

Exploring Psychosocial Issues Experienced by Young Adults with Amblyopia. A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study was to explore psychosocial and mental health problems experienced by young adults with amblyopia.

Methodology: In this qualitative study phenomenological approach was used. Six Participants having amblyopia were selected by purposive sampling technique with the age range of 18 to 25. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the information which was then analyzed by interpretive phenomenological Analysis.

Results: Analysis revealed the combination of psychosocial and mental health problems experienced by young adults with amblyopia in the form of six key themes which were rejection, umbrage, adjustment issues, inferiority complex, anxiety, and depression.

Conclusion: Being amblyopic, affects their appearance due to which they have to face rejection in different aspects of their life. The noticeable impact of rejection is inferiority complex. When they feel that others are not showing respect to them this makes them upset or annoyed. There is a need to further explore problems faced by amblyopic people. Health care providers and psychologists should understand the psychosocial and mental health issues of these people and the affected people should be provided appropriate psychoeducation and psychological and social support.

Keywords: amblyopic young adults, amblyopia, psychosocial problems

Introduction

Amblyopia (additionally called a lethargic eye) is a kind of helpless vision that occurs when changes in nerve pathways between a thin layer of tissue at the back of the eye and the brain (Sabri et al., 2006). According to estimates, amblyopia affects one to five percent of the population worldwide and one to three percent in any area of Pakistan. Young individuals with amblyopia have to deal with a whole new set of obstacles to function in today's world. They have to experience many social, psychological, and mental health issues similarly they face functional limitations like completing tasks such as finding work, getting into university, and finding a life mate. Individuals with amblyopia are more likely to experience sadness, stress, anxiety, and other psychological and social concerns such as low self-esteem, bullying, social troubles, poor school achievement, social isolation, loneliness, and self-assurance issues (Sabri et al., 2006). With young adults, only a few studies on amblyopia have been conducted in Pakistan. People having this problem was of different age groups.

Literature

Young adults with amblyopia have many psychological concerns such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor body image. Overall poorer mental well-being and quality of life were found in visually impaired people in comparison to fully sighted people. Adults experience a variety of emotions such as anger, frustration, and

denial while trying to adjust to this life-changing event. Social situations may be anticipated as being fearful and creating avoidance (Newell, 2000). They sometimes find it challenging to handle bullying, and feel uncomfortable revealing their appearance-related concerns to peers which further produces social appearance anxiety and feelings of isolation. Constant negative thoughts and language create anxiety, worry, and self-blame (Garcia, 2010). Seeking support from family and friends is effective in dealing with appearance-related concerns of people with a visible disfigurement (Rumsey, Clarke, White, Wyn-Williams, & Garlick, 2004). The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of adults' personal lived experiences with amblyopia.

Methodology

The interview has taken place with individuals who have amblyopia. The data was collected using the purposive sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative research approach for identifying and selecting relevant data scenarios to make the most of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The participants who have congenital amblyopia were included with all of its four categories. Six participants (N=6) were included in this study and interviewed to find out the psychosocial problems experienced by them, with the age range of 18 to 25.

Procedure: Ethical consideration was kept at the forefront while conducting the study. We have ensured the participant for their confidentiality and independent response. All the individuals were informed that they can leave the study whenever they want to. To maintain participants' confidentiality the information kept hidden. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the information which was then analyzed by interpretive phenomenological Analysis. Semi structure interview was comprised of 5 main questions which were related to their social and psychological experiences. These questions covered many domains as social, psychological, and mental health issues of amblyopic young adults. These questions helped to probe and elaborate more questions. After getting permission from the participants the interview was audio recorded. The interview was helpful to complete the procedure of IPA and to draw the themes from the collected data. IPA focuses on the lived experience of participants by incorporating dual components, phenomenology, and interpretation. First, it shares the aims of idiographic phenomenology, which provide a detailed analysis of the elements of the reflective personals and subjective view of an individual's experiences. Phenomenological research in its true sense requires participants to engage with these reflexive techniques to give a more accurate representation of how they perceive and interpret their world (Caelli, 2000).

Result

The analysis resulted in three superordinate themes (social problems, psychological problems, and mental health problems) and six themes (rejection, umbrage, inferiority complex, adjustment issues, depression, and anxiety). Amblyopic people were facing social marginalization and rejection as a result of negative attitudes about blindness. The amblyopic individuals were excluded from decision-making and restricted educational and employment options.

