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VISUAL PLANET FOR BLIND: IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA ON VISUALLY IMPAIRED VIEWERS IN PAKISTAN

Abstract

This study explores the impact of mass media on Visually Impaired Viewers (VIV) in Pakistan, based on the objectives: (a) to understand and uncover the psychological, sociological, informative and entertainment needs of VIV; (b) to investigate how and in what extent the VIV are gratifying their needs from the content of mass media. Qualitative method has been used and data was collected via in-depth interviews with semi structured questionnaire. Snow ball sampling was adopted and 10 interviews were conducted including 7 males and 3 female respondents. Member check technique was done and data was analyzed thematically. This study found that mass media of Pakistan is not properly gratifying the needs of visually impaired viewers, especially; mainstream media like Television channels are not paying any attention towards the issues and events of VIV. Blind community is marginalized and annoyed by the behavior of sighted society, feeling depressed due to stereotypical portrayal on mass media, and are not willing to become a charitable object for profitable organizations. Radio and Internet were found highly impactful on the lives of blind people.

Keywords: Visually impaired viewers, impact, mass media, uses and gratification, blind users.

1.1. Introduction

The world's largest blind population is living in developing countries. "Around two million people are completely blind in Pakistan (Reporter 2013). India is now home to the world's largest number of blind people. Across the globe, 37 million people are blind and 15 million are from India (Sinha 2007). Blindness is linked with many other mental and social problems, for example, depression, lack of confidence, unemployment, limited social circle, disconnection with the real world. By far the most common psychological co morbidity of vision loss is depression; there are also social manifestations such as higher rates of unemployment and divorce (Fox 2012). These issues force blind people to play a

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passive role in the society; they suffer their whole life and do not get a chance to achieve a pure self-esteem. It is crucial to identify their needs and requirements which only they can explain.

With representing of uses and gratification, this study has examined the impact of mass media on visually impaired viewers, moreover, explored their psychological, sociological, information and entertainment needs, which they want to gratify from media of Pakistan. It has been assumed that mass media in Pakistan is not fulfilling the needs of visually impaired people. When it comes to the mass media of Pakistan and its responsibility towards visually impaired people, situation seems unfair and critical. Two million blind people of a Pakistan are a huge population, which should be utilized in a good manner, so it can perform effective role for the betterment of society, furthermore, nourishment of their own personalities.

Blind people simply cannot read printed newspaper on their own, because of no vision; they read only Braille writing system. Braille is a system of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or who have low vision (Living with Vision Loss 2016). Hearing is a power of mostly blind people; they cannot see, and for overcoming that visual disability they eventually focus too much on sounds & voices. Mr. Rauf, a blind man said, “We recognize people with their voices, same as sighted people identify others with faces”. That shows the real strength of hearing system of a blind people. There is not a single radio station which is broadcasting content for visually impaired persons in Pakistan, no education, no guidelines and not even a single talk show which can be helpful for their daily routine matters.

Pakistani Satellite Television Channels, with the respect to content, focuses on politics, crimes and entertainment. As far the needs of blind people concern, it is producing any content which can support them, media owners and program producers are totally ignoring the huge population of VIV, there is no question about the quality of content as there is no content. This paper primarily aims at analyzing that is mass media of Pakistan providing enough content to satisfy the psychological, sociological, information and entertainment needs of visually impaired viewers?

2.0. Literature Review

2.1. Psychological and Social Behaviors of Visually Impaired People

A number of researches have been conducted on the psychological and social behaviors of the visually impaired people. For instance, Kef (1997) examined personal network and social support of visually impaired young adults, aged between 14-23 in the Netherlands. It was found that oldest adolescent had the largest network. The average participant had a personal network of 15 people (compared to 15-20 for sighted adolescents.) The oldest adolescents had the largest networks and blind adolescents had the smallest (Kef 1997).

