

Does Being Handicapped Affect Self-Actualisation of Blind School Children?

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Self actualization describes the natural tendency of humans to strive to fulfill their potential. Progress through the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization – is the unintentional result of living, probably beginning in the childhood (Maslow, 1968). The unique characteristics of children provide additional potential for their developing skills, which promote self-actualization. Specific forms of self-actualization, therefore, vary greatly from person to person. Self-actualization need not to be limited to creative and artistic people but it is applied to different kinds of individuals in all walks of life. Every individual has an opportunity to fulfill his or her potential by doing well what each does best. The present investigation attempts to explore or find out the possible relations among the disabled or handicapped students and their level of self-actualization. For this purpose Personal Orientation Inventory was administered to 22 male students of high school who are handicapped students belonging to a blind school. The age range of subjects was 15 to 21 years with rural background. Findings indicate that most of the subjects were able to score high on the sub-scale of Self-regard (Sr) and Acceptance of self in spite of weaknesses (Sz) but were unable to reach the required level of self-actualization. Several statistically significant correlations suggest further work with larger sample.

In the natural course of life and living it has been observed that often individuals do not perform up to the maximum level of their inherent potentials. As a result, their abilities remain stunted, and their potential tends to wither away in the event of not being converted in manifest capacities. And it is even more amazing that often individuals are not even aware of their hidden potentials and tend to remain satisfied with whatever they are able to achieve. Social scientists have put forward the view that achievement level of individuals can be raised and their level of aspiration increased through systematic psycho-educational intervention. This

state of affair, viewed from the purely cultural viewpoint indicates that it could be the result of some societies being more competitive and achievement oriented than other societies. Which are by nature more contemplative and complacency dominated? In spite of these cultural differences, individuals can be motivated to work up to the maximum of their potentials leading to a healthy and productive life.

Self-actualization need not be limited to creative and artistic people but it is applied to different kinds of individuals. Every individual has opportunity to fulfill his or her potential by doing well what each does best.

Specific forms of self-actualization therefore vary greatly from person to person. Today, in major industrially developed countries affirmative action is being taken for hiring qualified handicapped employees. A handicapped person is broadly defined to include any individual with either a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (Wexley & Yukl, 1984). As a result of this trend avenues of training and employment are going to be opened for physically handicapped individual.

Physical disability seems to be an important factor influencing the behaviour and adjustment of a person. Firstly, by means of specific limitations of functions imposed directly by the impairment itself and secondly, by means of negative social significance of physical deviation in the Indian culture. The Indian organizations have yet to understand and take proactive steps to accommodate workers with disabilities e.g., offices with wheelchairs ramps, redesign of tools and equipment and special training programmes, etc. this negligence further marginalizes the physically disabled, producing lowered feelings of self-acceptance and self-worth.

Hasnain and Joshi (1984) compared lame boys with normal boys on certain psychological factors. No difference was found on the anxiety scores of the two but interestingly the normal were found to be more submissive whereas the lames were found to be more assertive. Ojha (2002) investigated social anxiety and various dimensions of mental health among orthopaedically handicapped youth. He found social anxiety to be higher especially in orthopaedically handicapped female as compared to orthopaedically handicapped males. On the various dimensions of mental health, viz; group oriented attitude, integration of personality and positive self-evaluation were found to be significant for physically handicapped. Groomes and

Leahy (2002) examined the relationship among the stress appraisal process, coping disposition, and level of acceptance of disability. The finding of this study indicates that people with disabilities attributes certain subjective meanings to stressful situations which are related to their particular ways of coping and levels of acceptance of their disability.

The purpose of the present study was to assess the level of self-actualization of visually handicapped high school students who are going to be a part of the future labour force of the country. The objective of the study was to find out to what level the visually handicapped children have accepted their disability and whether they are ready to take part as productive members of their society and nation and whether they understand their inner need to grow and self-actualize.

Method

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 22 blind children; age range of subjects was 15 to 21 years with rural background. The subjects have been taken from blind school of city of Varanasi. The educational qualification of subjects was high school. All subjects were male visually handicapped students.

