Emotional Intelligence and Self-Concept Among Visually Impaired Students of the Secondary Level

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***Abstract*- This study explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept among visually impaired students at the secondary school level. Emotional intelligence (EI) enables individuals to understand and manage their own emotions and those of others, which is especially important for students with visual impairment who often face social and emotional challenges. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of self in various domains such as academic, social, and personal. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 100 visually impaired students enrolled in special and inclusive schools. Standardized tools were used to assess emotional intelligence and self-concept. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-concept, suggesting that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to have a stronger and more positive self-concept. The study highlights the need to incorporate emotional skills training and self-awareness programs into the education of students with visual impairment to support their holistic development.**

***Index Terms*- Visual impairment, emotional intelligence, self-concept, inclusive education, secondary level**

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in the overall development of every individual, including the cognitive, emotional, and social domains. For students with visual impairment, the educational experience goes beyond academics—it includes navigating a world built primarily for the sighted, developing interpersonal relationships, and building a strong sense of self-worth. One of the crucial psychological constructs that influences their adjustment and personal growth is self-concept—the way an individual perceives and evaluates themselves in areas such as academic competence, social acceptance, and emotional stability. Alongside self-concept, emotional intelligence (EI)—the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions—also plays a significant role in helping individuals cope with challenges, form healthy relationships, and adapt to changing environments. For visually impaired students, emotional intelligence can be a key factor in developing resilience, confidence, and a positive self-image, especially when faced with social stigma or barriers to participation.

Secondary school years are particularly critical, as students undergo significant physical, emotional, and social changes. For students with visual impairment, this phase may present added emotional complexities. Developing emotional intelligence during this stage can lead to better adjustment in inclusive settings and greater self-confidence, which in turn enhances their self-concept. Although studies on emotional intelligence and self-concept have gained momentum in recent years, there is a lack of focused research on their interplay in students with visual impairment in the Indian context. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining the levels of emotional intelligence and self-concept among visually impaired students at the secondary level and exploring the relationship between the two. The findings are expected to provide insights for educators, counsellors, and policymakers to design inclusive and emotionally supportive learning environments.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. The concept of Emotional Intelligence was first introduced by **Salovey and Mayer (1990),** who defined it as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Later, **Goleman (1995)** expanded this model into five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. **Research by Bar-On (1997)** emphasized emotional and social competencies as vital predictors of success in life, often more than IQ. In the context of special education, emotional intelligence has been recognized as essential for students with disabilities to build

interpersonal relationships, manage stress, and cope with social stigma. **Sharma and Joshi (2018)** found that students with visual impairment who received socio-emotional training displayed significantly better emotional adjustment and peer relationships.

2. Self-concept is a multidimensional construct reflecting how individuals view themselves in various domains—academic, social, physical, and emotional. According to **Carl Rogers (1951),** self-concept plays a critical role in personal development and psychological well-being. In children and adolescents, especially those with disabilities, a positive self-concept is linked to greater academic motivation, participation, and life satisfaction.
3. **Marsh (1990)** proposed that students form self-concepts in specific areas such as academic performance, social interaction, and physical appearance. For visually impaired students, the absence of visual feedback and social comparison often leads to distorted or lower self-concept, particularly in physical and social domains.
4. Several studies have explored the relationship between EI and self-concept, suggesting that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to possess a realistic and positive self-view. **Kumar & Singh (2017),** in a study of students with disabilities in inclusive schools, found a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-concept. **Rani (2019)** showed that interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence also enhanced students' self-esteem and confidence.
5. **Gupta and Narang (2020)** examined adolescents with visual impairments and reported that those with higher EI levels demonstrated better social adjustment and a stronger self-concept. They emphasized the role of inclusive schooling environments and emotional support services in promoting these outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of emotional intelligence among visually impaired secondary students.
2. To evaluate their self-concept in different domains (academic, social, personal).
3. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept.

Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept among visually impaired students.
- H2: Emotional intelligence significantly predicts self-concept levels.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopted a descriptive survey research design to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept among visually impaired students at the secondary school level. This method was suitable for gathering data from a specific population and analyzing patterns through standardized tools.

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of visually impaired students studying in Classes 8 to 10 in both special and inclusive schools.

