CHAPTER - VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

India has an unduly large share of visually handicapped population. In modern times, the gravity of the problem of this disability has gained increasing attention.

The right to see is one of the precious gifts of nature and the deprivation of sight is one of the worst disabilities a human being can suffer. The eyes are a wonderful creation of nature and a master-piece of perfection. Eye-sight is one of the most precious possessions of man. To lose vision, total or partial, is a tragedy. The problems faced by the visually handicapped individuals have to be viewed from the physical, psychological, sociological and emotional angles. The visually handicapped individuals pose a challenge to society.

India has a load of more than 13 million blind persons out of whom nearly 11 million are blind due to refractive errors. Eyes are affected due to many factors, mostly by accidents, infections, malnutrition, vitamin A deficiency, refractive errors, cataract and glaucoma.

A visual handicap is a potential health hazard posing a grave threat to the well-being of the individual. A person suddenly blinded
usually develops reactions such as protest against the unfairness of visual loss, anxiety and depression. The person experiences a threat to his identity and finds it difficult to go out alone, thereby feeling more isolated. The individual is maladjusted in the areas of home, social and environmental adjustment. The individual feels threatened, lonely, insecure, alienated and isolated. The handicap renders him incapable of leading a normal life as it interferes with his well-being. He is unable to gain mastery and control over the environment and develop and nurture satisfying interpersonal relationships that are vital for his well-being. The handicap hampers and disturbs his functioning and this further leads to disturbances in his well-being.

Well-being is related to all aspects of the psychological growth of the individual-physical, perception, language, skills, intelligence, sociability, social sensitivity, emotional maturity, learning, enduring aspects of personality and cultural values. The concept of mental health is closer to psycho-social well-being. This experience of well-being bolsters and enhances confidence and faith in one's abilities and this experience promotes and fosters feelings of self-competence and self-esteem. Self-esteem is the positive image of oneself based on a fair appraisal of one's assets and liabilities. Self-esteem and social support are positive indicators of one's lifestyle. Social support is an important factor in the development and maintenance of mental health. Lack of social support makes one susceptible to psycho-pathology as
supportive positive interactions are important to a person's health and well-being. This is all the more reason to accord special attention and high priority to the study of subjective well-being in visually handicapped individuals.

The present study is designed to bring into focus the mental health and subjective well-being experiences and other related aspects of well-being in visually handicapped individuals in comparison with normal sighted individuals. For the purpose of the present study, the data are collected from the sample of 110 visually handicapped subjects and another 110 normal sighted subjects by adopting quota sampling technique from the city of Bangalore in Karnataka State. The sample in both the groups are matched on the demographic variables like age, sex, religion, education and so on.

Based on the present findings it may be inferred with strong conviction that the visual handicap has a gross impact on the mental health and other related aspects of life in the visually handicapped individuals. The visual handicap leads to enormous disturbances in the personality of the visually handicapped individuals, they feel helpless, invalid and uncertain about themselves as they lack confidence in themselves and their capabilities. These negative attitudes affect the normal course of life of the visually handicapped individuals. As a result they suffer from low self-esteem and self-competence. They fail to establish meaning and healthy relationships with their kith and kin.
The handicap restricts their scope of activity to a narrow circle and enforces dependence on others and this affects their morale. These feelings of dependency give rise to feelings of insecurity, anxiety, deprivation and social devaluation and this ultimately leads to self-devaluation. They feel deprived of a congenial and cordial social life as they feel unwanted and neglected in their social milieu. This further leads to frustration and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy and thus they perceive and appraise a low amount of support from their family members, friends and their significant others.

By undertaking a comparative study of the two groups, the following trends and observations are noticed. The major findings are presented in a simplified format.

1. The visually handicapped individuals experience lower status of well-being on all the dimensions of subjective well-being than the normal sighted individuals.

2. The visually handicapped individuals experience lower status of overall subjective well-being than the normal sighted individuals.

3. The dimensions of subjective well-being have significant intercorrelations in relation to one another in both the sample groups.
4. The dimensions of subjective well-being have significant correlation with self-esteem in both the sample groups.

5. The dimensions of subjective well-being have significant correlation with the four types of social support in both the sample groups.

6. The visually handicapped individuals have lower self-esteem than the normal sighted individuals.

7. The visually handicapped individuals have lower self-competence than the normal sighted individuals.

8. In the visually handicapped individuals self-esteem has significant correlation with family support.

9. In the normal sighted individuals self-esteem has significant correlation with family support and total social support.

10. The visually handicapped individuals experience and appraise lower amount of support from their family members, friends, and significant others than the normal sighted individuals and as a result they experience lower amount of total social support than the normal sighted individuals.

11. The four types of social support have significant intercorrelations with each other in both the sample groups.
12. The demographic variables age, education, marital status, employment status, source of income and income have significant influence on the dependent variables in both the sample groups.

13. The type of blindness — congenital blindness and the adventitious blindness have significant influence on the dependent variables overall subjective well-being and social support, but there is no significant influence on the dependent variable self-esteem.

Suggestions

Counselling services may be desirable in any programme of education, but for the visually handicapped individuals it is a dire necessity. The visually handicapped individuals need to be made aware of their status of mental health as this knowledge can be helpful to them in helping them to elevate and enhance their status of subjective well-being and other related aspects of life.

Recommendations

The sample for the present study is only a representative sample of the vast visually handicapped population. Therefore, a larger sample needs to be included in order to make generalized observations and conclusions and also to have a more enlightened knowledge about their status of subjective well-being and other related areas of life.