

# Social and Environmental Factors as Determinants of Self-Adjustment of Persons with Visual Impairment in Oyo State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Persons with visual impairment often receive inappropriate behaviour from their environment as well as encountering many unpleasant challenges in their effort to cope with vicissitudes of life. Most study on persons with visual impairment tend to focus on the use of assistive visual devices and their academic achievement with little or no studies devoted to factors that can help them to achieve proper self-adjustment within society. This current study therefore examined the social and environmental factors as determinants of self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment in Oyo State of Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted while purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred participants for the study. Findings revealed that social and environmental factors were positively correlated with self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment. The joint contribution of social and environmental factors to self-adjustment was significant,  $F = 436.424$ ,  $P < 0.05$ , accounting for about 89.8% of the variance. The relative contribution of the independent variables to self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment ranked environmental factors ( $\beta = 0.883$ ,  $t = 27.404$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) more than the Social factors ( $\beta = 0.426$ ,  $t = 13.222$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in terms of beta. Social and environmental factors are important determinants of self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment. Therefore, it is recommended that family, school and community should accept persons with visual impairment through caring and supportive attitudes, and learn to accommodate them.

**Keywords:** Visual impairment, social factors, environmental factors, self-adjustment.

## INTRODUCTION

Persons with visual impairment refers to those with total blindness, partial sightedness and low vision. These individuals often receive hostile and inappropriate behaviour or attitude from their environment. In addition, they have fewer social experiences compared to their subject peers (Beaty, 1994). Students with visual impairment, for instance, lack confidence expressed through pattern of passivity, dependence or an unwillingness to take responsibility (Gurb, 2000). Even when they are included in a regular class, this does not necessarily help them to interact with their sighted peers. Many of them still suffer from social isolation, fewer friends and inadequate social abilities (George and Duquette, 2006 and Hurre, Komukinen and Aro, 1999). Besides the challenges everyone faces, persons with visual impairment have many more such as learning orientation to a new place and creating supportive networks. All these challenges tend to impact negatively on their self-adjustment.

Furthermore, a person who loses his or her sight undergoes extensive behavioural-motivational, cognitive and emotional adjustment (Dodds and Flannisen, 1994). It is a fact that visual impairment of whatever degree can cause psychological mala-adjustments if not mitigated. Adjustment is often personalized and depends on nature and quality of prevailing

psycho-social support and rehabilitation of opportunities. It is a devastating physical condition with deep emotional and economic implications. The consequences affect not only the individual but also the family and the community. The loss of vision after illness or trauma causes major changes in life-styles which may result in problems of psychological and social adjustment of the victim. Across the globe, persons with visual impairment encounter many unpleasant challenges in their effort to cope with vicissitude of life. Moreso, attempts to study this subject matter has being confined to focused mainly on their academic achievement and the use of assistive visual devices with little or no studies devoted to factors that can help them to achieve self-adjustment in the society. This scanty literature on self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment suggests that the characteristics of this set of people make it difficult for them to blend with others in society. A review of literature reveals that much of the research on people with visual impairment focuses on older adults and late-onset blindness especially regarding environmental needs.

Social factors such as family, school and community have been found to alter or even reverse expected negative outcomes by enabling individuals with visual impairment to circumvent life stressors and manifest resilience despite risk. In the literature, studies indicate that the main attributes of these factors are caring and supportive relationships, positive and high expectation, and opportunities for meaningful participation; which is termed as “Protective factors or protective processes” (George and Duquette (2006). The society at large is responsible for the creation of the social construct which stifle the enhancement of one’s potentials and perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty on persons with disabilities. For instance, persons with visual impairment, who experienced the security of loving parents and have strong attachments to their parents, are better able to reach out to other relatives. This preposition is supported by attachment theory that posits that children who enjoy a secure attachment relationship with their parents and other care-givers use this relationship as a support to venture out and explore their environment (Maccoby, 1993). Thus, parents who are secure and competent offer children a model of security from which to build their own social skills, while parents who are more authoritarian and demand obedient, conforming and dependent offspring, may have children who are never really comfortable exploring the world for themselves.