Similarly, Colock (1992) investigated the psychology of newborn blind kid and observed grooming patterns, motor skills, verbal indications, interaction with the society and collaboration with other sighted kids. Results found that special education is the vital process for the nourishment of a disabled child. Parents play the vital role for the visually impaired kid before the stage of school,

especially mother is the fundamental source of motivation. Hands are another major instrument of blind kids for understanding the environment. The hands of a blind child will help in the recognition of parents and familiars (Fraiberg 1977). Language and proper communication also play a central role for the understanding process of a blind kid.

Another variable that has been found is the level of depression and anxiety among blind people. Astrid and Richard (2007) added that there is a strong relation between visual impairment and depression and anxiety in older people in Britain. It was argued that visually impaired people had a higher prevalence of depression compared with people with good vision. Of visually impaired older people, 13.5% were depressed compared with 4.6% of people with good vision (Jennifer, Astrid and Richard 2007).

2.2. Portrayal of Disable People in the Media

Mass media like TV and Cinema are part of the daily lives of people; attributes of people regarding social phenomena are greatly influenced and reshaped through the specific content (Elliott & Byrd, 1982). Especially, demonstrating the stereotypical image of physically disabled people in media content frames the mindset of viewers and construct false impression, which leads towards a social disorder, and a formation of a stigmatic society.

While keeping the psychological effects of this kind of portrayal, Barned (1992) suggested a variety of recommendations to eliminate this biased behavior.

- There should be fair recruiting of disabled persons in media houses.
- Disability Equality Training sessions by disabled people are important for media workers.
- It is necessary that media content should be available for all accessible formats for disabled persons like Braille code reading for blind people.
- Disabled actors should be employed for performing a disabled character in any production.
- Avoid depicting disable person receiving charity; media should represent disable and non- disable person equally.

2.3. New Technology & Visually Impaired People

It has been viewed that Internet is quite useful for visually impaired older people (Okonji, Lhussier, Bailey, & Cattan, 2015). Internet and new technology make them able to perform daily tasks more efficiently, feel socially connected and cope with vision impairment. Lučić, Sedlar, and Delić (2011) also tested a prototype of computer educational game Lugram with visually impaired children. They argued that basic motor skills were important for a blind user to play lugram. Initially, blind kids need the help of sighted children and afterward they started playing on their own.

Similarly, Ulrich (2011) conducted research about Cane, which has been upgraded with robot technologies to assist the visually impaired people and known as Guidecane. Ultrasonic sensors were integrated with Guidecane which detects

obstacle in a way and the embedded computer finds a suitable save direction and steers the cane towards that way. The steering action results in a very noticeable force felt in the handle, which easily guides the user without any conscious effort on his/her part (Ulrich and Borenstein 2011). In addition, Helal, Moore and Ramachandran (2001) examined wireless pedestrian navigation system for visually impaired persons. The name of this navigational system is Drishiti, it boosts the moving capability of a blind person and allows to walk more effectively and efficiently regardless the fear of obstacles in the way.

2.4. Academic and Reading Preferences of Visually Impaired People

There are number of software available that can convert the books and reading material in to the digital format that can help blind people to read. For instance, the DAISY Consortium was formed in May 1996 by talking book libraries to lead the worldwide transition from analog to [Digital Talking Books](#) (Daisy Consortium 2016). Padure (2008) tested the effectiveness of DAISY Digital books with visually impaired students in Sweden & Norway. Results showed significant progress in the learning capacity of visually impaired students.

Adetoro (2010) investigated reading interest and information needs of visually impaired people in Nigeria. It explored and highlighted the areas of reading interest for blinds and suggested converting more information into alternative format for visually impaired readers. Study found that adult blinds had high interest in getting religious, business and entertainment reading material, while secondary school students had high interest in art and stories. The information which is not available in alternative format such as Braille coding is not useful for a blind person. Braille materials (58.3%) are the most preferred source of information generally (Adetoro 2010). Blind person have same intensity of interest in getting desired information as sighted person does and it varies from age and qualification level.

3.0. Visually Impaired Television Viewers & Uses & Gratification Approach

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is an approach to understand how people actively consume media to satisfy and gratify their specific needs, it is an audience centered approach and assumes that audience has ultimate power to select and reject specific media content. This [communication theory](#) is [positivistic](#) in its approach, based in the [socio-psychological](#) communication tradition, and focuses on communication at the [mass media](#) scale (West, et al. 2007).

