

MISCONCEPTION AND BLINDNESS: A PERSPECTIVE OF PAKISTANI COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The study explored misconceptions about blindness within the Pakistani community. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 51 urban residents through simple random sampling. Participants, primarily educated individuals, responded to a structured questionnaire with 20 close-ended statements addressing positive and negative stereotypes about blindness. Data collection occurred in-person at educational institutions, local places, and markets, as well as via smartphone, email, and WhatsApp. Quantitative analysis methods included mean, standard deviation, independent t-tests, and analysis of variance. Findings revealed that positive misconceptions about blind individuals included perceptions of sharp intellectual abilities, enhanced judgment skills, and strong concentration capabilities. Negative stereotypes portrayed blind individuals as objects of pity, unsafe navigating spaces independently, and assumed them to share similar interests. No significant gender-based differences ($p=0.397$) were found, indicating similar perceptions across males and females. There was a statistically significant difference ($p=0.12$) in misconceptions about blindness among different age groups. The results suggested that misconceptions about blindness differ significantly between certain age groups, especially between the middle-aged (36-45 years) and younger (16-35 years) groups. No significant difference ($p=0.459$) was found in misconceptions based on the qualification. The common people had higher level of positive stereotypical behaviors in comparison to their negative misconceptions.

Keywords: Misconceptions, Blindness, Perspective

Introduction

Blindness, one of the most challenging and misunderstood disabilities, has been a subject of myths and stereotypes across cultures and societies (Tobin, 1995; Létoublon, 2010). While some view it as a condition marked by despair and dependency, others attribute extraordinary abilities, such as heightened intellect or mystical powers, to individuals who are blind (Dickel & Dickel, 2022). These perceptions often stem from a mix of cultural beliefs, religious narratives, and societal attitudes.

Myths and misconceptions about blindness in Pakistan stem from cultural and religious beliefs and contribute to stigma. Prevalent myths and misconceptions include blindness is a punishment from God for the individual's or their family's sins. People with blindness are less intelligent or incapable of learning. Blind people are dependent and cannot contribute to their families or society. All blind individuals see nothing at all. Blindness is a hereditary condition in all cases. Blindness is irreversible and cannot be prevented or treated. Blind people develop extraordinary senses, such as heightened hearing or touch, to compensate for their lack of sight. Blind individuals cannot marry, have families, or raise children effectively. Blindness can spread through physical contact or sharing personal items. Technology is inaccessible to blind individuals (Rahman, 2006). Such misconceptions hinder the inclusion of blind individuals in education, employment, and community life (Bulk et al., 2020).

In Pakistan, misconceptions about blindness significantly influence the social integration and empowerment of visually impaired individuals (Alkhairy et al., 2023; Ajuwon & Ruth Bieber, 2014). Despite advancements in education and assistive technologies, these stereotypes persist (Bhowmick & Hazarika, 2017; Mulloy et al., 2014), affecting how blind individuals are perceived and treated (Manjari et al., 2020). This study seeks to explore the perceptions of the Pakistani community regarding blindness, aiming to uncover the extent of positive and negative misconceptions and their impact on social attitudes.

Review of Related Literature

Historical and cultural perspectives have shaped the perception of blindness over centuries (Trompoukis & Kourkoutas, 2007; Ibraz, 1991), often associating it with divine punishment or moral failure (Ashaye et al., 2006). Blindness has been associated with moral and religious interpretations, often seen as a punishment for transgressions (Bates, 1998). McCarraher (2012) highlighted that such models of disability were pervasive, with blindness frequently linked to guilt and shame. This moral and religious framing shaped societal attitudes (Andrews, 2017; Retief & Letšosa, 2018), reinforcing stigma and discrimination against individuals with visual impairments (Beaudry, 2016). Research has highlighted the duality of stereotypes surrounding blindness, ranging from pity and helplessness to admiration for presumed superhuman abilities (Noë et al., 2000; Oguego et al., 2018).

In contemporary contexts, these stereotypes continue to influence societal attitudes and behaviors, as evidenced by studies in Romania and Pakistan. Sardegna and Shelly (2002) found that societal representations of blindness are deeply entrenched in fictionalized and exaggerated narratives (Papadaki & Tzvetkova-Arsova, 2013), creating barriers to realistic understanding and integration. Similarly, misconceptions about blindness in Pakistan, whether positive e.g. heightened intellect or negative e.g. dependency and helplessness,

reflect a lack of awareness about the true capabilities and needs of visually impaired individuals. Addressing these misconceptions through education and advocacy is critical for fostering an inclusive society.