Similarly, characteristics of culture also affect peoples’ development social skills. Instructors who take the time to observe and know the culture and community in which children live are better able to build on its strengths or work to mediate its potential negative effects on children’s social development. However, people who live in violent or unsafe communities may be fearful and withdrawn when in their learning environment. Those exposed to domestic abuse, gang violence, and petty or not-so-petty criminals do not feel safe or secure. Their feelings of insecurity will interfere with their total development, especially social skills development (Gross and Clemens, 2002 and Slaby et al., 1995). Children who witness violence or have been personally affected by violence will express their needs, grief, fears, apprehensions, and thoughts in different ways. Some may withdraw, become irritable, or stop eating or sleeping; others may act out. It’s important for teachers to take their cues from the child. Support each child as an individual while providing all children with the following:

*‘Make sure routines are kept, that children know and can depend on the structure of the day. Accept children’s feelings and behavior with support and acceptance. Find ways for children to express themselves, whether through outdoor play, running, drawing, painting, building or telling stories’ (NAEYC, 2001).*

Pertinent to the above, school settings is another important factor affecting social development. In addition to a child's parents and family, the teacher becomes an agent of socialization. The school set rules, limits, and standards for behavior. Other children also become models, setting new or different standards for social behaviours. Entrance into the school society can be difficult for young children (Seefeldt, 2005). The dichotomy of socialization – developing a strong sense of individuality while learning to become a member of a group – is ever-present in school. At school, students not only share materials, toys, and time but also shared in the attention of their teacher. Here, they learn to cooperate, see others viewpoints and work together as a team for the common welfare improvement.

The social model of disability stressed that the specific problems experienced by persons with disabilities generally result from the totality of disabling environment and cultures (Oliver, 2004). Thus, many of the practical difficulties that persons with visual impairment experienced were due to environmental barriers and obstacles that are a direct result of an inaccessible environment. This environment includes lack of opportunities for self-growth, lack of inclusive academic environment, inadequate understanding of their needs, societal negatives attitudes and others. Many blind and partially sighted people need to gain a level of independence however, depending on the severity of the vision loss, they often require assistance Bramley (2008) found that vision loss increased the risk of being put into managed care rather than attempts being made to help one make the transition of adapting to living in a sighted environment in their own home. It has been shown that aid in small tasks is far more valued services than someone taking over all household task.

Assistance regarding safety is also a need evident in research. The Audit Commission (2001) reports that 190,000 visually impaired people were admitted to hospital as a consequence of falls in 1999. Douglas, Pavey and Corcoran (2008) found that vision loss due to glaucoma significantly increased risk of falls, accidents and injury at home and there was a direct loss burden of blindness during the first year of managed care. Help making the home a safer place and allow an individuals' greater freedom and independence in living will improve their self-adjustment. Furthermore, the common and principal environmental problem confronting persons with visual impairment is the societal attitudinal barrier. Generally, the society tends to display low expectation of these people which undermined their potential. In addition to the attitudinal encounter, lack of disability-specific environmental support is another obstacle confronting them. All these have consistently worked against their self-adjustment. A positive emotional climate and caring environment is an essential condition for the healthy growth, development and self-adjustment of all people in general and those with visual impairment in particular.

The negative impacts of visual impairment seems to have reduced their quality of life, unable to access education, difficulties to get a marriageable partner, denial of employment, exposed to physical and verbal abuses, and generally experience negative family and societal attitudes which often weaken their self-esteem and expose them to the risk of developing avoidable mental health problems. Pertinent to the above, individuals with visual impairment also contend with difficulties in mobility, in accessing information, uses of telephone and in accessing transportation. Thus, they find it difficult to adjust to their environment. Clearly, the issues affecting persons with visual impairment need to be addressed to enable them adjust appropriately to the demands of societal life. Hence, this study therefore examined the social and environmental factors as determinants of self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment in Ibadan Oyo State. Thus, the basic objective of this paper is to examine the

relationship between environmental, social factors and self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment. The scope of the study was limited to students with visual impairment in Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo and University of Ibadan.

### METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive research design. The research methodology was chosen because of the cultural and environmental undertone which can best be captured by using descriptive statistics, explorative analysis and observational qualitative design. It is descriptive because the study presented the events as they are and there was no manipulation of any variable. The population of this study contains all persons with visual impairments in Oyo State. The target population for this study consisted of one hundred purposive selected students with visual impairment from the two selected tertiary institutions (University of Ibadan and Federal College of Education Oyo). Moreover, we employed self- adjustment scale which is an adaptation of the college adjustment scale (CAS). The CAS is a self- report instrument that focuses on the level of adjustment among persons with visual impairment. This instrument consisted of 30 items questionnaire placed on a 4-point likert scale of agree, disagree, strongly agree and strongly disagree which cut across various problems of adjustment. The instrument was adapted to suit the needs of the participants. Before concluding on the instrument, a pilot tested was conducted on twenty persons with visual impairment within the polytechnic Ibadan and the reliability index score was 0.86. The data collected were collated, scored, computed and analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics of frequency counts, simple percentages and inferential statistics of T-Test and Multiple Regression Analysis.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were reported in table 1; across the sample institution, University of Ibadan had 13(13.0%) of the respondents while the remaining 87% were respondents from federal college of education special. In the table, 59.0% of the respondents were males while 41.0% were females, implies that there were more females visual impaired respondents than males within the sample.