Rejection

Individuals reported experiencing bullying, lack of confidence, embarrassment, and social isolation in many situations. There is no definitive list of bullying behavior. This present study proved that fear of bullying was faced by amblyopic individuals, as one of the participant reports, They didn't like meeting people, and they did not enjoy gatherings. An avoidant personality disordered person is acutely aware of their difficulty in social situations and appears socially inept. Despite this self-awareness, comments from others in social circumstances about your shyness or unease can feel like rejection or judgment. In comparison to individuals with normal vision, studies on visually impaired students have revealed that many students struggle socially.

"My class-fellows and cousins enjoy calling me by names and teasing me. I, sometimes wear sunglasses so that people can't see my eyes".

One of the participant describe this by saying,

"I usually face many problems moving in society as people used to degrade me in public places, they do not even think about the environment".

Umbrage

Individuals living with amblyopic eyes were experiencing hesitation, reluctance, and nervousness in social situations, they also had reluctant behavior, and withdrawal from social situations. Amblyopic young adults also had communication problems as they avoided attending ceremonies. They used to avoid people when they asked for something. Communication difficulties are misconceptions and mistranslations of other people's meanings while interactions. In family, partner, workplace, and other interactions, this is a typical phenomenon.

Participant reported that,
"I don't like public gatherings and don't even like to meet any relatives as they also make fun of my condition that's why I avoided everything".

Another one reported that,
"I avoid facing people, I have not enough courage to meet them with this eye issue. These eye conditions are embarrassing for me".

One of my clients supports this point as she said,
"Most of the time I feel hesitant and embarrassed if someone calls me for asking something".

Another client said,
"I like to spend time at home alone or with my family members. I avoid going out with friends because I think other people will make fun of me".

Inferiority complex

Significant disturbances in thoughts, feelings and behavior indicate the presence of a psychological disorder, according to this definition; these disturbances must reflect some kind of dysfunction (biological, psychological, or developmental), must cause significant impairment in one's life, and must not reflect culturally expected reactions to certain life events. Amblyopic young adults reported body-image insecurity, lack of confidence, sadness as they were having difficulty meeting people. Being confident in yourself and your abilities assures you that you can handle a variety of scenarios. The present study explored that people with amblyopic eyes have low self-confidence. They avoid public places, they avoid meeting people because of their eyes.

One of my participants was showing a lack of confidence as she said,
"I'm not comfortable enough to go alone in public places by myself."
Another one reported,
"I don't want to meet any of my relatives, they are very rude and they make me feel inferior to them".
"Although my family is very supportive my other relatives and cousins are not good with me as many time they taunt and embarrassed me in family function that's why I usually avoid going to such gatherings, I usually stay at home".

Adjustment issues

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was first defined as a personality trait characterized by concern about other people's judgments, anxiety over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluating circumstances, and the expectation that others will adversely judge oneself. Amblyopic people usually reported that they are negatively evaluated by others, as they thought people will make fun of them and will start laughing at them.

One of my participant reported,
"I usually avoid giving a presentation in class because I think the whole class is staring at me and will laugh at me".

"I feel insecure while going outside the home, and it is always frightening for me that people will make fun of me. I don't like it when they talk about my eyes".

Anotherone supported this point by saying,
"I feel inferior to others. I cannot see straight and clear as others can".
"I always try to avoid people and don't attend any function, I don't want to meet any of my cousins".

One of my participants shows a feeling of negative self-evaluation by saying,
"I perceive myself as a low confident individual and don't like to go outside home. I sometimes don't like my condition I ask myself, why I'm with this problem".

"I don't think I'm fit for this society, people have good looks, and they don't have any problem with their eyes, whenever I started to talk to anyone they first look at my eyes".

"I'm afraid of making friends because I think people will not accept or not behave normally if I go to them and try to talk".

Job insecurity is characterized by a sense of inadequacy in the workplace. They may have a lot of doubt, perplexity, reluctance, and ambiguity about their profession, and they may feel like a fraud all of the time. Students at all levels of school may feel insecure, causing them to doubt their intelligence, capacity to write a well-written paper, and ability to apply knowledge as needed. People with a job and school uncertainty encounter issues such as failing grades, poor work performance, and leaving things unfinished in either scenario.

My subject reported this problem by saying,
"I thought if I'll apply for a job interview they will not hire me because of my looks. Once a company rejected to give the vacancy by saying that how you will work and manage in such a competitive environment, it hurts me a lot"

Anotherone reported a problem by saying,

“I’m afraid of making friends because I think people will not accept or not behave normally if I go to them and try to talk”.