In the Pakistani context, stereotypes about blindness reflect a similar pattern. Positive misconceptions, such as the belief in heightened intellectual abilities and sixth sense, coexist with negative ones, including the notion that blind people are objects of pity or incapable of independent living (Mocanaşu, 2019). These stereotypes, while occasionally rooted in admiration, often result in limited opportunities and discriminatory practices for individuals with blindness.

Statement of the study

The study investigated the perspective of Pakistani community for the misconceptions about the blindness.

Objectives

1. To determine the positive misconceptions of Pakistani people about the blindness.
2. To assess the negative misconceptions of Pakistani people about the blindness.
3. To compare the male and female perspective for misconceptions about the blindness.
4. To evaluate the misconception of people towards blindness on the basis of their age groups.
5. To apprise the misconception of people towards blindness on the basis of their qualification.

Research Questions

1. What are the positive misconceptions of Pakistani people about the blindness?
2. What are the negative misconceptions of Pakistani people about the blindness?
3. Is there any difference between the male and female perspective for misconceptions about the blindness?
4. What is the misconception of people towards blindness on the basis of their age groups?
5. What are the misconceptions of people towards blindness on the basis of their qualification?

Methodology

The study determined perspective of Pakistani community about the misconceptions towards the blindness.

Study Design

A survey research design based on descriptive methodology was employed to approach the common people for data collection. A quantitative research approach was used in the study based on numerical data findings.

Population

All the common people were the target population of the study. Researcher mainly included those people who were educated and belonged to urban locality.

Sample of the Study

A sample of 51 common people specifically the urban area residents from various cities of the Pakistan were selected for the study purpose.

Sampling Technique

The sample of the study was selected through simple random sampling technique. The sample was approached randomly from the various public / private educational institutes and urban localities.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire with 20 close ended statements regarding the positive and negative stereotypical behaviors towards the blindness, was framed to collected data from common people of Pakistan. The questionnaire was validated with the help of previous literature and faculty members support. The reliability index of the instrument was also determined as under:

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.890	20

The reliability index of the research tool was $r=0.890$ with Cronbach alpha statistics which proved highly effective suitability to be used in the study.

Data Collection

The data of the study was collected by personally visiting various educational institutions, local places, markets by the researcher. Researcher also approached various respondents through making contact via smartphone and sending the questionnaire through email and WhatsApp. The basic research objectives were shared with the participants of the study and nature of research questions along with procedure of its completion was also shared. Researcher distributed the questionnaire among the participants and collected back after ensuring the complete data provision.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through mean, standard deviation, independent t-test and analysis of various.

Results

Table 1

Demography of participants

Variables	F (N=51)	%
Gender		
Male	36	70.6
Female	15	29.4
Age		
16-25 Years	40	78.4
26-35 Years	8	15.7
36-45 Years	2	3.9
46 Years & Above	1	2.0
Qualification		
FA/F.Sc	4	7.8
BA/B.Sc	15	29.4
B.Ed/BS/MA	22	43.1
M.Phil	9	17.6
Ph.D	1	2.0

The sample consists predominantly of males (70.6%), while females make up 29.4% of the total participants. This indicates a significant gender imbalance in the sample, with a higher representation of males.

The majority of participants (78.4%) fall within the 16-25 years age group, indicating that the sample predominantly includes young individuals. 15.7% are aged 26-35 years, suggesting a smaller proportion of middle-aged participants. A negligible number of participants belong to the 36-45 years (3.9%) and 46 years & above (2.0%) age groups, highlighting limited representation from older age brackets.

The educational background of participants is diverse, with the highest proportion (43.1%) holding B.Ed/BS/MA degrees, reflecting a moderately educated majority. A significant percentage (29.4%) of respondents has BA/B.Sc qualifications, while 17.6% have attained M.Phil, suggesting advanced educational attainment among some participants. A small fraction of participants (7.8%) have completed FA/F.Sc, indicating a lower level of education. Only 2.0% have achieved a Ph.D., representing the highest level of education.