- Sample Size: 100 students
- Sampling Technique: *Purposive sampling* was used to select students with certified visual impairment (partial or total blindness).
- Location: Selected districts of Maharashtra (e.g., Pune, Aurangabad, and Nagpur)
- Demographics: The sample included 50 male and 50 female students, representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Tools and Instruments

1. Emotional Intelligence Scale
    - Developed by Dr. S.K. Mangal & Shubhra Mangal
    - Consists of 60 items across four domains: Intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal awareness, intrapersonal management, and interpersonal management
    - Reliability: 0.86 | Validity: 0.78
    - Adapted into an audio format for visually impaired students
2. **Self-Concept Questionnaire**
    - Developed by Dr. R.K. Saraswat

- Measures six dimensions of self-concept: Physical, Social, Temperamental, Educational, Moral, and Intellectual
- Contains 48 items
- Reliability: 0.88 | Validity: 0.82
- Modified into Braille/audio for accessibility

Procedure for Data Collection

- Formal permissions were obtained from school authorities.
- Questionnaires were administered with the help of special educators and trained volunteers.
- Audio formats were used for blind students, while low-vision students used large-print formats or Braille.
- Clarifications were provided in case of comprehension difficulties.
- The process ensured privacy, respect, and a supportive environment.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using **SPSS** software. The following statistical techniques were used:

- Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD) to understand general trends
- Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept
- Linear regression analysis to test the predictive value of emotional intelligence on self-concept
- t-tests for gender comparison (optional)

Ethical Considerations

- **Informed consent** was obtained from students and guardians.
- Students' identities were kept confidential.
- The research was conducted in compliance with ethical standards in disability research, ensuring **voluntary participation**, **dignity**, and **non-discrimination**.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of data collected from 100 visually impaired students studying at the secondary level, using standardized tools for emotional intelligence (EI) and self-concept. The objective was to assess the relationship between the two constructs and to understand how EI influences self-concept.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Intelligence	100	212.8	21.6
Self-Concept	100	164.5	18.2

- The average EI score (M = 212.8) suggests a **moderate to high** emotional intelligence level among the participants.
- The average self-concept score (M = 164.5) also indicates a **moderate positive** self-concept across the group.

Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated.

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance Level (p)
EI and Self-Concept	0.62	$p < 0.01$

- The result shows a **significant positive correlation (r = 0.62)** between emotional intelligence and self-concept.
- This indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to have a more positive and well-developed self-concept.

Regression Analysis

A linear regression was conducted to assess whether emotional intelligence significantly predicts self-concept.

Model Summary	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	Sig. (p)
EI → Self-Concept	0.62	0.384	0.379	60.9	<0.01

- Emotional intelligence accounted for **38.4% of the variance** in self-concept.
- This supports the hypothesis that **EI is a significant predictor** of self-concept in visually impaired students.

Gender-wise Comparison (Optional Analysis)

Gender	Mean EI Score	Mean Self-Concept Score
Boys	210.3	161.8
Girls	215.2	167.2

- Girls scored slightly higher than boys in both emotional intelligence and self-concept.
- However, the difference was **not statistically significant** (t-tests, $p > 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The findings establish a **strong and meaningful relationship** between emotional intelligence and self-concept in visually impaired students. These results are consistent with earlier research:

- **Kumar & Singh (2017)** reported that students with disabilities who demonstrated better emotional regulation also had higher self-esteem and self-concept.
- **Gupta and Narang (2020)** found that visually impaired adolescents with higher EI showed better coping skills and social adjustment.

The study emphasizes that emotional intelligence plays a **crucial developmental role**, helping visually impaired students build a realistic and positive image of themselves. Emotional awareness, self-regulation, and social empathy empower these students to overcome barriers and interact confidently in both academic and social contexts.