UGT discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape (McQuail and Denis 2010). Unlike other mass communication theories UGT assumes media viewers are not passive, in fact they are active and very well aware of their specific needs. UGT believes in audience power and suggests that viewers consciously select their desired media according to specific need for achieving gratification.

According to Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch UGT's approach was based on "the social and psychological origins of needs, which generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratifications and other

consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones."(Elihu, et al. (1973–1974)). The social and psychological origins generate multiple needs for a media viewer, such as, information, education, social interaction and entertainment. UGT perceives media content is being filtered by audience to gratify specific need and media always try to produce that content which can fulfill viewers demand and satisfy their needs.

UGT is effective approach when communication is associated with New Media like internet and smart phones. The [Internet](#) provides a new and deep field for exploring UGT. It was found to have three main categories of gratifications: content gratification, process gratification, and social gratification (Stafford, et al. 2004). Internet user gets gratification through its content, browsing experience and having social interaction with other users. Leung (2013) found social media users have motivations like, social and affection, need to vent negative feelings, recognition, entertainment and cognitive needs.

Online gaming is another perspective as per UGT approach, internet users go to online gaming websites and play their desired game for needs gratification. Achievement, enjoyment and social interaction are all motivations for starting to play an online game, and their success at the game as well as the extent to which their uses were gratified predicted their continuance in playing (Jen-Her, Shu-Ching and Ho-Huang 2010). Usage of Smart phones are also important as per UGT approach; people use phones for achieving gratifications like sociability, entertainment, instrumental and information.

UGT has a heuristic value and provides communication researchers a "perspective through which a number of ideas and theories about media choice, consumption, and even impact can be viewed"(Stanley and Dennis 2009).

As per this paper, Uses and Gratification was suitable approach to adopt for theoretical framework and with the help of it researcher identified social and psychological needs of visually impaired viewers, their expectations regarding mass media of Pakistan, their patterns of media consumptions and impact of mass media on their daily lives.

4.0. Research Design

The design of this paper is exploratory because the topic is relatively new and limited data is available. No research has been conducted before on the relationship between mass media and visually impaired viewers under the umbrella of Uses and Gratification approach. Due to exploratory nature of study, a qualitative research method was selected. Snow ball sampling technique has been adopted for interviews because visually impaired people are not moving in mainstream society and normally it is hard to find appropriate respondent for the research study. The key person and first respondent was Mr. RaufTahir, a blind man and Professor of English Literature, he introduced the next respondents, and then chain formed.

Data was collected via in-depth interviews and in order to explore the psychological, sociological, information and entertainment needs, it also examined the impact of mass media on the lives of blind people. Interviews were performed through a semi-structured questionnaire, with broad themed, open-ended

questions, to cater the objectives of study. Interviews last approximately 60 minutes in total duration and were recorded with the consent of participants. Member checks technique was done, transcribed verbatim and the content was analyzed thematically.

Ten interviews have been conducted, including 7 males and 3 female respondents. Respondents possessed a wide range of age and had different level of visual impairment conditions, varying from partial sight to complete blindness. Mostly respondents were highly educated and working in education sector.

5.0. Findings and Analysis

After analyzing the data thematically, five themes have been emerged from this study that are:

1. Awareness about visually impaired people
2. Inclusion of blind persons in the media industry
3. Stereotypical portrayal of blind people in the media
4. Language and terminology about blind people
5. Accessible media content for blind people

Beside these themes, two mediums have been considered most influential from all respondents, Radio and Internet.

5.1. Awareness about Visually Impaired People

It has been observed through all interviews that visually impaired viewers are so much concerned about their social belonging with the society, and have deep sense of isolation. They felt marginalized and disconnected with the mainstream society, however, many blind persons are working professionally in various fields, especially in education sector as a lecturer or as a professor, parallel with sighted co-workers, but still are not able to communicate and socialize with them effectively.