Table 2

Positive misconceptions about the blindness

Sr. No.	Positive Misconceptions	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D
1.	Blind have some extra and compensatory skills on replacement of vision impairment.	51	1	5	3.80	1.149
2.	Blind people are highly sharp and intellectual.	51	2	5	4.20	.872
3.	Blind people have sixth sense and good judgement skills.	51	1	5	4.14	1.096
4.	Blind people have high concentration powers.	51	1	5	4.02	1.068

The table 2 summarizes the positive misconceptions people hold about blindness, measured using mean and standard deviation. A higher mean indicates stronger agreement, while the standard deviation reflects the variation in responses. The mean value 3.80 with S.D 1.149 indicates moderate to high agreement with the misconception that blind have extra and compensatory skills on replacement of vision impairment. Majority of the participants suggested strong agreement (M=4.20, S.D=0.872) with being highest-rated misconception in the table. The mean value 4.14 with S.D 1.096 represented strong agreement, closely following the second misconception in terms of agreement level with the idea that blind people have sixth sense and good judgment skills. The mean score 4.02 with S.D 1.068 reflected high agreement with this misconception that blind people have high concentration powers.

Table 3

Negative misconceptions about the blindness

Sr. No.	Negative misconceptions about blindness	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D
1.	Blind people are the objects of pity.	51	1	5	2.78	1.390
2.	Blind people have very little potential to succeed in life.	51	1	5	2.22	1.390
3.	Blind people look differently like use of glasses or old-fashioned clothes.	51	1	5	2.12	1.177
4.	All blind people have similar interests.	51	1	5	2.39	1.372
5.	All blind people have similar thinking pattern.	51	1	5	2.37	1.341
6.	Blind people cannot use the technology.	51	1	5	2.14	1.456
7.	Blind people cannot independently travel.	51	1	5	2.39	1.415
8.	Blind people cannot marry.	51	1	5	1.84	1.271
9.	Blind people cannot develop friendship.	51	1	5	1.86	1.429
10.	Blind people cannot get education.	51	1	5	1.80	1.342
11.	Blind people are socially very weak.	51	1	5	2.10	1.345
12.	Blindness is the result of religious punishment.	51	1	5	1.63	1.113
13.	Blind people are totally handicapped and helpless.	51	1	5	2.02	1.319
14.	It is dangerous to allow blind to move through space alone.	51	1	5	2.45	1.376

15.	Blind people cannot perform any job.	51	1	5	1.88	1.366
16.	Blind people cannot see anything at all.	51	1	5	2.31	1.378

Table 3 represented the negative misconception of the people about the blindness. It was noted that people have very low level of negative misconceptions about the blind people. The people opined negative misconceptions with high rated mean values (2.78, 2.45 and 2.39) about the ideas that blind people are the objects of pity, it is dangerous to allow blind to move through spaces alone, and all blind people have similar interests respectively. The people showed negative misconceptions with low rated mean values (1.63, 1.80 and 1.84) about the statements that blindness is the result of religious punishment, blind people cannot get education and blind people cannot marry respectively.

Table 4

Comparison between the perception of male and female people about the blindness

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	df	Sig
Male	36	2.58	.66776	0.855	49	.397
Female	15	2.40	.88871			

This analysis compares the perceptions of males and females regarding blindness using an independent t-test. On average, males have a slightly higher mean perception score (2.5806) compared to females (2.3867). However, females show greater variability in their responses (higher standard deviation). The p-value ($p=0.397$) in the "Equal Variances Assumed" row is greater than 0.05, indicating no statistically significant difference in perception scores between males and females. The mean difference of 0.19389 suggests that males score slightly higher, but this difference is not significant. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of males and females about blindness based on the t-test results. Both genders hold similar views on blindness, and any observed differences in means are likely due to random variation rather than a systematic difference.

Table 5

Impact of age group on the perception of people towards the misconceptions about the blindness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.562	3	1.854	4.053	.012
Within Groups	21.500	47	.457		
Total	27.062	50			

The F-statistic is 4.053, and the corresponding p-value is 0.012. The p-value is less than the standard significance level (typically $\alpha=0.05/\alpha = 0.05$), which shows that there is a statistically significant difference in misconceptions about blindness among different age groups. This suggests that the age group does influence how people misconceive blindness.

Table 6

LSD Post-hoc test results about the comparison between age groups regarding their misconception towards blindness

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1 16-25 Years	2 26-35 Years	.27468	.26802	.311
	3 36-45 Years	-1.06282*	.50066	.039
	4 46 Years & Above	-.96282	.50066	.061
2 26-35 Years	1 16-25 Years	-.27468	.26802	.311
	3 36-45 Years	-1.33750*	.54593	.018
	4 46 Years & Above	-1.23750*	.54593	.028
3 36-45 Years	1 16-25 Years	1.06282*	.50066	.039
	2 26-35 Years	1.33750*	.54593	.018
	4 46 Years & Above	.10000	.69055	.885
4 46 Years & Above	1 16-25 Years	.96282	.50066	.061
	2 26-35 Years	1.23750*	.54593	.028
	3 36-45 Years	-.10000	.69055	.885

Significant differences exist between the 36-45 Years group and the 16-25 Years and 26-35 Years groups, indicating that the 36-45 years age group misconceives blindness differently (more) as compared to these younger age groups. The 26-35 Years age group also misconceives blindness significantly differently (less positively) as compared to the 46 Years & above age group. These results suggest that misconceptions about blindness differ significantly between certain age groups, especially between the middle-aged (36-45 years) and younger (16-35 years) groups.