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents Demographic Characteristics**

Institution	Frequency	Percent	Degree of visual impairment	Frequency	Percent
University of Ibadan	13	13.0	Total Blind	45	45.0
Federal College of Education Special	87	87.0	Partially sighted	32	32.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	Low Vision	23	23.0
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Male	59	59.0	<b>Onset of visual impairment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	41	41.0	Congenital	48	48.0

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	Adventitious	52	52.0
<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
20 - 25years	41	41.0	<b>Family social economic status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
26 – 30 years	24	24.0	Low	31	31.0
30 years and above	35	35.0	Middle	54	54.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	High	15	15.0
<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Primary Education	2	2.0	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Secondary Education	13	13.0	Students	76	76.0
Tertiary Education	85	85.0	Lecturer	7	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	Civil servant	7	7.0
			Artisan	4	4.0
			Self- Employment	6	6.0
			<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Again we observed that 41.0% of the visual impaired respondents were between the ages of 20 - 25 years, 24.0% were between 26 -30 years of age, while 35.0% between the age of 30years and above. This denotes that majority of the respondents were in their prime age of 20 - 25 years. In terms of respondents' education, 2.0% hold primary education, 13.0% are secondary education holders, while 85.0% claimed tertiary education. Interestingly, our sample captured 7.0% Lecturers, 76.0% students, and 7.0% Civil servant. Other occupation of respondents includes Artisan (4.0%) and Self- employed workers (6.0%). Similarly, the demographic table revealed that 45.0% of the respondents sampled are totally blind, 32.0% are partially sighted, while the remaining 23.0% have low vision. Also, Table 1 revealed that 48.0% of the respondent sampled have congenital onset visual impairment, while 52.0% have adventitious onset visual impairment, this indicates that majority of the respondents have adventitious onset visual impairment (See Table 1 for details).

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1

#### What is the relationship between social factors and self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment?

The results of social factors as determinants of self- adjustment among persons with visual impairment are presented in Table 2 below. Responses revealed that family social support (Mean 3.44) is ranked highest in the Mean score rating and was followed by good friends among both with normal vision and those with visual impairment (Mean 3.40). other score attributed to various responses are that; Despite visual limitation, I take part in social activities without hindrance(Mean 3.27), I can move around easily without any support(Mean 3.25), I

adapt easily at home and in other environment(Mean 3.20), I do not see my visual limitation as a problem(Mean 3.16).

**Table 2: Social factors and self-adjustment among persons with visual impairment**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Rank
1	My family gives me sufficient social support	66(66%)	17(17%)	12(12%)	5(5%)	3.44	.891	1
2	I am from poor family background	20(20%)	42(42%)	18(18%)	20(20%)	2.62	1.023	8
3	My family is rich and provide my needs	19(19%)	29(29%)	14(14%)	38(38%)	2.29	1.166	14
4	Adapting to the demands of daily living is a challenge	19(19%)	32(32%)	17(17%)	32(32%)	2.38	1.126	11
5	My parents are overly protective	22(22%)	21(21%)	23(23%)	34(34%)	2.31	1.161	13
6	I adapt easily at home and in other environment	46(46%)	35(35%)	12(12%)	7(7%)	3.20	.910	5
7	I blend well with other people in the environment	42(42%)	35(35%)	8(8%)	15(15%)	3.04	1.053	7
8	Work place environment is oppressive and pose a challenge to me	30(30%)	26(26%)	19(19%)	25(25%)	2.61	1.163	9
9	I have good friends among both those with normal vision and those with visual impairment who assist me sometimes	57(57%)	32(32%)	5(5%)	6(6%)	3.40	.841	2
10	My boss considers my needs in my place of work	17(17%)	34(34%)	13(13%)	36(36%)	2.32	1.136	12
11	My siblings assist me to carry out my domestic work at home	20(20%)	41(41%)	14(14%)	25(25%)	2.56	1.076	10
12	I find it difficult to adjust in my place of work without support	18(18%)	23(23%)	24(24%)	35(35%)	2.24	1.120	15
13	I can move around easily without any support	48(48%)	34(34%)	13(13%)	5(5%)	3.25	.869	4
14	I do not see my visual limitation as a problem	47(47%)	31(31%)	13(13%)	9(9%)	3.16	.972	6
15	Despite visual limitation, I take part in social activities without hindrance	46(46%)	39(39%)	11(11%)	4(4%)	3.27	.815	3

