

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF THE STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE BLIND SCHOOLS OF ASSAM- A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstracts

Blindness is a serious problem faced by the handicapped children. From the census Report it is observed that the number of disabled children is increasing day by day. It is seen that a large number of India's visually impaired children are found in villages in the lower strata of society. In Assam also there are large numbers of visually impaired children scattered in all blind schools of Assam. In Assam there are mainly five blind schools. They are Guwahati Blind School Basistha; Guwahati, SrimantaSankar Mission Blind School; Nagaon, Jorhat Blind Institution; Jorhat, Moran JanamangalAdarsha Blind School; Moran, AssamShishu Andhra Vidyalaya; Bihpuria. There was a blind institution in Ghilamora at Lakhimpur district. But it is already almost not functioning. These blind schools have faced many educational and financial problems. But there are many prospects of the visually impaired children. So, the investigator wants to investigate different problems and prospects of the students studying in the blind schools of Assam.

Key-words-

Visually impaired, scattered, educational problem, economic problem.

Introduction

Sense organs are the gateway of knowledge in our body. It is true that most of the knowledge and information are received through the sense of sight. If the eyesight is defective then it leads to visual deficiencies. Visual disturbances may influence the individual in all aspects of life. So, visually impaired is the first group to have received special attention by the society among all handicapped ones.

Blindness is a serious problem faced by the handicapped people. From the Census Report of India, it has been found that the number of disabled people in India is increasing day by day. According to the census report 2001, there were a total of 21.91 million disabled persons out of the total population of 1028 million of India, which constitutes nearly 2.13% of total

population out of which 106,34,881 were visually impaired children. The 2001 Census Report of Government of India enumerated 530,300 disabled persons in Assam. Again according to 2011 Census there were 50,33,481 visually impaired persons in India .So, it is seen that the population of visually impaired is increasing every year. Again according to 2011 Census of India there were total of 4,80,065 disabled people in Assam out of which 80553 were visually impaired.

It is seen that a major portion of India's visually impaired children are found in villages in the lower strata of society. The causes of their impairment vary from malnutrition to lack of medical care, superstition, poverty and negligence. Many of these children have parents having visual impairment .The visually impaired children need special attention and care. In our country the educational facilities consist of special schools for the visual impaired children. Most of the schools are residential in character. The education system of visually impaired children needs special attention and special educational provision which is quite different from the education system of the normal children.

So, keeping in view of these, the present study has conducted to study the socio-economic status, institutional facilities and issues and challenges faced by students studying in all blind schools of Assam.

Significance of the study

Whether vision loss is sudden or gradual, it is the cause of great stress and anxiety, often leading to physical, emotional, and social limitations. Visual Impairment & Blindness Services do not look at vision loss as a tragic event. There are solutions to be found to solve problems related to vision loss using a team approach. These solutions are geared towards helping the blind or visually impaired person remain independent as long as possible in every phase of daily life. In India begging is recognized and time-honored form of livelihood for the visually impaired children. In order to make them an enlightened and efficient member of society, the education system must take into consideration their needs, abilities, capabilities, aptitudes and their likes and dislikes. In India there is limited number of educational institutions for visually impaired children. Therefore, the educational institutions must be concerned with these considerations. How far these have been taken into consideration can be determined only with the help of a comprehensive research. So far very limited number of such studies have been

conducted and reported in Assam. By observing these factors, it is realized that there is need of a sociological study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows -

1. 1st objective is to study the socio-economic background of the visually impaired students.
2. To study the institutional facilities available for the visually impaired students.
3. To study the issues and challenges face by the visually impaired students in pursuing education.
4. To identify adjustment problems faced by the visually impaired students.

Research questions

1. Whether the visually impaired children face educational problems?
2. Whether the visually impaired student faces social problems?
3. Whether the visually impaired children face economic problems?
4. Whether the visually impaired children face adjustment problems?

Field and Methodology

The field of the present study has been confined to the states of Assam. In Assam there are mainly five blind schools. They are Guwahati Blind School Basistha; Gauhati, SrimantaSankar Mission Blind School; Nagaon, Jorhat Blind Institution; Jorhat, Moran JanamangalAdarsha Blind School; Moran, AssamShishu Andhra Vidyalaya; Bihpuria. There was a blind institution in Ghilamora at Lakhimpur district. But it is already almost not functioning.

Methodology of the study

As I have already stated all five blind schools are regarded as the universe of the study. For the fulfillment of the objective of the study, as the universe of this study is small, therefore, the entire universe is treated as sample. The present sample at the time of visiting was 270 in all blind schools of Assam. All the students of these schools are the respondent for the present study.

