

Grit, Self Image and Coping Strategies among Sighted and Visually Impaired College Students

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to compare the level of grit, coping strategies and self-image among blind and sighted college students. Ex-post facto research design and convenience sampling was used. The sample included 80 city college students, where 40 were visually impaired and 40 were sighted day scholars. Independent t tests was done using SPSS package where a significant difference among the visually impaired and sighted college students was found in grit, task-oriented coping strategy and self-image, with no significant difference in self-esteem scores.

Keywords: *Grit, Self-image, Coping Strategies, Self-Esteem, Visually Impaired, Sighted College Students*

More than a billion people worldwide live with some type of a disability. This comprises of 15 percent of the total population of the world. 2 to 4 percent of such people undergo significant impairment in functioning and they require technical assistance to support them. Some of these devices include low vision correction devices, hearing aids and wheelchairs. Around 2.2 billion people globally experience either blindness or some form of vision impairment. This includes 285 million people who are visually impaired and 39 million people who are blind. (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020)

Visual impairments include low vision and blindness and refer to any degree of impairment to a person's ability to see that affects his or her daily life. (Sapp, 2010) It can be fixed but it often requires some curative devices such as glasses or contact lenses. It is also known as vision loss. Some people who cannot have access to such corrective measures live with the disability permanently. Visual acuity of less than 20/40 or 20/60 can be diagnosed as visually impaired. Blindness, on the other hand, refers to complete or nearly complete loss of vision. Visual impairment and blindness can significantly cause complications in leading

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a normal life. It can hinder day to day activities such as reading, cooking, driving, socializing, walking and grooming. (World Health Organization, 2015) The etiology could stem due to biological and environmental factors that leads to impairments in a person's daily functioning and limits his social competencies. This paves way for the society to isolate these individuals and thus, they become victims of discrimination, stigma, prejudice and stereotypes (Brunes et al., 2019).

Lazarus & Folkman (1984) defined coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.” (Garcia, 2010) **Self-image** refers to a person’s reflection of having an orientation or regard to himself as an object (Sirgy, 1982). Self-image has an impact on a person’s thoughts, feelings and behaviour. “**Grit**,” coined by Duckworth et al., (2007) embodies two important qualities needed for excellence and success: passion and perseverance. It is an unwavering trait, as it did not oscillate between the various life domains, age groups, time of onset of the disability or gender. (Crehan, 2015)

In this study, individuals with visual impairment are focused, as visual impairment can limit people's functionality with regards to day-to-day activities and can have an effect on their quality of life and ability to interact with their environment. (Eremie, 2019) Such individuals tend to have poor self-esteem (Papadopoulos et al., 2013), an unduly sense of dependence (Vignesh et al., 2019) and a poor social life (Beteinaki et al., 2019; Ofeibea Amedo et al., 2016). Despite their shortcomings, some have the determination to succeed in life with support from significant others and the means to adjust and manage their limitations effectively. The current research intends on focusing on the coping strategies, self-image and grit exhibited by visually impaired students in comparison to sighted college students.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

- To assess the level of grit, coping strategies and self-image in blind college students.
- To compare the level of grit, coping strategies and self-image among blind and sighted college students.

Research Design

The research design was an ex-post facto research.

Sampling and Sample

Convenience sampling was used to collect data from 80 students aged 18-23 years, of whom, 40 were visually impaired and 40 were sighted city college students.

Instruments

- **Grit S-Scale:** The Short Grit S-Scale was developed by Duckworth & Quinn, (2009). It is an 8- item self-survey scale which measures the facets of grit, specifically passion and perseverance. The internal reliability for the Short Grit Scale was $\alpha = .82$.
- **Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS):** Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations is a 48 item self-report scale which was designed by Endler & Parker, (1990). It is used to assess the various coping styles in individuals. It consists of three scales with 16 items each assessing Task-, Emotion-, and Avoidance-oriented

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coping. The avoidance scale is further classified into two sub scales measuring avoidance through distraction and social diversion.

- **Self-Image Profile for Adults (SIP- Adult):** The Self Image Profile for Adults is a 30 item self-report scale that was developed by Butler & Gasson, (2006). It assesses the individual's perception of self and it identifies both self-image and self-esteem. It assesses the individual's perception of self and it identifies both self-image and self-esteem. The measure demonstrates good internal consistency with Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .898.

Procedure

The data was collected from the visually impaired students of a city college. The questionnaires were presented to them though Braille form, exclusively prepared for the study. The data was collected online from sighted individuals studying in various city colleges. Consent was sought from the participants and confidentiality was maintained.

Statistical Analysis

Mean scores of the samples were obtained and the differences were statistically analyzed by computing independent t tests scores to examine the differences in grit, coping strategies self-image and self-esteem in visually impaired and sighted college students.

