



# Social Work Intervention to Build Self-Esteem Through Informed Understanding on Developmental Needs Among the Visually Impaired Adolescent Girls

Pungringa Agnes PS<sup>1\*</sup>, Mrityunjay Kr. Singh<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Work, Assam University, Silchar 788011, Assam, India  
agnesringa@gmail.com

**Abstract.** Adolescence is a crucial stage of development, during this stage, self-esteem has a major influence on shaping personal growth, social adjustment, and academic achievement. Physical ability is considered as an important factor that influences self-image and offers individuals opportunities to assess their abilities and strengths. However, visually impaired adolescent girls face challenges related to both physical and developmental needs, which can foster a positive attitude towards their overall development. It is essential to develop skills that help visually impaired adolescent girls think positively about themselves, as their attitudes strongly influence their self-esteem and their ability to adjust to their environment. This study aims to educate and raise awareness to build self-esteem through an informed understanding of developmental needs among visually impaired adolescent girls. The researcher adopted a quantitative research method and conducted the study with a total sample size of 17 visually impaired girls aged between 12 and 18 years, from Little Flower School, Chennai, using a purposive sampling method. A pre- and post-intervention design was adopted using an interview schedule and observational methods. The research showed a significant improvement, with adolescent girls strongly agreeing to liking and feeling positive about themselves despite their visual impairment, increasing from 58.8% before the intervention to 82.4% in the post-test results after the intervention. The study highlights that social work intervention can create a supportive environment and positively impact visually impaired adolescent girls by addressing their needs and challenges. Emphasizing and supporting their developmental needs can enable them to strengthen their self-esteem positively.

**Keywords:** Adolescence, Developmental Needs, Self- Esteem, Visual Impairment.

## 1 Introduction

The eye is considered as an essential sensory organ in human body, accountable for receiving a large proportion of the information a person gathers through their senses. Individuals are highly dependent on their senses as they learn, conceptualize, and develop reasoning skills. Although visually impaired individuals are an essential part of society, the absence of sight limits their ability to fully perceive and experience the world around them (Panday et al., 2015). According to the World Health Organization (2004), blindness is described as the complete loss or absence of the capability to see or respond to visual stimulants. According to Lee et al. (2025), visual impairment refers to reduced vision that makes it difficult for a person to carry out daily activities. It is reported that cataracts, glaucoma, uncorrected vision problems, age-related macular degeneration, and diabetic eye disease are the primary causes of blindness globally. Meanwhile, Sahli and Idil (2019) describe visual impairment as reduced vision that makes it difficult for a person to carry out everyday activities such as reading, driving, or watching TV. It is defined by how effectively an individual performs, rather than being measured by visual acuity or visual field. The term encompasses people either partially blind or completely blind. Globally, about 2.2 billion people experience near or distance visual impairment, with cataracts and refractive errors being the leading causes. Reports have highlighted that children who develop serious vision impairment early in life may experience delays in language, cognitive, emotional, and social development, with lifelong effects. In India, approximately 4.95 million individuals are blind and around 70 million live with visual impairment, including approximately 0.24 million children. The leading cause of blindness is cataract; however, it emphasises that early identification and timely treatment can help in reducing blindness and vision loss (Mannava et al., 2022).

Adolescence is a challenging stage of life, during which an individual experiences physical, psychological, and social changes. These changes have a strong impact on their psychological well-being. Meanwhile, individual with learning difficulties is more likely to drop out of school. It also notes that having an individual with learning difficulties in the family often places additional stress on family members. Many such families report greater chaos, disorganization, or conflict. Parents frequently experience anxiety when raising a child who needs special care, particularly when family or community resources are limited. Furthermore, family responses to members with learning disabilities such as unrealistic expectations, lack of acceptance, and impatience increase risk factors. Adolescents with learning disabilities do not become independent as quickly as their peers and often rely on adults for a longer time (Murthy, 2011). It was reported that visually impaired young students experienced poor academic

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performance (World Health Organization, 2023). The loss of sight often leads to feelings of helplessness, inferiority, stress related to anxiety, depression, low self-confidence, and poor performance. Physical limitations often cause developmental delays and dependence, and many blind individuals struggle with low self-esteem. Therefore, social acceptance and psychological well-being are crucial for successful rehabilitation, as these challenges strongly affect their self-view, adjustment, and acceptance of blindness (Dawn, 2018). Visually impaired children are further observed to often struggle with daily activities such as reading, mobility, and self-care, leading to decreased independence (Ma, 2024). Additionally, Onnik et al. (2024) noted that visually impaired individuals experience challenges in interacting others, leading to loneliness and social withdrawal. They also noted that visual impairment significantly affects daily activities, causing anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances resulting negative impact on overall functioning. Bos et al. (2006) highlights that low self-esteem is associated with poor educational attainment, and children with low self-esteem often experience less acceptance from their peers. Further, Naranjo and Gonzalez (2012) note that early adolescence is a crucial stage for building self-esteem. At this stage adolescents often experience stress, which affect them and causes fluctuations in their self-esteem as they grow into adulthood. Additionally, negative experiences, like problems in school or losing peer support, are strongly linked to drops and changes in self-esteem during this period. However, they emphasize that effective ways for improving self-esteem include direct self-esteem building programs, problem-solving, and encouraging better communication and emotional understanding.