I blend well with other people in the environment(Mean 3.04), I am from poor family background (Mean 2.62), Work place environment is oppressive and pose a challenge to me(Mean 2.61), My siblings assist me to carry out my domestic work at home(Mean 2.56), Adapting to the demands of daily living is a challenge (Mean 2.38), My boss considers my needs in my place of work(Mean 2.32), My parents are overly protective (Mean 2.31), My family is rich and provide my needs, (Mean 2.29), I find it difficult to adjust in my place of work without

support (Mean 2.24) respectively. Conclusively, the results showed that social factors are determinants of self-adjustment among persons with visual impairment. These results are consistence with that of Liang, Krause and Bennett, (2001) who noted that the social relationship of an individual and the support networks one builds are vital to one's well-beings.

### **Research question 2: What is the relationship between environmental factors and self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment?**

Orientation and mobility education are necessary to help the visually impaired persons to adjust in the society (Mean 3.80) ranked highest in the Mean score rating and was followed by Persons with visual impairment need accessibility location to function effectively in the society (Mean 3.68), Societal acceptance will boost the morale of persons with visual impairment (Mean 3.67), Provision of accommodation for persons with visual impairment is poor (Mean 3.47), Societal negative attitude is demeaning and oppressive (Mean 3.43), Fellow workers tends to look down on employed workers with visual impairment (Mean 3.36), Persons with visual impairment are not involved by the government at all level in the decision making process (Mean 3.35), Societal infrastructures are often not suitable for persons with visual impairment (Mean 3.32), Society believes that it is a waste of resources to educate persons with visual impairment (Mean 3.22), Even with employment, persons with visual impairment are not well guided and motivated to perform their job effectively (Mean 3.21).

**Table 3: Environmental factors and self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Societal negative attitude is demeaning and oppressive	58(58%)	29(29%)	11(11%)	2(2%)	3.43	.769	5
2	Persons with visual impairment are disallowed from participating in social activities	40(40%)	15(15%)	33(33%)	12(12%)	2.83	1.092	13
3	Orientation and mobility education are necessary to help the visually impaired persons to adjust in the society	85(85%)	12(12%)	1(1%)	2(2%)	3.80	.550	1
4	Persons with visual impairment cannot be gainfully employed in any occupation	15(15%)	21(21%)	21(21%)	43(43%)	2.08	1.116	15
5	Societal infrastructures are often not suitable for persons with visual impairment	46(46%)	35(35%)	14(14%)	5(5%)	3.22	.871	8
6	Persons with visual impairment are not often selected as resource persons or speakers in seminars or workshop	48(48%)	24(24%)	18(18%)	10(10%)	3.10	1.030	11
7	Even with employment, persons with visual impairment are not well guided and motivated to perform their job effectively	50(50%)	30(30%)	11(11%)	9(9%)	3.21	.967	10
8	Fellow workers tends to look down on employed workers with visual impairment	53(53%)	33(33%)	11(11%)	3(3%)	3.36	.798	6

9	Provision of accommodation for persons with visual impairment is poor	59(59%)	33(33%)	4(4%)	4(4%)	3.47	.758	4
10	Society believes that it is a waste of resources to educate persons with visual impairment	54(54%)	25(25%)	10(10%)	11(11%)	3.22	1.021	9
11	Persons with visual impairment have no access to information about life generally	39(39%)	21(21%)	23(23%)	17(17%)	2.82	1.132	14
12	Persons with visual impairment have no access to transportation and social services	45(45%)	16(16%)	28(28%)	11(11%)	2.95	1.086	12
13	Persons with visual impairment are not involved by the government at all level in the decision making process	56(56%)	29(29%)	9(9%)	6(6%)	3.35	.880	7
14	Persons with visual impairment need accessibility location to function effectively in the society	73(73%)	23(23%)	3(3%)	1(1%)	3.68	.584	2
15	Societal acceptance will boost the morale of persons with visual impairment	71(71%)	26(26%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	3.67	.570	3

Persons with visual impairment have no access to transportation and social services (Mean 2.95), Persons with visual impairment are disallowed from participating in social activities (Mean 2.83), Persons with visual impairment have no access to information about life generally (Mean 2.82), Persons with visual impairment cannot be gainfully employed in any occupation, (Mean 2.08), respectively. The results showed that environmental factors are determinants of self-adjustment among persons with visual impairment. Findings showed a significant relationship exists between the two variables and this is in line with the submission of Oliver (2004) who opined that the social model of disability stresses that the specific problems experienced by people with disability generally including those with visual impairment result from the totality of the disabling environment and culture.

