Research on the Social Integration Difficulties and Countermeasures of Young Visually Impaired People

Tingting Li[1,*], Cunchen Deng[1], Wenxun Yang[2]
[1]School of Social Work, Chongqing University of Science and Technology, Chongqing, China
[2]Resource and Environmental Economics, Chongqing University of Science and Technology, Chongqing, China
*Corresponding Author

Abstract: As the core force of social development, the growth, development and social integration of young people are directly related to the realization of personal values and the enhancement of social vitality. However, due to visual impairment, young visually impaired persons face many inconveniences in study, work and daily life, as well as numerous difficulties in social interaction and employment. This paper systematically examines the current situation and dilemmas of social integration among young visually impaired persons through qualitative research methods. The study finds that this group is confronted with multi-level challenges in interpersonal communication, education, employment and social participation, which mainly stem from the interaction of their own visual limitations, psychological adaptation difficulties and social environmental barriers. On this basis, the study suggests that social work interventions should construct a multi-level support system: improve adaptive capacity through psychological empowerment and skill training; establish family support and peer mutual aid networks; and promote accessible and inclusive social policies, so as to facilitate the social integration of visually impaired persons.

Keywords: Youth with Visual Impairment; Social Integration; Social Work Intervention; Qualitative Research; Accessibility

1. Introduction

Visual impairment refers to the damage of visual function to a certain extent. Patients fail to achieve normal vision due to low visual acuity or visual field defect, thus affecting their daily life. According to recent data released by the World Health Organization, there are 285 million people with visual impairment worldwide, among which China has as many as 17.31 million people with visual impairment, including about 8.3 million people with grade I visual disability (total blindness), accounting for 21% of the global blind (total blindness) population.

To achieve modernization, China takes the equal participation of persons with disabilities in society as the core goal, strengthens employment support and living security for persons with visual impairment, especially young persons with visual impairment, and enhances the construction of barrier-free facilities, so as to provide policy support for the social integration of young persons with visual impairment. As the core path for disadvantaged groups to participate in social life equally and realize personal values, the core connotation of social integration lies in that individuals obtain development resources and opportunities equally through continuous interaction with society, and fully participate in economic, political, social and cultural life. This theory also provides a core framework for the development of social work services for persons with disabilities [1,2].

Based on the above, this paper selects young persons with visual impairment in Region L as analysis samples, adopts the interview method to deeply analyze the current situation and dilemmas of their social integration, and puts forward strategies to improve their social integration from the perspective of social work, so as to contribute to the healthy growth of young persons with visual impairment.

2. Current Situation of Social Integration of Young Persons with Visual Impairment

This paper takes young persons with visual impairment in Region L as the research object. Based on field research and in-depth interviews, it systematically investigates the current

situation of their social integration and influencing factors, and puts forward corresponding countermeasures accordingly. Through a combination of case interviews and participatory observation, the study conducts in-depth research on 10 young persons with visual impairment, striving to comprehensively reflect the real dilemmas and needs of this group in the process of social integration.

2.1 Weak Interpersonal Communication and Social Support System

2.1.1 Low level of self-disclosure and restricted emotional expression

The loss of visual function leads some young visually impaired persons to develop feelings of inferiority and defensiveness in social interactions, making them reluctant to easily reveal their true thoughts. Some interviewees stated that after visual impairment, their communication with friends remained superficial, with little in-depth exchange of inner feelings. Long-term avoidance of social occasions further weakened their self-expression ability. Some visually impaired students also mentioned that they often avoided deep interactions for fear of excessive attention from classmates regarding their visual conditions, which hindered the establishment of trusting relationships [3].

2.1.2 Insufficient conflict coping ability and difficulties in maintaining interpersonal relationships

Due to perceptual limitations, young visually impaired persons are prone to interpersonal frictions in intimate relationships or daily interactions, and generally lack effective skills to resolve conflicts. For example, some respondents experienced misunderstandings and quarrels caused by unintentional behaviors of family members. Although they realized the problems afterward, they found it difficult to take the initiative to communicate and improve, leading to gradual estrangement. Some visually impaired students also reported that they could hardly accurately identify others' emotional changes, frequently conflicting with roommates over trivial daily matters and failing to provide emotional support, which worsened their interpersonal relationships [3,4].