“I have dropped my children to school and sitting in the car, the gatekeeper said to my driver ‘Pay my regards to madam’, he could communicate with me directly as I am blind and not deaf and dumb, I mean, people have absolutely no idea how to communicate with a visually impaired person” (Maryam Rauf).

“People ask ridiculous questions to me like, how you eat? How you watch movie? This behavior of society is not making any sense” (Prof. Faisal Kamal Haider).

Every respondent highlighted this obnoxious behavior of sighted society and complained about the negligent role of mass media of Pakistan regarding this issue.

“What are personal needs? Awareness about my related opportunities, tools which can relate me to my life or about the talk of people which are working in our institutions, media is simply not covering it” (Prof. Abdul Rauf).

It seems social belonging is the biggest issue for visually impaired community; it is the root cause of almost every difficulty which they encounter in a life. Marginalized behavior started from childhood when a visually impaired kid faced cornered from relatives and other fellow kids, sighted children do not like to play with a blind child, as they feel that kid cannot be able to fulfill the needs of a particular activity. So, ultimately that kid forced to restrict himself socially only with other blind kids. This particular scenario get worst with the passage of time when a visually impaired kid become young adult and having a desire to go into a practical phase of a life, employers hesitate to offer jobs to blind people, they doubt on their abilities, show sympathy, but do not offer them a vacancy in their organization. This economical hurdle creates bigger issues and opens new era of a struggle for a blind individual.

Participants of this study were not satisfied with the current function of mass media in creating any kind of awareness regarding their issues; most of the respondents simply out ruled any positive role of Pakistan media. Multiple suggestions were offered by respondents and visually impaired people believe if mass media plays progressive role in generating awareness in the society, about their concerned issues, this problem can be solved.

Suggestions were as follows:

1. Public Service Messages: Media should create public service messages in a series about different issues of blind people, those multimedia messages must be produced for sighted society and aimed to educate them so they can co-operate with visually impaired people effectively. Those issues can be about walking with a blind person in public, crossing road or having a visually challenged passenger in a public transport.

2. Seminars: Different seminars should be held for generating awareness about blind community and media must cover those events properly.

3. Workshops: Different workshops should be held among sighted professionals and visually challenged people. Both groups will exchange skill sets and meaningful ideas with each other.

5.2. Inclusion of Blind Persons in the Media Industry

Although some visually impaired people are already working in media industry, particularly in Radio channels as Radio Jockey, but only few blind individuals managed to go to that far in their professional career.

“There is not a single visually impaired anchor person in the Pakistan Television Channels at the moment, and the reason is reluctant behavior of media owners” (Prof. Rauf Tahir).

Respondents of this study were so much eager to work in a professional environment, parallel with the other sighted people. They believe, marginalized behavior of a society can be eliminated, if mass media recruit more blind professionals in industry. This recruitment of visually impaired people will give multiple benefits to blind community and helps sighted society to understand the needs of blind people.

“I think, it is important to recruit visually impaired people in media outlets whether in a field of acting or as an anchorperson in any news channel. In the first, people will be surprised to see blind anchor but gradually the curiosity will decrease and society will be normalized” (Prof. Faisal Kamal Haider).

There are multiple positions in which media can include blind professionals. Beside the physical disability, visually impaired persons are not lacking anything; in fact, they are better than sighted people in some manners, like visualization and cognitive process. Blind people have strong sense of hearing, touching and feeling they have sharpened these senses throughout life and become very sensitive.

Respondents claimed that they are capable of performing any assigned task in a professional environment, most likely; they can work as an Anchorperson, Newscaster, Researcher or even Editor.

“This is very important to recruit visually impaired people in media outlets, they have talent and ability to learn anything challenging, some even tried like in Radio channels and they were very successful” (Prof. Rauf Tahir).

This inclusion of blind professionals in media industry will open new economical venues for them and give confidence as an individual; they will have the feelings of social belonging, personal identity and consider themselves as an active and productive citizen of a society.

When blind professionals work in media industry, they will produce media content which will help in normalizing the relation between blind and sighted society. Visually impaired community will connect itself to those blind media professionals and see them as a role model; this sense of connection will encourage blind users and force them for hard work.