Table 7

Impact of qualification on the perception of people towards the misconceptions about the blindness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.012	4	.503	.923	.459
Within Groups	25.050	46	.545		
Total	27.062	50			

The F-statistic is 0.923, and the corresponding p-value is 0.459. The p-value is greater than the standard significance level (typically $\alpha=0.05$ /alpha = 0.05 $\alpha=0.05$), which shows that there was no statistically significant difference in misconceptions about blindness among people on the basis of their different qualifications. This suggests that the qualification group does not influence how people misconceive blindness.

Table 8

Comparison between the positive and negative misconception towards the blindness

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Positive Misconception	51	4.0392	0.73036	High
Negative Misconception	51	2.1446	0.98833	Low

Table indicated that people had higher level of positive misconceptions (M=4.0392, S.D=0.73036) about the blindness whereby they had low level of negative misconceptions (M=2.1446, S.D=0.98833). The results revealed that common people had higher level of positive stereotypical behaviors in comparison to their negative misconceptions.

Discussion

The data highlights a strong tendency to hold positive but generalized misconceptions about blind individuals. While such perceptions may stem from admiration or respect, they could inadvertently contribute to stereotyping. Efforts to raise awareness about the diverse abilities and experiences of blind people are essential to balance these perceptions. The study revealed that common people have both positive and negative misconceptions about the blindness such as blind people are extra sharp and good judgment abilities and have additional sixth sense and concentration power. On the other hand they see blind people in negative perspective such as blind are the objects of pity, it is dangerous to allow blind to move through spaces alone, and all blind people have similar interests. Similar findings were reported by Mocanasu (2019), where researcher identified among the students of the “Dunarea de Jos” University, the dominant stereotypes about the visually impaired and the main meanings attached to the blindness. Social representation of the abilities and potential of people with visual impairment are predominantly stereotypes, blindness being considered to be one of the most difficult and feared human conditions. Often the “sighted” people know very few real elements about the size of the disability, the education and the possibilities of social-professional integration of the visually impaired, most of the information coming from stories conveyed in the collective mind, which create unrealistic, exaggerated images, many times in the fictional realm. The existing stereotypes regarding this category of people are both positive and negative, the blind people being portrayed from objects of mercy, eternally unhappy individuals as a result of a life marked by tragedy, to superheroes, people endowed with a range of mystical abilities, super powers, worthy to admire. Some of these stereotypes are still found today in the Romanian society.

Conclusions

The study determined the stereotypes of the common people about the blindness in Pakistan. The misconceptions of positive nature incorporated that blind people have sharp and intellectual abilities and have sixth sense in addition to judgment skills and good concentration power. Moreover, common people have negative misconceptions about the blind people that blind people are the objects of pity, allowing blind to move through spaces alone is dangerous, and all blind people have similar interests respectively. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of males and females about blindness based on the t-test results. Both genders hold similar views on blindness, and any observed differences in means are likely due to random variation rather than a systematic difference. There was a statistically significant difference in misconceptions about blindness among different age

groups. This suggests that the age group does influence how people misconceive blindness. The results suggest that misconceptions about blindness differ significantly between certain age groups, especially between the middle-aged (36-45 years) and younger (16-35 years) groups. There was no statistically significant difference in misconceptions about blindness among people on the basis of their qualification. This suggests that the qualification group does not influence how people misconceive blindness. It was inferred that common people had higher level of positive stereotypical behaviors in comparison to their negative misconceptions.

Recommendations

Researcher recommends that awareness campaigns should be launched at the gross root level through social media and print media to condemn such misconceptions about the blind the people. Special emphasis is required to be given to eradicate the negative stereotypes among the common people about the blindness. However positive and sympathetic behavior to support and cooperate the blind people in their routine life activities is required to be encouraged. Blind people also required to be given the similar rights and privileges like normal ones and stereotypical behavior should be discouraged.

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Conflict of Interest

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