2.2 Restricted Access to Education and Employment Opportunities

2.2.1 Imperfect educational support system and limited integration effects

The current education system still struggles to meet the needs of visually impaired students in terms of resource supply and teaching adaptation. Some interviewees pointed out that problems such as the shortage of Braille textbooks and insufficient classroom interaction support directly affected their academic development and social integration. The situation of visually impaired youth in rural areas is even more severe. In individual cases, students were forced to discontinue their studies due to teachers' underestimation of their learning ability, losing opportunities for further education.

2.2.2 Narrow employment channels and blocked career development

Employment choices for young visually impaired persons are still highly concentrated in traditional industries such as massage and tuning, with limited access to the mainstream job market. Interviews revealed that most respondents had encountered implicit discrimination in job hunting due to visual problems, and some employers clearly expressed a preference for employees with better vision. Long-term unemployment has gradually caused some visually impaired youth to lose confidence in employment and fall into a state of passive dependence.

2.3 Multiple Barriers to Social Participation

2.3.1 Accessibility deficiencies in the physical environment

The inadequate urban barrier-free facilities severely restrict the independent mobility and social participation of visually impaired individuals. Respondents noted that issues such as occupied tactile paving and the lack of voice prompts in public transport not only compromise travel safety but also significantly limit their scope of activities. In isolated cases, falls occurred due to chaotic surroundings near workplaces, leading the individuals to avoid going out as much as possible afterward, resulting in a gradual breakdown of social connections [5,6].

2.3.2 Prejudice and misunderstanding in social perception

The public generally tends to underestimate the capabilities of visually impaired people or adopt an overprotective attitude. Such cognitive biases virtually hinder the social integration of this group. Some respondents mentioned that they

were rejected due to visual impairment during job applications even though their qualifications met the requirements. In daily life, overly conspicuous acts of "assistance" from others made them feel singled out, leading them to voluntarily reduce social interactions and develop self-isolation.

3. Difficulties in the Social Integration of Young Visually Impaired Persons

3.1 Physical Level

3.1.1 Limited participation ability caused by visual function loss

Visual defects directly restrict the information reception and spatial mobility of young visually impaired persons, forming a fundamental obstacle to social integration. Vision is the main channel for humans to perceive the outside world. Young visually impaired persons mainly rely on hearing and touch as alternative means, and their information reception is often delayed or biased. Some respondents stated that they often misunderstood others' intentions because they could not recognize facial expressions and body language, such as misreading casual jokes as ridicule, and thus avoided in-depth communication.

3.1.2 Difficulties in environmental adaptation restrict activity scope

Visual impairment leads to weakened spatial navigation ability. Coupled with inadequate barrier-free facilities, this seriously limits the independent travel of visually impaired persons. Due to problems such as occupied tactile paving and lack of voice prompts on public transport, some respondents went out independently very few times a month, and their activity scope was limited to between home and workplace.

3.2 Psychological Level

3.2.1 Identity crisis and increased emotional burden

Visual defects not only bring functional limitations, but also easily trigger self-doubt and social anxiety, forming internal resistance in the process of integration. Low self-worth creates psychological constraints. Many young visually impaired persons equate visual loss with insufficient personal ability, forming negative self-perception. Some respondents admitted that they often felt "inferior to others", avoided in-depth contact with able-bodied people, and even gave up opportunities for love and marriage.

3.2.2 Negative social experiences exacerbate psychological isolation

Past experiences of being discriminated against or overly focused on can easily make visually impaired youth fear social activities. For example, some respondents developed strong anxiety about going out independently after suffering verbal harm in public; others avoided group activities ever since being improperly teased at parties, generalizing individual negative events into universal perceptions.

3.3 Social Level

3.3.1 Absence of support system and exclusion from external environment

Insufficient social support, uneven resource allocation, and public cognitive bias jointly constitute the external structural factors for the integration difficulties of young visually impaired persons. Family support is inappropriate. As a key source of support, family attitudes and behaviors directly affect the confidence of visually impaired youth in social integration. Some respondents stated that their families either restricted their going out and social practice due to overprotection, or caused self-enclosure because of neglecting their emotional needs; some families even required their children to get employed as soon as possible due to financial pressure, sacrificing their opportunities for further education and social development.

