Excellent	
4	Do you think that the social inclusion scale for VI will suffice the purpose to evaluate student's social inclusion?	Yes	Yes	Yes	All the expert agree that the scale will suffice the purpose of evaluating VI students' social inclusion
5	Considering the purpose of the scale, do you think the rating given will serve the purpose?	Yes	Yes	Yes	All the experts agree that the scale will be able to assess social inclusion.

Analysis of Feedback from experts –

All the experts gave positive feedback on the appropriateness of all the components of social inclusion to assess social inclusion, they agreed that the determinants truly represent respective component and the scale will suffice the purpose of evaluating VI students' social inclusion. All the experts agreed that the scale will serve the purpose of assessing students' social inclusion and quality of the statements with respect to the given criteria is 'Good to Excellent'. As there were no suggestions for change from the experts, the tool was thus finalized.

Description of Measure:

- Self-report measure
- A 31 -item rating scale designed to measure Social inclusion in visually impaired adolescents.
- This measure has three different subscales designed to measure three dimensions of perceived social inclusion in VI. These dimensions are:
 1. Belongingness
 2. Participation
 3. Relationships
- Participants rate each item's statement on how true or false they believe it is for themselves.
- 4 point - Rating scale - All responses to the statements (items) in the scale are given on a 4-point scale ranging from "Definitely True" to "Definitely False".
- The scale is –
Definitely false (0)

Probably false (1)

Probably true (2)

Definitely true (3)

Reverse order for the negative statements.

- The answering format is the same for all subscales.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to identify determinants of social inclusion. The literature and content analysis was used to identify components of social inclusion and subsequently the underlying determinants of social inclusion with respect to VI adolescents. Three components viz. belongingness, participation and relationships were found out and their 22 determinants were identified that were used to develop a measure called Social Inclusion Scale for Visually Impaired (SISVI). This may contribute to the field by providing components of social inclusion and respective determinants that may be considered as a potential measure specifically for assessing social inclusion of Visually Impaired adolescents.

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