Respondents were complaining about the performance of actors in blind roles in movies and dramas. They were in an opinion that sighted actors are not capable of performing blind roles as they have absolutely no idea how it feels. Many respondents saw this practice as a mockery of their characters and were not happy at all, they suggested production houses to hire actual blind person for a blind character. This particular suggestion is remarkable and has multiple benefits from both ends, producers will get original actor and viewers will experience natural acting.

“In movies and dramas, the role of disabled people should be performed by genuine disabled people and not by normal actors. It will take some efforts but at the end it will be a win win situation” (Prof. Rauf Tahir).

“Blind people are also very creative and skilled; they can also perform in films and dramas. I think they should get a chance to have roles” (Jabir Hussain).

“Hiring blind person as an actor is a very good idea and must be considered seriously. Blind people can act very well, if they get opportunity” (Sadia Butt).

“I agree with the idea of the inclusion of blind people, but only in a case, when media accepts disabled people as a normal worker with a disability and not on the term of special induction” (Fyaz Hussain).

5.3. Stereotypical Portrayal of Blind People in the Media

The portrayal of blind people in different media productions was also a major concern for all respondents. Visual art forms like Stage, Drama and Film are major source of entertainment for mass media users and people gratify their emotional and aesthetic needs while watching their desired entertainment content. Various media productions are depicting the characters of disabled people including visually impaired ones. Respondents of this study did not appreciate those blind characters, they were not satisfied with pseudo portrayal of visually impaired people through sighted actors, furthermore, they pointed different problems.

- Instrument of sympathy
- Sense of ridicule
- Super human being
- Unreal performance of actors

Almost every participant strongly condemned sympathetic approach of a society towards them. Visually challenged community is simply not willing to accept this stereotypical behavior of sighted society and consider it inhumane and humiliating. Blindness is a physical phenomenon but people make it social phenomenon, which is absolutely incorrect and creating many obstacles in the progress of blind individuals. Participants had an opinion that mass media is also following this unreasonable notion of a society and continuously portraying blind people in a state of self-pity, showing them an object of violence who are struggling for a basic needs and spending life with a dependency on other human beings. This low projection of a blind people encourages sighted society to have pity for visually challenged individuals and restrict to accept them as a normal human being.

“Media should not portray us as a charitable element as it has two drawbacks, first it hurts psychological and secondly it can be a smug satisfaction but not in general, media should cover visually impaired people as it covers other members of a society” (Prof. Rauf Tahir).

“Some channels called me for an interview but I refused because they always try to handle my personality as per their own criteria and get sympathy of a viewer out of it” (Dr. Faisal Kamal Haider).

Respondents added, they feel sense of ridicule when see humiliation of blind characters from sighted actors in different productions. One responded referred famous stage drama “*Shartia Meethay*” in which lead characters were blind and behaved unreasonably from start to end. This mockery of visual impaired people becomes the source of amusement for sighted society, viewers get impact from media productions and when they see this sort of ridiculous behavior they start practicing it in a real world and blind community face the consequences.

“I am not satisfied with the portrayal of blind people in media. There was a stage play “Shartia Meethay”, in one scene a blind character move his hand on a person and says “is it a goat? Audience laughed on it” (Amir Ashraf).

Media productions also portray blind people as super human beings possessing some unnatural powers. There is a well-established notion in the society that nature always gifts some extra sense to a person who born with any sort of physical disability, it seems content writers are also following this pre-existed perception of a society. Many respondents denied this superficial statement, deemed it a wrong perception and considered it is just a mediated reality.

“We are normal human beings and having same set of personality traits like any sighted person has. But we struggle more to fit in the society due to the lack of physical disability. When we do more effort that makes us more effective but there are no super human traits we are possessing” (Jabir Hussain).

“It is a stereotype. When a person lacking some ability, ultimately, he utilizes available resources so in our case as we do not have visual skill so we rely more on our hearing sense and with the period of time it gets stronger. The notion of a magical powers associated with visually impaired people is not true” (Prof. Rauf Tahir).

One respondent Maryam Rauf partially accepted the association of super powers with visually impaired people.