3.3.2 Social stereotypes and underestimation of ability

Society still holds strong stereotypes toward visually impaired persons, either regarding them as completely dependent on others for care, or underestimating their working and social abilities. Some young visually impaired persons reported that they were rejected due to vision problems in job hunting even though their abilities met the requirements; in daily life, excessive help from others also made them feel specialized, thus reducing social interactions.

4. Countermeasures to Promote the Social Integration of Young Visually Impaired Persons

4.1 Individual Level

4.1.1 Exploring potential from a strengths perspective to enhance psychological capital and social skills

Many young visually impaired individuals have

long suffered from exclusion and self-denial, forming a rigid belief that disability equals incompetence. Social workers should first adopt a strengths-based approach to help them re-understand themselves. Using the "strengths list" tool, they can be guided to discover their advantages in auditory memory, language expression, tactile sensitivity, and so on. By reviewing successful experiences, they are encouraged to take control of their lives. Social workers help them identify and adjust irrational beliefs, and form a positive cognition: visual impairment is a characteristic, not a defect.

4.1.2 Social skills training and emotion management groups

A lack of effective social skills is a major barrier to the social integration of young visually impaired persons. Through structured group activities, social workers can cultivate their abilities in self-expression, positive communication, and conflict management. First, simulate daily social scenarios, such as expressing acceptance or refusal through role-play, to help them master relevant verbal expressions and responses. Second, emotion management: young visually impaired persons often experience anxiety. Social workers can establish emotion management groups and relieve their stress through music therapy, meditation, and mindfulness.

4.2 Relational Level

4.2.1 Expanding the family support network

The family is the most important source of support for visually impaired persons, but it may also become a source of overprotection or emotional neglect. Social workers can carry out parent-child parallel groups to guide parents to realize that "protection does not mean isolation," encourage them to gradually let go, and support their children to participate in social activities. Family interviews can be used to mediate parent-child conflicts and help parents listen to their children's real needs. Joint tasks can be designed to improve cooperation and trust among family members. For families with neglect or biased behaviors, social workers should conduct appropriate interventions to promote the fair distribution of family resources and effective provision of emotional support.

4.2.2 Building a peer support network

Support from similar groups has unique value for emotional identification and experience sharing. Social workers can promote the establishment of mutual aid groups, reading clubs, or art groups for young visually impaired persons, such as organizing activities like "Blind Friends Music Club" and "Audiobook Sharing Sessions," to create a safe and inclusive communication space. In these groups, participants can share coping strategies, social experiences, and emotional feelings, forming a "peer education" effect. In addition, a combined online and offline social model can be developed, such as establishing WeChat groups for daily support and organizing regular offline gatherings, to gradually break their social isolation.

4.2.3 Designing community integration activities

The community is an important part of social integration. Social workers should actively cooperate with community organizations to plan activities involving both visually impaired and able-bodied persons, such as community fitness festivals, choirs, and public welfare teams. The focus should be on equal participation rather than the experience of being "helped." Visually impaired persons are no longer "recipients" but "partners" who perform tasks through cooperation, which enhances their sense of participation and changes stereotypes among community residents.

4.3 Environmental Level

4.3.1 Continuously promote barrier-free facility Construction and Create a Barrier-Free Travel Environment The government should clarify the objectives and timetable for barrier-free facility construction, incorporate barrier-free facilities as an important component into relevant planning, and ensure that newly built public buildings, transportation facilities and other constructions meet barrier-free requirements. Standards for the design, construction and acceptance of barrier-free facilities should be formulated and improved to guarantee their practicality, safety and convenience. Relevant departments should develop effective supervision measures. Once such behaviors as occupying tactile paving or intentionally damaging barrier-free facilities are found, law enforcement agencies shall take corresponding measures [7].

4.3.2 Link education and employment resources, provide vocational

Training and Entrepreneurship Support Education and employment are the main pillars of social integration. Social workers must actively cooperate with schools, enterprises and associations for persons with disabilities to

establish a supportive education and employment system. Braille learning materials and e-learning resources should be provided to ensure equal access to education for visually impaired students. In the employment field, it is necessary to strengthen anti-discrimination publicity among employers, promote the implementation of the quota employment policy, and expand non-traditional employment channels [8].