Tools

Personal Orientation Inventory; It was developed by E.L. Shostrom (1963) was used to select respondents who are self-actualized and those who are not self-actualized. It is a 150 two-choice item, self-report questionnaire which reflects the values and behaviour of major importance in the development of a self-actualizing person. The items are scored twice, first for two basic scales of personal orientation, inner-directedness support (127 items) and time competent (27 items) and second for

ten scales each of which measures a conceptually important element of self-actualizing (1) Self-actualizing Value (SAV), (2) Existentiality (Ex), (3) Feeling Reactivity (Fr), (4) Spontaneity (S), (5) Self-regard (Sr), (6) Self-acceptance (Sa), (7) Nature of Man (Nc), (8) Synergy (Sy), (9) Acceptance of Aggression (A), (10) Capacity for Intimate Contact (C).

Procedure

The sample was selected using the eligibility criteria of age, education and sex. The tools were administered orally to each subject individually by the researcher. The efficiency of an oral administration of POI as a measure of self-actualization of disabled athletes was examined by Sherrill et al., (1990). Results show that inventory administered orally can be used appropriately with disabled athletes. The results were analyzed with the help of mean, SD and Coefficient of correlation.

Results and Discussion

The overall findings indicate that most of the handicapped students were high on the scale of Self-regard and Self-acceptance, but they were not able to self-actualize. These two scales may be considered to reflect the general area of self-perception. The sub-scale of Self-regard measures affirmation of self in terms of worth and strength and the subscale of Self-acceptance measures acceptance of one's self in spite of one's weaknesses or deficiencies. It is more difficult to achieve self-acceptance than self-regard. Self-actualizing requires both.

All the subjects who scored below the self-actualizing range, are therefore not able to reach the required level for self-actualization. Means of two main scales were 15.68 and 75.68 respectively (Table 1). This score indicates the subjects were time incompetent and other directed, this being the reason why they were

not able to self-actualize. Scores on the sub-scales of POI indicate that most of the subjects were well below the average mark except on two scales of Self-regard and Self-acceptance.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the scales of the POI.

POI scales	Mean	SD
1. Time Competence (Tc)	15.68	1.08
2. Inner-Directedness (I)	75.68	3.02
3. Self-actualizing Value (SAV)	17.18	1.53
4. Existentiality (Ex)	15.72	1.12
5. Feeling Reactivity (Fr)	13.95	0.99
6. Spontaneity (S)	9.40	1.18
7. Self-Regard (Sr)	12.04	1.29
8. Self-acceptance (Sa)	18.77	1.44
9. Nature of Man (Nc)	10.86	1.08
10. Synergy (Sy)	6.18	0.85
11. Acceptance of Aggression (A)	15.45	1.59
12. Capacity for Intimate Contact (C)	16.77	1.57

Further, table 1 gives the mean and SD of two main scales and ten sub-scale of the POI. The mean indicates that handicapped children are time incompetent (15.68), other-directed (75.68), rejects the value of self-actualizing people (17.18), insensitive to own needs and feelings (13.95) are fearful of expressing feelings behaviorally (9.40), have high self-worth (12.04), have acceptance of self in spite of weaknesses (18.77), sees man as essentially evil (10.86), sees opposites of life as antagonistic (6.18), denies feeling of anger and aggression (15.45) and have difficulty in warm interpersonal relationship (16.77).

Table 2: Correlation of Time Competence (Tc) with sub-scales of POI.

POI scales	r
1. Inner-Directedness (I)	0.735**
2. Self-actualizing Value (SAV)	- 0.205
3. Existentiality (Ex)	0.630**
4. Feeling Reactivity (Fr)	-0.469
5. Spontaneity (S)	-0.431
6. Self-Regard (Sr)	-0.149
7. Self-acceptance (Sa)	-0.447
8. Nature of Man (Nc)	0.165
9. Synergy (Sy)	0.065
10. Acceptance of Aggression (A)	-0.077
11.Capacity for Intimate Contact (C)	0.123

Table 2 gives the correlation of Time competence with ten sub-scales of POI. Significant positive correlation were found for Inner-directedness (0.735) and Existentiality (0.630) and negative correlation were found for the sub-scale of Feeling reactivity (- 0.469), Spontaneity (-0.431) and Self-acceptance (-0.447).

Positive and significant correlations were found between time competence and inner-directedness (0.735), indicating that these subjects do not discriminate well between past and future. They were not able to tie the past and the future to the present in a meaningful continuity. The other-directed seems to be motivated to develop a system that is built to receive signals from a far wide circle and not just parents and few authoritative figures in the person’s life. The primary feelings that control him are fear and anxiety brought on by the influences of school authorities or the peer group. They transform their feeling of fear into an obsessive, insatiable need for affection or reassurance of being loved. A mean of 15.72 on the sub-scale of existentiality indicates that these students hold values so rigidly

that they become compulsive or dogmatic. They were not flexible in application of values. Time competence is negatively correlated with the subscale of feeling reactivity this indicates that handicapped students who are time incompetent but have higher mean 13.95 on the sub-scale of feeling reactivity indicating that they are sensitive to their needs and feelings.