**Research Question 3: What is the composite contribution of social and environmental factors to self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment?**

Table 4 showed that there was a significant composite contribution of social and environmental factors on self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment. That is, self-adjustment jointly affects the independent variables. The table also showed a goodness of fit of (R square) of 0.900 and adjusted R square value of 0.898. This means that our model jointly explained about 90% variations in the self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment in Oyo state. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $p < 0.05$  using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom ( $df = 2/97$ ). The table also showed that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 436.424 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variables was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance. The result thus supports the findings of (Bernard, 1995), who stresses that social factors such as family, school and community have been found to alter or even reverse expected negative outcomes and thus enable individuals with visual impairment to circumvent life stressors and manifest resilience despite risk.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis of the combined prediction of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable**

.R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
0.949	0.900	0.898	2.37326			
Summary Regression ANOVA						
	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	P	Remark
Regression	4916.219	2	2458.109	436.424	0.000	Significant.
Residual	546.341	97	5.632			
Total	5462.560	99				
Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)		Standardized Coefficients			
Model	(B)	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Remark
Constant(self-adjustment)	-2.288	2.568	-	-0.891	0.375	-
Social Factor	0.651	0.049	0.426	13.222	0.000	Significant
Environmental factors	0.763	0.028	0.883	27.404	0.000	Significant

Using the standardized regression coefficients to determine the relative contribution of the independent variables, environmental factors ( $\beta = 0.883$ ,  $t = 27.404$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is the most potent contributor to the prediction, follow by social factors ( $\beta = 0.426$ ,  $t = 13.222$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), in that order. It implies that there was a positive relative contribution of each of the independent variables (social and environmental factors) on the dependent variable self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment. This finding agreed with Bernard, 1995 and Trust (2000) that assistance which allows the individuals with visual impairment to remain in control in his/her environment and to assert independence will ultimately help them to achieve self-adjustment.

**Research question 5: What is the significant difference in the self-adjustment of male and female person with visual impairment?**

**Table 5: Testing the differences in self-adjustment of male and female persons with visual impairment**

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df.	t-Cal	t-Crit	P
Self-adjustment	Males	59	61.71	7.247	98	-	1.990	0.788(p<0.05)
	Females	41	62.12	7.765				
	Total	100						

**Source: Estimate from Regression Analysis**

Table 5 showed that there was no significant difference between in the self-adjustment of male and female persons with visual impairment, has was observed from the t-test result. There was no significant difference as the p-value was not significant at 5% level. This result was corroborated with the mean difference; the mean difference showed an insignificant little difference between self-adjustment of male and female persons with visual impairment in Oyo state. The result supports the findings of Dodds and Flannisen, 1994 who pointed out that a person (male or females) who loses his or her sight undergoes extensive behavioural motivational, cognitive and emotional adjustment, and the findings of Beauty (1992) and Lopez-Justica (2001) who observed that persons with visual impairment of both genders tend to feel inadequate and inferior because of their lack of social acceptance in the environment.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion social and environmental factors have a joint significant contribution on self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment in Oyo States. The need for improved self-adjustment of persons with visual impairment therefore becomes imperative and it depends on many factors such as level of education, economics status of the parents, family and social support, attitude of members of society, access to information and health facilities , the victim’s well- being, school support, support of religion people, community support and institutional supports. It has further become necessary in view of the numerous challenges encountered by persons with visual impairment to invest in training and retraining of special education personnel. Therefore, this study recommends that the family, school and community should reverse negative attitudes and change to caring and supportive attitudes toward individuals with visual impairment. Also, parents and teachers at all levels of education should take time to observe and understand the uniqueness of each person with visual impairment to build on his/her strengths for better social development. Lastly, the community should accept persons with visual impairment and learn to support them, while government at all levels should make provision for sponsoring person with visual impairment for social skills development.

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