4.3.3 Promote public education and social

Advocacy to Reduce Discrimination and Prejudice Social prejudice and discrimination often stem from ignorance and estrangement. Social workers can strengthen public awareness and education regarding the care for visually impaired persons, so as to improve social recognition and acceptance of this group. Training on travel services for visually impaired persons should be carried out to help the public correctly understand braille and provide effective assistance and services for them. For public service personnel, their role positioning should be strengthened as service providers, resource linkers, collaborative organizers, information guides, strength enablers and policy advocates [9]. Volunteers should be encouraged and organized to participate in voluntary services to help visually impaired persons travel safely on the road. An effective feedback mechanism should be established to encourage visually impaired persons to put forward service suggestions and needs, so that timely services can be provided [10].

5. Conclusion

This study takes 10 young visually impaired persons in Region L as research subjects, and adopts qualitative research methods including case interviews and participatory observation to systematically explore the practical dilemmas and influencing factors of their social integration. It is found that the group faces significant obstacles in three dimensions: interpersonal communication, education and employment, and social participation. Their integration difficulties result from the interaction of physiological, psychological and social factors.

The loss of visual function forms fundamental restrictions on information reception and spatial mobility, and the resulting psychological problems such as distorted self-identity and social anxiety further aggravate their social isolation. At the social level, inadequate barrier-free facilities, insufficient supply of educational and employment resources, prominent public stereotypes and prejudices, and inappropriate family support constitute external structural barriers. Internal and external factors jointly restrict the social integration process of young visually impaired persons.

Based on the research findings, this paper constructs a multi-level social work intervention system from three dimensions: individual, relational and environmental, providing practical approaches to solving the social integration dilemma of young visually impaired persons. At the individual level, potential is explored from the strengths perspective, and social and emotion management training is carried out to consolidate the internal foundation for integration. At the relational level, family support is optimized, peer support networks are established, and community integration activities are carried out to build a diversified social support system. At the environmental level, standardized construction of barrier-free facilities is promoted, educational and employment resources are linked, and social publicity and education are strengthened to remove external integration barriers.

The social integration of young visually impaired persons is a systematic project that requires the joint efforts of individuals, families, communities, governments and all sectors of society. Due to the limited scope and number of research samples, the universality of the conclusions needs to be improved. Future research can expand the research areas, combine quantitative research methods, deeply analyze the integration differences among groups with different characteristics, and conduct follow-up studies on the implementation of intervention strategies.

Promoting the equal social integration of young visually impaired persons can not only realize the personal value of this group, but also enhance social inclusiveness, stimulate social vitality, and contribute to the realization of social fairness and justice.

References

[1] Chen Chengwen, Sun Jiayue. Social Integration: The Sociological Significance of a Concept. Journal of Social Science of Hunan Normal University, 2012, 41(06):66-71.

[2] Li Han. A Theoretical Analysis of Social

Integration Theory Guiding Persons with Disabilities to Promote Sports Participation. Fujian Sports Science and Technology, 2021, 40(03):19-24.

[3] Kong Xiaojing. Research on Social Work Promoting Social Communication Ability of Visually Impaired College Students. Changchun University of Science and Technology, 2019.

[4] Wang Zhihui. Research on Case Work Intervention to Improve Interpersonal Communication Ability of Visually Impaired Persons. Yangzhou University, 2024.

[5] Liao Huiqing. Accessible Environment Construction Calls for Social Work Intervention for Persons with Disabilities. China Social Work, 2023, (18):1.

[6] Wu Lianfang, Wang Binbin, Zheng Fuhong. From "Brainstorm" to "Action": Social Workers Help Build All-Round Barrier-Free Services. China Social Work, 2023, (12):37-38.

[7] Zhao Xiaohua. Research on the Construction of Technical System for Standardized Construction of Barrier-Free Facilities. China Housing Facilities, 2023, (05):55-57.

[8] Li Jing. Enriching National Standard Braille Reading Resources to Boost High-Quality Development of Special Education. Modern Special Education, 2024, (05):6-7.

[9] Liao Fei. Analysis of Activity-Oriented Service Model for Visually Impaired Readers: Taking the "Reading Warmth—Care Action for Visually Impaired Readers" Project of Foshan Library as an Example. Library Research and Work, 2019, (12):68-71.

[10] Huang Xiaoqing. Role Orientation and Strategy Analysis of Librarians in Visual Impairment Services: Taking Guangxi Library as an Example. Journal of Henan Library Science, 2026, 46(01):95-97.