

The Phenomenological Analysis of Blinds Academic Achievement Factors

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Introduction

The most important channel of learning is the visual channel because 80% of human learning is done through the visual channel. One of the problems of blind people or those with visual impairments is educational problems, especially in higher education. Some studies have shown that people with visual impairments might have less self-efficacy, lower educational progress and physical abilities due to social rejection. However, these people have special talents. The educational level is one of the predictors of self-confidence, self-esteem and the life quality for blind people. Therefore, the level of education and presence in university will have positive effects on the blind individuals' psychological well-being. Although some studies have been conducted on the educational progress of people with visual impairments, no qualitative research has yet been conducted with the aim of evaluating the understanding, lived experience of these people and the influential factors in their academic achievement in higher education. Therefore, the goal of this research is to identify the main factors underlying the academic achievement of blind students via the exploration of their lived experiences.

Method

The current research was conducted with a qualitative approach via the application of phenomenological methodology. The participants of this research were 15 blind students in Iran who were either PhD. candidates or graduates from universities during 2018-2019 academic year. These

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participants were selected via snowball sampling. Sampling continued until we reached data saturation and further data did not provide us with any new information. The data were collected through deep semi-structured interviews during 3 months by telephone interviews while using Colaizzi methodology for coding and analyzing the data through seven steps. For validating the results of this research, the final analysis of interviews was tabulated with variables and concepts were shown to three participants and two professors who were familiar with the scope of the study for study. They all agreed with the extracted themes and the interpreted data.

Results

About 248 initial codes, which were extracted from the interviews through similar meanings, were organized in 44 concepts. They were categorized into the following 10 main themes: family supports, using education for meeting the needs, compensating for the experiences and unpleasant feelings, perspectives and hopeful believes, secondary educational achievements, educational context, positive personal features, cognitive talents and abilities, positive social factors and goal-defining toward values and interests.

Conclusion

The participants' interviews show that having higher family support was the reason that these people choose education for meeting their innate needs for progress, independence, attention and security. Also, they choose education based on unpleasant feelings and experiences from social contacts in order to build a bright future for themselves. They had achievements with the help of their cognitive abilities and characteristics such as hard working, tolerance and responsibility which motivated them for their further progress. Educational context and hopeful perspective in society about higher education also encouraged them to increase their attention to academic studies as well as acquiring academic achievements.

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