The sub-scale of spontaneity is also negatively correlated with time competence, this indicate that in spite of their time in competency, the students have the ability to freely express their feelings behaviourally. One important negative correlation was found on the scale of self-acceptance, this indicates that blind students who are not able to be time competent yet have the capacity of accepting themselves in spite of their weaknesses.

Table 3 gives the correlation of Inner-directedness with ten sub-scales of POI. Significant positive correlation was found on the scale of Existentiality (0.787) and negative correlation was found for the sub-scale of Self-actualizing Value (-0.618) and Spontaneity (-0.532).

Table 3: Correlation of Other-Directness (I) with sub-scales of POI

POI scales	r
1. Self-actualizing Value (SAV)	-0.618**
2. Existentiality (Ex)	0.787**
3. Feeling Reactivity (Fr)	-0.373
4. Spontaneity (S)	-0.532*
5. Self-Regard (Sr)	-0.274
6. Self-acceptance (Sa)	-0.357
7. Nature of Man (Nc)	0.040
8. Synergy (Sy)	0.276
9. Acceptance of Aggression (A)	-0.021
10.Capacity for Intimate Contact (C)	-0.126

**p<0.01 *p<0.05

Inner-directedness is positively correlated with the subscale of Existentiality which indicates that students are not flexible in applying values or principles of self-actualization to their life. Existentiality is a measure of one's ability to use good judgment in applying these general principles. The students who get low mean of 15.72 on this subscale tend to hold values so rigidly that they may become compulsive or dogmatic.

A negative correlation on the subscale of self-actualizing value with other-directed indicating that these students reject the values of self-actualizing individuals. Inner-directedness is also negatively correlated with Spontaneity, the mean of 9.40 on this scale indicate that in spite of their other directed oriented blind students have the ability to express feeling behaviourally. This scale measures the ability to express feelings in spontaneous action. As our finding indicates, the visually handicapped students were not fearful of expressing feelings behaviourally.

The above findings indicate that most of the visually impaired students, in spite of their disability, have high self-worth and most important result is that they accept their self in spite of their weaknesses. It indicates an optimistic viewpoint. Everybody is engaged in different kinds of activities. However, in case of disabled persons they are disturbed or hampered in varying degrees. Inability to take part in social, physical and recreational activities makes such a person more dependent on the family members and community. It is, therefore, important to take certain steps to facilitate the functioning of the disabled in his / her personal and social life. We have to help them in rebuilding of physical, mental and social activities which prepare the disabled to take their place in the community and become a productive member of the society.

Several studies have been conducted on disabled persons from different angles to know

their needs, problems and personality make-up. Dennis and Michael (2002) indicated specific relationships between child disability and family structure; culture and resources; effects on material relations and family functioning; family social conditions and sibling functioning. Many studies (Lewis, 1993; Weier, 1965; Lewis, 1994) investing high school children whether normal or gifted have found that the students were not able to self-actualize. The present study, dealing with high school handicapped visually impaired students, also reaches the same conclusion. It indicates that somehow society inhibits man's striving to actualize himself. further, lack of adequate parenting and an educational objective lacking the means of helping the child grow and develop, attaining his potentialities, weakens the system that is nurturing the child (Irena, 1999).

Self-actualization is a natural process that occurs and the individual's basic and higher order needs have been met. Thus, parents who wish their children to become self-actualized need to help their children satisfy their more basic needs for health, safety, belonging, love and self-esteem. Positive parenting principles associated with each of these needs can assist the creation of life conditions that allow children to actualize their own unique potentialities (Nistul, 1984).

In conclusion, there seems to be a thin but strong silver lining in an otherwise dark scenario. Most of the visually handicapped students show high self-worth and acceptance of self in spite of weaknesses. High values on these two subscales should encourage the planner and policy makers to review the existing strategies of learning and parenting. Both the supportive agencies of the child's life – his family and school – should be able to help these students to live in the present and make them independent and self-sufficient. To go ahead and grow to their fullest capacities, to do what each does best.

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