Anxiety

"Mental health" and "behavioral health" refer to people's cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being. It all comes down to how people think, feel, and act. The phrase "mental health" is also used to describe the absence of mental illness. Mental illness can have a significant impact on one's day-to-day life, relationships, and physical health. Taking care of one's mental health may allow one to completely appreciate life. Stress, depression, and anxiety can all harm a person's mental health and cause them to miss work. Despite the widespread use of the phrase "mental health," many diseases that doctors identify as psychological disorders have physical causes.

“I usually avoid giving a presentation in class because I think the whole class is staring at me and will laugh at me”.

One of my participant reported feelings of anxiety by saying,

“I am not confident enough to present in front of the class or go on in gathering because my experience is not as good as people always stare at me with a different meaning.

Depression

A complex combination of social, psychological, and biological factors contribute to depression. People who have experienced life's misfortunes (such as job loss, bereavement, or traumatic experiences) are more prone to depression. We discovered in this study that people experience numerous challenges in their daily lives, which is why they become depressed at times. According to studies, depression can lead to increased stress and dysfunction, worsening both the afflicted and those living with amblyopia's situation. According to the findings, patients with amblyopia had higher levels of irritation, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, social competence, depression. Having trouble falling asleep, remaining asleep, or getting up too early are all examples of sleeping difficulties. Sleep deprivation and poor quality sleep can both harm a person's health. Eye problems can cause important biological cycles to be disturbed.

Participant have reported,

“I feel depressed and don’t want to make any friends don’t want to talk to anybody. I don’t like confronting people”.

My interviewer highlighted many times that

“I feel much better and safe when I spend time alone, at least there would be no one at that time who hurts me by saying rude”.

“Sometimes I wanted to beat the people or class fellows who judge or make fun of my eyes”.

Anotherone showed feelings of anger by saying,

“When someone calls me inverted names, I feel very bad, God has created me like this then why these people are showing such attitude”

“I feel depressed and don’t want to make any friends, don’t want to talk to anybody. I don’t like confronting people”.

One participant reported,

“I have disturbance in the sleep, sometimes I can’t sleep all night, different negative thoughts are racing in my mind”

Discussion

This study has explored the social, psychological, and mental health problems of amblyopic young adults. Most individuals with amblyopia have been facing difficulties such as fear of bullying, lack of confidence, social avoidant behavior, and hesitation in different situations. Adults feel uncomfortable revealing their appearance-related apprehensions to peers which further leads to feelings of isolation and social avoidance (McKillop, 2010). They also experienced withdrawal from social situations and communication problems because their friends and other people were somehow showing taunting behavior that’s why they are not confident enough to move freely in society. They usually avoid going out by themselves because people make fun of them, and because of their eyes, they felt vulnerable. Adults who think their looks determine their self-worth have lower self-esteem and a higher level of depression. Warm, supportive parenting is associated with high self-esteem (Erol & Orth, 2011). In the present study young adults reported a loss of self-confidence. Visible disfigurement can result in lowered self-confidence and a negative self-image. Concern about physical looks was evident among all the individuals interviewed in the present study.

Conclusions

In this study According to our Understanding Physical Appearance matters a lot in our culture . Alignment of eyes of young amblyopic patients is affected which influences their physical appearance.Same as because of their weak eyesight they also face functional limitations.In our society they are ignored on both family level to government level.These all problems not only causes physical issues for them. But they also faces social issues like bullying and ambrage.This make them inferior complex and lose confidence on themselves, ultimately they are more prone to the anxiety and depression.

Limitatins and Suggestions

During this study we faced some limitations like first of all It was somehow very difficult to conduct the interviews with individuals suffering from amblyopia because many hospitals were not allowing to take interviews from their clients for commercial reasons.Furthermore, the interview environment was not according to the standered protocols for interview couldn't maintain their their privacy. A proper environment should be provided with incentive to the participants for exploring better informations.Moreover in this present study was a single-method was used. It is suggested that multi method should be used for external validity in further studies.

Implications

We suggest that mental care should be balanced along with clinical care in order to decrease the distress outcomes of people with amblyopia. Family support system should be established and special workshops for parents of these type of people should be conducted. More study is needed to look at the perspectives of families and other care providers to identify system barriers to this young population's obtaining and engaging with vision care. There should be a family support structure in place, as well as special programs for parents of amblyopic adults. A more integrated care pathway between the hospital and community-based primary care services could thus support the delivery of a more holistic approach.

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