Research design of the study

The research design of the present study is descriptive method. It is more relevant and suitable with the nature of the problem.

Tools and Techniques to be used

In this study the data has been collected from primary and secondary sources .The primary data is collected by interview scheduled and observation. The secondary data is collected by official and government records, documents, books, newspaper etc.

Classification, Tabulation and Analysis of data

The data are collected in accordance with the outline of the purpose. After collecting data from the field, it was roughly been checked up. The next step was the classification of data. After collection of data the data are classified, tabulated and analysed according to need and demands of the present study. The collected data were classified into some tables in a systematic manner.

Analysis of Data

The data were analysed statistically according to the tables. For the analysis of data, the researcher used descriptive analysis process. The analysis of data was based on logical as well as statistical point of view. The analysis was based on information and comments of the respondents stated at the time of interview. In this regard calculations and frequency and percentage have also been made for the proper analysis of data.

Field Experience

In the study the investigator selected Guwahati blind school, Nowgaon blind school, Jorhat blind school, Moran blind school and Bihpuria blind school of Assam as her field of study. The investigator has good experience which she receives at the time of field work. She has got a great opportunity to visit many districts of Assam. Mainly she was excited when visited Bihpuria blind school of Lakhimpur district of Assam. All the ways are surrounded by greenish beauty. A cold wind was blowing from the Arunachal Pradesh which is about 10 kms away from Bihpuria. Making relationship with the blind students is very exciting. Some of the blind students want to know why this information are necessary.

Delimitation of the study

The delimitations of the study are as follows -

1. The study will include only visually impaired students studying in blind schools of Assam.
2. The study will include the students from class 1 to class x.
3. The study will include the schools managed by the ministry of social welfare and voluntary organization.

Major Findings-

Findings of the 1st objective

Objective- To study the socio-economic background of the respondents.

It is found by the investigator that much attention was not paid for the education of the blind, because in preparatory class very less number of respondents were found. Because of that the respondents were not admitted in the class at the actual age. Many over aged respondents were found in every class of every school of Assam.

Male respondents were more than female respondents in all blind schools. More Hindu respondents were found than any other religion in the study.

The rapid growth of nuclear family system was seen in the study. Advancement and spread of education played a vital role to break the joint family system. It is the need of the society to live alone.

Though small family is preferred by the individual, it is seen by the investigator that studied visually impaired children bears big family size. Though the parents of visually impaired respondents were not illiterate, they were not highly educated. High salaried job were not seen among the parents. Most of the parents were farmer, income of their parents were not sound. Kachha house were found more than pukka house.

It was also found that schools were managed by the social welfare department, different non-government organizations and private donations. Some schools like Moran blind school are well managed, but some are suffered a lot.

Findings of the 2nd objective

Objective: To study the institutional facilities in the school.

It is assumed that 2nd objectives are fulfilled by the investigator. All the institutional facilities and issues and challenges was studied and the summary of the findings are given below-

Some essential facilities like hostel, mosquito net, and toiletry material, uniform were found to provide in all blind schools of Assam. But in Bihpuria and Jorhat blind school, toiletry material was not provided. It is very interesting that in Moran blind school, there was a beautiful Namghar where believers of all religion worshipped. The investigator found that some co-curricular activities were not provided in some blind schools. Interestingly weaving and bamboo

work was provided in Moran blind school only. Enough teaching learning material was provided in the schools. But in Bihpuria blind school teaching learning material was not provided equally. As the Braille books are key for the blind students therefore Braille books were provided in the school. But at the higher secondary level Braille books are not available.

The blind respondents were very much attracted for music. Majority of the children learnt to blow musical instrument and also learned singing. As other state controlled school all blind school was holding unit test, half yearly examination and annual examination. Though parent's teacher meet was essential all school seems to neglect it. It was found that all schools were covered by kaccha or pucca boundary walls. Though CCTV and siren are essential, there were no such facilities in the school. None of the school provided well medical facilities or permanent medical staff for the respondents. Separate rooms were provided for both boys and girls. Majority of the respondents were satisfied for the food that provided in the school. Both teacher and headmaster helped the respondents to solve any problem in their day to day life.

The respondents of Bihpuria blind school were deprived of active living and recreational facilities. Moran and Guwahati blind school had the credit of sufficient number of recreational facilities provided in the school. But no one school provided yoga classes. It was found by the investigator that except Jorhat blind school other respondents were impressed by the loving behaviour of the headmaster. Medium of the school were Assamese.

Findings of the 3rd Objective

Objective: To study the issues and challenges in the school.

