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NIMA UCHUN O'ZBEKISTONDAGI KO'ZI OJIZ VA ZAIF KO'RUVCHILAR ISH JOYIDAGI MOSLASHTIRILGAN SHAROITLARNI TALAB QILMAYDILAR: SIFATLI TADQIQOT NATIJALARI

Аннотация

Ushbu maqola Buxoro vohasidagi o'рта maktablarning ko'zi ojiz va zaif ko'ruvchi o'qituvchilari nima uchun ish beruvchilaridan qulay mehnat sharoitlarini talab qilmasliklarining sabablarini o'rganishga qaratilgan, garchi ularga ehtiyoj bo'lsa ham. O'qituvchilar, maktab xodimlari va mutaxassislar bilan jami 28 ta yuzma-yuz yarim-strukturalizatsiyalangan intervyu o'tkazildi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatdiki, bunday o'qituvchilar yordamchi qurilmalar va texnologiyalarning yuqori narxi, ma'muriy xodimlar tomonidan yoqitirilmaslik qo'rquvi, maktablardagi texnologik infratuzilmaning etishmasligi va mavjud moslashuvlarning yo'qligi tufayli qulay mehnat sharoitlarini talab qilmaganlar.

Kalit so'zlar: o'рта maktablar, ko'zi ojiz va zaif ko'ruvchi o'qituvchilar, sifatli tadqiqot, intervyulashtirish.

WHY BLIND TEACHERS IN UZBEKISTAN DO NOT REQUEST ACCOMMODATIONS: A QUALITATIVE INSIGHT

Annotation

This study aims to explore why secondary school teachers with visual impairments and blindness in the Bukhara Oasis did not request reasonable accommodation from their employers, despite needing them. A total of 28 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, their school personnel, and experts. Research findings revealed that such teachers often avoid requesting reasonable accommodation due to the prohibitive cost of assistive devices and technologies, fear of being disliked by administrative staff, a lack of technological infrastructure in schools, and a lack of reasonably available accommodations.

Keywords: secondary schools, teachers with visual impairments and blindness, qualitative inquiry, interviewing.

ПОЧЕМУ НЕЗРЯЧИЕ УЧИТЕЛЯ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ НЕ ТРЕБУЮТ УСЛОВИЙ ТРУДА: РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ КАЧЕСТВЕННОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

Аннотация

Данное исследование направлено на выявление причин, по которым учителя средних школ с нарушениями зрения и слепотой в Бухарском области не обращались к работодателям с просьбой о предоставлении условий труда, несмотря на необходимость. Было проведено 28 полуструктурированных интервью с учителями, школьным персоналом и экспертами. Результаты исследования показали, что такие учителя воздерживаются от запроса условий труда из-за высокой стоимости ассистивных устройств и технологий, опасения негативного отношения со стороны административного персонала, недостаточного уровня технологической инфраструктуры в школах, а также отсутствия реально доступных условий труда.

Ключевые слова: средние школы, учителя с нарушениями зрения и слепотой, качественное исследование, интервьюирование.

Introduction. Globally, over one billion people - around 15% of the world's population - live with disabilities and require at least one assistive product, including about 200 million people with visual impairment or blindness, highlighting the urgent need for accessible technologies that support independence and inclusion [1]. In Uzbekistan, Presidential Resolution No. PP-57 mandates the provision of 18 assistive devices based on medical assessment, yet support for blind individuals remains limited, with only white canes [2]. Recent progress remains modest: in 2023, the Central Administration of the Blind Society of Uzbekistan distributed 350 adjustable canes, 10 voice tonometers, and 25 voice thermometers [3]. By late 2025, the National Agency for Social Protection under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan reported that 18 intersections and 753 traffic lights had been equipped with audible signals, while 7,756 assistive devices were distributed to visually impaired individuals, including

white canes, Braille materials, Braille writers, voice tonometers, thermometers, glucometers, and eyeball prostheses [4].

Essentially, teaching is one of the priority professions for people with visual impairments and blindness in Uzbekistan [5]. In 2023, a total of 100 teachers with visual impairments and blindness were employed in secondary schools across the Bukhara Oasis (Bukhara, Navoi, and Samarkand regions) [6]. Therefore, this study explores why secondary school teachers with visual impairments and blindness in the Bukhara Oasis did not request necessary reasonable accommodation from their employers, despite needing them.

Research Methodology. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of visually impaired and blind secondary school teachers in the Bukhara Oasis through semi-structured in-person interviews. Purposive sampling recruited 20 teachers (varying acuity: partial sight, severe visual

impairment, total blindness) and six school personnel, with snowball sampling for two experts; data saturation was achieved. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan (No. 06-06/2-3194, Dec 1, 2023) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (No. PPI/111/8/JEP-2024-076). Printed materials for sighted/partially sighted participants included 20 copies each of information sheets and consent forms, plus six interview protocols for the researcher. For blind participants, the researcher prepared 20 Braille information sheets and 25 Braille consent forms. Thematic analysis was conducted, with trustworthiness ensured via data triangulation and member checking [7, 8].