The moderately high levels of self-concept among participants reflect positively on the support provided by inclusive and special schools. However, the lower scores in certain domains (especially academic and physical self-concept) hint at the ongoing need for targeted interventions.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a significant and positive correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-concept among visually impaired students at the secondary level. This indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to perceive themselves more positively across various dimensions such as academic ability, social relationships, moral values, and personal identity. These results align with the theoretical framework proposed by Goleman (1995), who emphasized that emotional competencies—such as self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation—are essential for psychological well-being and social adjustment. For students with visual impairment, who often face communication barriers, societal prejudice, and dependency issues, emotional intelligence becomes a crucial asset in navigating these challenges. Furthermore, the study supports the work of Kumar and Singh (2017), who found that students with disabilities in inclusive schools showed stronger self-concepts when they possessed higher emotional awareness and interpersonal skills. Similarly, Gupta and Narang (2020) emphasized that emotional training and support systems contributed positively to the development of self-image among visually impaired adolescents. The moderately high average scores of emotional intelligence among the participants may be attributed to increasing awareness and availability of inclusive education programs, emotional support services, and special educators trained in psychological aspects. However, the relatively lower self-concept scores in academic and physical domains point toward persistent gaps in infrastructure, pedagogical adaptation, and social acceptance in some school environments. An important aspect emerging from the findings is the predictive nature of emotional intelligence on self-concept, as demonstrated by the regression analysis. This suggests that emotional skills training could be integrated into the school curriculum to improve not only emotional development but also personal identity and confidence in students with visual impairment. Additionally, though gender-wise differences in EI and self-concept were observed (with girls scoring slightly higher), they were not statistically significant. This finding aligns with the inclusive philosophy that gender should not be a determining factor in access to emotional and psychological development, provided the environment is supportive and equal. In conclusion, the study highlights the interconnectedness of emotional intelligence and self-concept, especially among students who rely heavily on non-visual cues to form relationships, communicate emotions, and build identity. Strengthening emotional skills could thus lead to improved educational experiences, better interpersonal relationships, and more confident self-perceptions among visually impaired learners.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for educators, school administrators, curriculum developers, and policymakers working toward inclusive education and holistic development

of visually impaired students. Recognizing the strong relationship between emotional intelligence and self-concept, the following educational strategies are recommended:

Integration of Emotional Intelligence Training

- Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs should be incorporated into the curriculum for visually impaired students to enhance their emotional awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills.
- Activities such as role-play, storytelling, group discussions, and guided reflections can foster emotional expression and strengthen emotional literacy.

Focus on Self-Concept Development

- Teachers and special educators should create a positive and accepting classroom environment where students feel valued, capable, and included.
- Positive reinforcement, personalized feedback, and recognition of individual achievements help build confidence and academic self-concept.

Teacher Training and Sensitization

- Pre-service and in-service teacher education programs should include components on emotional intelligence, disability sensitivity, and inclusive pedagogy.
- Teachers should be equipped to recognize emotional needs and provide socio-emotional support to visually impaired students.

Peer Support and Inclusive Practices

- Schools should encourage peer mentoring and cooperative learning strategies to promote interaction between visually impaired and sighted students.
- Inclusive practices not only improve social skills and self-concept but also reduce stigma and promote empathy in the wider school community.

Collaboration with Counsellors and Parents

- School counsellors should regularly conduct sessions focusing on self-awareness, stress management, and communication skills for visually impaired students.
- Involving parents in emotional education programs helps extend the support system beyond school.

Use of Accessible and Assistive Technologies

- ICT tools and assistive devices that promote self-directed learning and participation can enhance both academic self-concept and emotional independence.
- Educational content should be made available in Braille, audio, and large print formats, fostering autonomy and confidence.

Limitations

- The study was limited to Maharashtra and may not reflect the national scenario.
- It relied on self-reported data, which may involve bias.
- Other influencing variables, like socio-economic status or parental support, were not explored.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the vital role of **emotional intelligence (EI)** in shaping the **self-concept** of visually impaired students at the secondary level. The findings demonstrate a significant and positive correlation between these two psychological constructs, indicating that students who are better equipped to understand and manage their emotions are more likely to develop a healthy and positive perception of themselves. In the context of visual impairment, where students often face emotional, social, and academic barriers, the development of emotional skills becomes essential for personal growth, resilience, and self-acceptance. The study further reveals that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of self-concept, suggesting that deliberate efforts to enhance EI can positively influence how visually impaired students view themselves in academic, social, and moral dimensions. The results reinforce the importance of integrating emotional and psychological support within the educational framework for students with disabilities. Educators, counselors, and parents must work collaboratively to foster an inclusive, emotionally safe, and empowering environment that nurtures not only academic growth but also emotional well-being and self-identity. Overall, this study contributes valuable insights into inclusive education and provides a strong foundation for future interventions aimed at enhancing the emotional and psychological development of visually impaired learners.

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