We know that life of the blind children is very challenging, they face many educational, economic and adjustment problem in day to day life. It was found that they faced educational problem. But very few respondents replied that they had financial and adjustment problem. Usually we thought that due to the lack of eye sight, they may face many problems. But in practical field the investigator found that they were well adjusted with any situation.

Whether they were poor or rich it did not matter. Necessary materials were provided to them by the schools. But at first they faced problem in identifying letters, using toilet and in writing words. But regular eye check up and special classes were organised as remedial measures. Special classes helped them to clarify some difficult subjects. Light and ventilation

facilities were good except Bihpuria blind school. Due to the lack of electricity facilities the respondents of Bihpuria blind school did not use computer, fans etc.

Very few respondents were aware about different prominent visually impaired persons. Some of the visually impaired respondents were not inspired by the activities of them. But self esteem of the respondents was very strong. Some of the respondents replied that they have the capacity to do something better for the society. A few amounts of the respondents can operate computer with the help of special software.

Conclusion

The investigator concluded that much attention was not paid for the education of the blind, because in preparatory class very less number of respondents were found. Because of that the respondents were not admitted in the class at their actual age. Many over aged respondents were found in every class of every school in the field of study. Male respondents were more than female respondents. Respondents of Hindu religion were found than more than any other religion in the study. The rapid growth of nuclear family system was seen in the study.

Though small family is preferred by the individual, it is seen by the investigator that the visually impaired children bear big family size. The parents of visually impaired respondents were not illiterate; they were also not highly educated. High salaried job were not seen among the parents. So, kachha house were found more than pukka houses.

Schools were managed by the social welfare department, different non government organisations and private donations. Some schools like Moran blind school are well managed, but some have suffered a lot.

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capacity to do something better for the society. A few amounts of the respondents can operate computer with the help of special software.

Recommendations

In the light of the study conducted following recommendations have been offered so that, they may help teachers, policy makers, parents and researchers. The present study is related with the socio-economic background, institutional facilities, issues and challenges and adjustment problem of visually impaired children studied in all blind schools of Assam. After knowing the findings of the study following recommendations are proposed by the researcher.

1. Parents should be conscious for the education of their children. They should be made to understand that they are not different from sighted world, but they can be more efficient in some activities than any other sighted children. They should send their children at early age.
2. Teacher should create good environment and provide opportunities for better interaction of visually impaired children with other children for better adjustment.
3. It is assume that the schools are not appropriate for the blind, because staying within the four walls of the school they are deprived of social skill, competition spirits and social acceptance as if they are separate creatures. So the principle of the school should be reshaped.
4. Curriculum should focus on health and hygiene, exercise, yoga, training on mobility skills etc.
5. All blind institution should introduce guidance and counseling cell in school campus.
6. The Government should take immediate action for extension of classes to higher secondary level and to publish Braille books for higher secondary students.
7. Permanent doctor should be appointed in all blind schools of Assam.
8. Adequate arrangement should be made to give vocational training to blind children to make them economically self independence.
9. To teach the skill of weaving and bamboo work facilities should be made available in all blind schools of Assam.
10. The school authority should try to arrange parent's teacher meet one in thrice month.

11. CCTV, siren and fire extinguisher should be easily available in all blind schools of Assam.
12. The school should try to organise meeting by inviting notable visually impaired persons and should request them to deliver lecture to say their success story to the respondents.
13. The role of the school is most significant for helping visually impaired children. The school should encourage the blind students to take part in various activities and ensure more facilities for them.
14. Parents should be aware for the early entry of their children in the school. It is seen by the investigator in the study that many over aged children are studying in different classes. Actually it is wastage of time of the students.
15. In Jorhat and Nagaon recreational facilities should be provided accessible for all respondents studying in blind schools of Assam.
16. Support should be given to keep the mental health of the children.

Suggestion for Further Research

The visually impaired children on account of their impairments and deficiencies have specific needs and problems. The study which the investigator conducted had its imitations and delimitation also. So, other studies can be conducted with a wide range of varieties. Some of the suggestions are given below.

1. In this study emphasis is given on sociological study. So, another study may be done on educational or psychological character of the visually impaired respondents.
2. The present study is delimited to the students of blind students studying in the blind schools of Assam. So, further study may be done to make comparison with other blind schools of other state.
3. A comparison may be done between visually impaired children studying in integrated school and special school.
4. Another study may be done on parent's perception about their children and the blind school.
5. It is seen in the study that various problems are faced by the blind institutions of Assam. So, an in-depth study may be done on the problems faced by the blind institutions of Assam.

6. Another study may be done while taking the respondents such as headmasters, teachers and officials in particular.

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