Findings & Discussion

The prohibitive cost of assistive devices and technologies

Most teachers with severe visual impairments or total blindness refrain from requesting assistive devices or technologies from their employers due to prohibitive costs, viewing such requests as futile. For instance, Participant 20 declined magnifiers for teaching activities, deeming it a “useless request” given their high prices—portable electronic models like the 5.0-inch digital magnifier (4X-32X zoom, foldable handle) at US\$169.95, Eyoyo 5.0-inch version at US\$179.99, or video magnifiers up to US\$299.99 [9]. Larger video magnifiers proved even costlier: the MERLIN ULTRA 1080 HD 22" (MR2UE22A-VA) at US\$449.99, Freedom Scientific Topaz HD 20" desktop at US\$629.00, or enhanced vision DaVinci DAV1E24A text-to-speech model at US\$700.00 [10].

Participants 3 and 4 similarly highlighted exorbitant costs as the key barrier to Braille displays, which range from ~US\$3,500 for basic 40-cell models to over US\$15,000 for advanced 80-cell units. Prices depend on cell capacity (40/70/80 cells), refreshable Braille quality, Bluetooth/USB connectivity, battery life, and extras like ergonomic keyboards or speech synthesis. These features support key tasks such as document reading, note-taking, or basic coding. Examples include the entry-level HumanWare Brilliant BI 40X (Bluetooth-enabled, ~US\$3,600), mid-range Freedom Scientific Focus 40 Blue (~US\$4,000), higher-end HumanWare Braille Note Touch 32 (Android-integrated) or ViewPlus Columbia (80 cells) at US\$7,000–US\$10,000, and premium Euro Braille Eskys 64 or Orbit Reader 20 Plus nearing US\$12,000–US\$15,000 [11].

Totally blind teachers relied on personal screen readers (e.g., JAWS Professional Edition at US\$1,625 or Home Edition at US\$1,200 per perpetual license) for lesson planning, grading, and digital materials [12]. However, no participants formally requested the installation of JAWS at school. This reluctance arose from intertwined interpersonal dynamics, institutional constraints, and economic barriers. Participant 4 exemplified this pattern, viewing screen reader requests as overly complicated and burdensome, and kept silent to preserve harmony with the school administration.

Ultimately, high costs, far beyond typical school budgets, deterred secondary teachers who are partially sighted, severely impaired, or blind from requesting magnifiers, Braille displays, or screen readers.

Fear of being disliked

Fear of being disliked by the school administration was another key reason many visually impaired and blind teachers hesitated to request reasonable accommodation from their employers. Participant 21 specifically mentioned that teachers with visual impairments and blindness often worry about not being liked by the administration if they ask for assistive technologies, such as screen readers or adapted computers.

Participant 4 exemplified this pattern during his interview. He recalled that when he met the principal during his job recruitment interview, she explicitly said to him, “I will recruit you, but do not be a headache for me.”

Thus, fear of being disliked by school administration prevented secondary school teachers with partial sight, severe visual impairments, and total blindness from requesting reasonable accommodation, such as installing screen readers on school computers, from their employers.

Lack of technological infrastructure in schools

Technological inaccessibility in schools emerged as another key reason why eight teachers with visual impairments and blindness refrained from requesting reasonable accommodation from their employers. For instance, Participant 13's rationale for not requesting a screen reader stood in stark contrast to that of Participants 3 and 4 (discussed earlier). He explained that his own limited knowledge of computer technology left him feeling unprepared even to make such a request.

Participant 17 took this further, stating that requesting a screen reader would be entirely unnecessary. He pointed out that the school's computers were outdated, unreliable, and practically unusable for such purposes. These machines frequently malfunctioned, received no basic maintenance, and proved incompatible with assistive technologies, making any request seem pointless in such a resource-scarce environment. Participant 18 also echoed a request to screen readers as superfluous. His position stemmed from the school's computers being persistently inoperable, plagued by frequent malfunctions, outdated software, and poor maintenance, rendering them completely incompatible with assistive technologies.

Therefore, this technological inaccessibility in schools deterred secondary school teachers with severe visual impairments and total blindness from seeking reasonable accommodation, such as installing screen readers on school computers, from their employers.

Lack of reasonably available accommodation

The unavailability of reasonable accommodation was another reason seven teachers with partial sight, severe visual impairments, and total blindness refrained from requesting them. Teachers with severe impairments, for instance, urgently needed Braille textbooks to fulfil instructional duties but saw formal requests as futile due to well-known institutional shortages. Participants 2 and 22 exemplified this, stating that petitioning principals for such materials would be pointless amid systemic resource gaps.

Totally blind teachers similarly needed personalised instructional rooms with tactile layouts, optimal lighting, and strategically placed furniture. Still, they refrained from making such requests, viewing them as unattainable given entrenched infrastructure constraints and the absence of accessible classrooms. Participant 12, supervised by Participant 14, highlighted classroom shortages as the core barrier. Participant 15 faced identical constraints, despite the evident necessity for his visually demanding teaching environment. Participants 9, 12, and 15, all at two-shift schools, faced exacerbated shortages from storage-room conversions, further curtailing adaptive spaces. Participants 25 and 9 reinforced this shared reluctance amid persistent deficits.

Consequently, the unavailability of Braille textbooks and personalised instruction rooms deterred secondary school teachers with severe visual impairments and total blindness from seeking such accommodation from employers.

Conclusion. Secondary school teachers with visual impairments and blindness face major barriers in mainstream settings without assistive materials, devices, technologies,

personalised instruction rooms, and personal assistants. Yet most in the Bukhara Oasis have not requested reasonable accommodation from employers, perpetuating exclusion and underperformance. This study explores why, drawing on their

lived experiences to reveal systemic and personal hurdles. Future studies could extend this work by evaluating intervention pilots to ensure sustained progress toward disability-inclusive education.

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