RESULTS

Table I: Means, Standard Deviations and 't' value for grit between sighted and visually impaired college students

| Variable | Sample | Mean | SD | N | t-Value | df | p |
|----------|-------------------|------|------|----|---------|----|------|
| Grit | Visually Impaired | 3.70 | 0.38 | 40 | 3.77* | 71 | .003 |
| | Sighted | 3.31 | 0.53 | 40 | | | |

** $p < 0.01$

Results indicate that there were significant differences in grit between sighted and visually impaired college students. Grit was observed to be significantly higher in visually impaired college students in comparison to sighted college students, $t(78) = 3.77, p < 0.01$. The mean score of visually impaired college students ($M=3.70, SD=0.38$) was found to be higher than that of sighted college students ($M=3.31, SD=0.53$).

Table II: Means, Standard Deviations and 't' value for coping strategies between sighted and visually impaired college students

| Variable | Sample | Mean | SD | N | t-Value | df | p |
|--|-------------------|-------|-------|----|---------|----|------|
| Task-oriented Coping | Visually Impaired | 55.65 | 9.98 | 40 | 3.03* | 78 | .003 |
| | Sighted | 47.92 | 12.62 | 40 | | | |
| Emotion-oriented coping | Visually Impaired | 53.10 | 10.44 | 40 | 0.05 | 78 | .96 |
| | Sighted | 52.97 | 13.13 | 40 | | | |
| Avoidance -oriented coping | Visually Impaired | 56.97 | 13.12 | 40 | 1.17 | 78 | .24 |
| | Sighted | 53.57 | 12.82 | 40 | | | |
| Distraction-oriented avoidance coping | Visually Impaired | 56.02 | 11.86 | 40 | -0.01 | 78 | .98 |
| | Sighted | 56.07 | 11.57 | 40 | | | |
| Social Diversion-oriented avoidance coping | Visually Impaired | 54.32 | 12.67 | 40 | 1.70 | 78 | .09 |
| | Sighted | 49.60 | 12.07 | 40 | | | |

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Task-oriented coping strategy was observed to be significantly higher in visually impaired college students in comparison to sighted college students, $t(78) = 3.03, p < 0.01$. The mean score of visually impaired college students ($M = 55.65, SD = 9.98$) was found to be higher than that of sighted college students ($M = 47.92, SD = 2.62$). However, there were no significant differences in emotion-oriented coping strategy, $t(78) = 0.05$, avoidance-oriented coping strategy, $t(78) = 1.17$, distraction-oriented avoidance coping strategy, $t(78) = 0.01$, and social diversion-oriented avoidance coping strategy, $t(78) = 1.70$ between sighted and visually impaired college students.

Table III: Means, Standard Deviations and 't' value for self-image between sighted and visually impaired college students

| Variable | Sample | Mean | SD | N | t-Value | df | p |
|-------------|-------------------|--------|-------|----|---------|----|------|
| Self-Image | Visually Impaired | 130.75 | 22.91 | 40 | 3.26* | 64 | .001 |
| | Sighted | 107.85 | 37.8 | 40 | | | |
| Self-Esteem | Visually Impaired | 26.67 | 19.02 | 40 | 0.01 | 76 | .99 |
| | Sighted | 26.62 | 22.51 | 40 | | | |

Self-image was observed to be significantly higher in visually impaired college students in comparison to sighted college students, $t(78) = 3.26, p < 0.01$. The mean score of visually impaired college students ($M = 130.75, SD = 22.91$) was found to be higher than that of sighted college students ($M = 107.85, SD = 37.8$). However, there were no significant differences in self-esteem, $t(78) = 0.01$ between the two groups.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the level and differences in grit, self-image and coping strategies among visually impaired college students in comparison to sighted college students. Grit was found to be higher in visually impaired college students, which indicates that their level of passion and perseverance in order to achieve a goal is greater than those students with normal vision. The finding implies that there may be a drive in them to achieve both short-term and long-term goals with an added sense of optimism and hope which may make them feel good about themselves aiding them to realize their self-worth (Kleiman et al., 2013).

It was found that task-oriented coping strategy was higher in visually impaired college students, which indicates that they readily work to reduce the tension arising from an adversity and attempt to maintain a state of equilibrium, unlike sighted students who may put off solving the problem at hand for a later time. Tołczyk & Pisula, (2019) reported that there were no differences in coping styles between the two groups, which is contrary to the above finding.

Self-image was assessed to be higher in non-sighted college students in comparison to the sighted college students. These results are consistent with the study conducted by Obiakor, F. E.; Stile, (1990) who proposed that visually impaired students may have better self-concepts including its domain of self-image.

Self-esteem was observed to be similar in both the groups of non-sighted and sighted college students. It can be interpreted that visual impairment might not have had an impact on the self-esteem of the non-sighted college students, thus leading both the groups of students to have similar sets of firm beliefs and principles. This is in coherent with the findings of

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Griffin-Shirley & Nes, (2005) and Huurre et al., (1999) who also supported that there may not be significant differences in self-esteem of non-sighted and sighted college students.

The findings of this study have significantly added to the growing body of literature on grit, coping strategies and self-image. The limitations of this study were that it was not randomised, does not include a wider age group, and focused on students excluding the impact of employment, marriage and other factors.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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