“Some blind people do possess great sensory powers. We use three senses more frequently, Hearing, Touching & Smelling. I have seen a blind kid who recognized his mother via smell and not from hearing or touching. Blind people even recognize a person from the sound of his footsteps” (Maryam Rauf).

Beside all above mentioned stereotypical portrayal, participants also complaint about the unreal performance of sighted actors in a role of blind person. Respondents believed sighted actors have no idea of a life of visually challenged human; professional actors may be able to copy body gestures of a blind human but they cannot reach the cognitive process of a visually impaired person.

“That is artificial, even their acting is not up to the mark. If we see Indian movie Black, it is clearly evident that actress was not performing well” (Saima Fazal).

“Actually, the disabled characters which media portray are crafted for a special circumstance. There are some flaws in those characters. The reason is obvious, it is acting and the sighted human is showing himself as a blind” (Maryam Rauf).

5.4. Language and Terminology for Blind People

Every responded strongly condemned the “Andha” (Punjabi word for a blind person) and considered it insulting. It might be surprising for a sighted community that commonly use word of a Punjabi language becomes humiliating when spoken to a blind person. In a normal routine when a sighted person does something abrupt or bumped himself with anything, other guys say it “Andha”,

which means he has no vision and even no wisdom to tackle things in his way. The association of “Andha” word with a dumb person is the reason why visually impaired people do not like it.

“I think words are just words and they are not much important, the main thing is behavior towards blind people, if you call me disable and treat me well I am perfectly fine with it. But yes, there are some derogatory words such as “Andha” (Punjabi word for blind), this word is not appropriate and we feel offended” (Amir Ashraf).

“Do not call us “Andha” (Punjabi word for blind), because our society refers this word with foolishness and with inactive personality who has no intelligence” (Mehboob Ali).

“I think word special suits us as we do more struggle than other sighted people, but “Andha” (Punjabi word for blind) is not reasonable at all. One should not call us with that word” (Saima Fazal)”.

Mass Media of Pakistan commonly use word “Special” for disable persons, even every school or institution which is providing education to disable person is officially called as Special Education Center.

Most of the respondents did not appreciate “Special” word and consider it as an attempt of marginalizing blind people from a sighted society, this “Special” word also reduces the sense of belonging in visually challenged individuals and they feel alienated from mainstream world.

“We are people with different skills and not special. The word “Special” is also marginalizing us from a mainstream, it creates a sense of a pity and we do not need that. People should help us like a human helps another human” (Maryam Rauf).

“I am against the “Special” word which media uses for disable people. If they call us disable it will create sense of inequality and in the consequence, people will start helping us because only then they will feel that disable community is deserving. People call us “Special” but they do not consider us special” (Amir Ashraf)

5.5. Accessible Media Content for Blind People

Mainstream media, especially, Television channels are based on visuals and telecast content in the shape of audio and video with the support of written text on screens like breaking news or tickers. Respondents expressed the ineffective approach of television channels towards visually challenged community; they face difficulties while gratifying their information needs through media content, especially news items which are focus more on visuals and less on audio description.

This lack of accessibility is not limited only to television channels; it is prevailing in New Media too. Internet is now becoming a primary source of getting information and entertainment for most of the people, e-papers are replacing traditional print newspapers and readers are now easily gratifying their information needs. Even visually challenged people can also read e-papers through

screen reader software, but when it comes to Pakistan, where English is not a commonly spoken language and most of the population including blind are less educated and do not have understanding of English language, they are not capable of taking benefit from screen reader which is not synced with Urdu language. Unavailability of Urdu screen reader software is a big riddle in accessing the internet content for visually challenged community in Pakistan.

“Less qualified blind people cannot take benefit from screen reader technology, because they do not understand English Language” (Waris Nizami).

When it comes to entertainment needs the format of dramas and films are not sufficient for visually challenged community. Respondents claimed dependency on a sighted viewer for properly understands the content of video productions. They said we can only hear dialogues and background music but when any actor communicates through facial expressions we are totally unaware of it, furthermore, films and dramas do not verbally explain environment and atmosphere, simply because it was meant for sighted viewers and they can watch it.

“I used to ask from my mother about situation again and again while watching drama, when I was kid” (Sadiah Butt).

“There is no concept of Descriptive movies in mass media of Pakistan” (Jabir Hussain).

“When newscaster says, the relevant numbers are now showing on your television screens, we blinds are not capable to read those numbers and even tickers are not accessible for us” (Amir Ashraf).

5.6. High Impact of Radio and Internet on Blind People

Radio and Internet were considered most influential mediums from all respondents. Participants expressed their deep affiliation with the Radio transmission and measured it one of the biggest sources of information and entertainment. Few respondents are already working in Radio channels and hosting different programs. Hearing sense is the most important source of visually impaired people for getting information; Radio is the only medium which 100% works on Audio.

“There is a program on Pakistan Radio named “Himat Wale Log”, kids used to call and express their views about different matters, we felt connected with the society and experienced the freedom of expression” (SaimaFazal).

“Radio was the only source of entertainment for blind people in our childhood and we used to listen it a lot” (FyazHussain).

World Wide Web (Internet) is considered a revolutionary invention from participants. This new technology created great impact on the lives of visually challenged people, and successfully gratifying their information, sociological and entertainment needs. E-libraries, music portals, e-newspapers and social networking websites are facilitating visually challenged people in a good manner.

“This new technology of internet is very beneficial for visually impaired people and I will call it a revolution. This technology is like our eyes” (Amir Ashraf).

“Internet is very helpful and through social media sites we can interact with anyone easily, can share feelings and thoughts about different social topics freely. It is very effective when it comes to social needs of visually impaired people, but we should also teach our kids how to use this interactive media positively” (FyazHussain).

“I think, visually impaired persons are more connected with internet than a sighted people. We have better knowledge and taking much benefits from internet” (Maryam Rauf).

6.0. Conclusion

It has been observed that blind community of a Pakistan is marginalized and mainstream society is not giving equal status to them. This lack of social belonging is a biggest challenge in the life of every visually impaired person, blind individual struggles hard to connect with the mainstream world and trying their level best to achieve better life style. When it comes to the role of mainstream media of Pakistan in creating social belonging between blind community and sighted society, the situation is worst and almost every respondent denied any progressive role of mass media. In addition, they have added that media is just a profitable organization and only highlight those issues which sell quickly, the issues regarding visually impaired community and their activities do not have high sale value, so they have been ignored.

Respondents denied any particular coverage of their related events by mass media; they added in addition that our events are just projected as normal news item, but if we got some high-profile figure like politician or celebrity as a guest then media gives us proper coverage. So, it means our concerned issues are not important but prominence of any famous personality is.

Radio and Internet were considered as a biggest source for gratifying their informative, sociological and entertainment needs from visually impaired respondents. In fact, some respondents labeled internet a revolution in the lives of visually impaired people. The sociological problem is now, somehow, solved by internet and now any literate blind person can enjoy the social belonging through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, they can interact with their friends and also can enlarge social circle, which is quite impossible in a real world.

During interview sessions, it has been noticed that visually challenged people are against the stereotypical sympathetic approach; they negated pre-existed false notions of a society and consider blind community equally talented and skillful. Sarcastic behavior is also observed in all respondents; they were witty and sharp in their replies, laugh loudly and appreciate good humor.

After analyzing and investigating the psychological, sociological, informative and entertainment needs of visually impaired viewers, few suggestions can be given to mass media of Pakistan.

- Media should run proper campaign in the shape of Public Service Messages, to generate awareness in the society.
- Visually impaired people who are qualified and having related skills should be hired in media industry.
- Journalistic writers should adopt respectful language and terminologies while addressing any issue regarding blind community.
- Media content should be accessible for visually impaired viewers too, especially in a television, a newscaster would provide additional details about incident and there must be some audio device or technology which can read on screen text.
- A dedicated Radio channel for the needs of visually impaired community.
- Descriptive movies should be on-aired for blind people.
- Visually impaired artists should be casted as an actor in video productions.

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