## 2 Statement of the Problem

In India adolescent girls are a vulnerable group, where females are often neglected and do not get the necessary attention. Children with visual impairments play a vital role in society; however, these children are severely neglected by their own family and society. Visual difficulties are also a contributing factor that affects an individual's growth, influencing their overall development. It was observed that many adolescent girls with visual impairments experience low self-esteem due to their limitations and the challenges of being a girl, which need to be addressed and supported. These developmental challenges may also influence numerous aspects of their growth and development. Therefore, by taking account of their circumstances, attending to their specific needs, creating awareness and encouraging positive change, we can boost and enhance their self-esteem and overall development.

## 3 Theoretical Foundation

The study investigated and comprehended visually impaired adolescent girls using a mixed-method approach. It focused on the elements related to physical and social self-esteem and motivational and developmental needs and was based on theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Gestalt Therapy. According to Maslow's theory, motivation presents human needs in a five-level model, which is commonly illustrated as a pyramid. The hierarchy consists of fundamental physical needs, security, affection and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. It offers a useful framework for understanding and tackling the difficulties experienced by children with visual impairments. Meeting psychosocial and love needs through counselling, ensuring safety needs with cognitive and mobility support, promoting love and belongingness through social skills and classroom acceptance, supporting esteem needs with academic learning, and fostering self-actualisation needs through counselling for self-acceptance (McLeod, 2025). Meanwhile, Gestalt therapy focuses on the present and helps people understand themselves in relation to their environment. The aim of this therapy is self-awareness, accountability for choices and genuine communication. It believes that as individuals become more aware of themselves, they can grow, make better choices, and live meaningful lives (Corey, 2004). These theories were adopted and applied during the intervention process, as it aims to explore the girls' understanding of their developmental needs and use social work interventions to help them build self-esteem. The intervention also sought to enhance their awareness of developmental needs, improve self-knowledge, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and provide motivation for self-acceptance to achieve higher self-esteem among visually impaired adolescent girls.

## 4 Methodology

The researcher adopted a quantitative research method for this study, involving a total sample of 17 visually impaired girls, students from grades 5 to 8, aged between 12 and 18 years, from Little Flower School, Chennai. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling. A pre- and post-intervention design was implemented using an interview schedule and observational methods. The study obtained data through both primary and secondary sources. Data obtained were analysed using basic descriptive statistics.

### 5 Social Work Intervention

#### 5.1 Group Work

Group work is one of the methods of social work, where workers guide participants in activities, enabling them interact with others and grow according to their needs and abilities. Group work was adopted to conduct group session, discussion and presentation for the intervention process. With the application and help of group work model the group cohesiveness and assessment on the characters of individual in the group could be analysed.

The social work researcher applied several key principles of group work as a method during the intervention. The principle of planned group formation was adopted to ensure smooth academic purposes and to avoid interruption of the target group and the institution. With the principle of specific objectives, the researcher developed various objectives to fulfil the group’s goals, putting in the best effort to accomplish the group work meaningfully. Emphasizing the principle of a purposeful worker–group relationship, the researcher built a strong rapport with the visually impaired adolescent girls and conducted interactive and engaging sessions to help the members. The principle of continuous individualization was also practiced by identifying the causes of the members’ depression and their specific needs, giving equal importance to each individual without judgment. Finally, through the principle of guided group interaction, the researcher encouraged positive changes in the way members interacted, helping them build stronger and healthier relationships within the group.



Fig. 1. Social Work Intervention Model

Fig.1. Social work intervention model was designed based on the identified problems and developmental needs, incorporating insights from the theories applied to visually impaired adolescent girls. It served as the foundation for developing the intervention module, it contains very fundamental grass root problems which the adolescent girls encountered with the low self-esteem and attitude. In view of addressing the problems and needs, different methods were utilized to provide and inculcate constructive solution to the problem and needs for building self-esteem among the children.

### 6 Results and Discussion

Table 1. Age of the Adolescent Girls.

Age Group	Frequency (%)
12	6 (35.3%)
13	5 (29.4%)
14	4 (23.5%)

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15 2 (11.8%)

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**Table 1** shows that 6 (35.3%) of the respondents were 12 years; 5 (29.4%) belonged to the 13 years age group; 4 (23.5%) were 14 years; and the remaining 2 (11.8%) belonged to 15 years age group.

**Table 2.** Level of Visual Impairment among the Adolescent Girls.

Level of Visual Impairment	Frequency (%)
Blindness	4 (23.5%)
Severe Visual Impairment	11 (64.7%)
Moderate Visual Impairment	2 (11.8%)

**Table 2** reveals that 11 (64.7%) of the respondents have severe visual impairment, 4 (23.5%) have blindness, and 2 (11.8%) have moderate visual impairment.

**Table 3.** Educational Grade of the Adolescent Girls.

Educational Grade	Frequency (%)
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	6 (35.3%)
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	7 (41.2%)
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	4 (23.5%)

**Table 3** shows that 7 (41.2%) of the respondents were in Grade 7, 6 (35.3%) were in Grade 6, and the remaining 4 (23.5%) were in Grade 8.

**Table 4.** Liking Oneself.

Level of Agreement	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Strongly Agree	10 (58.8%)	14 (82.4%)
Agree	4 (23.5%)	3 (17.6%)
Disagree	3 (17.6%)	-
Strongly Disagree	-	-

**Table 4** indicates that in the pre-test, 58.8% of the respondents strongly agree upon liking oneself, 23.5% agree and 17.6% of the respondents genuinely disagree and did not like themselves. The study found a significant improvement, with respondents strongly agreeing that they liked themselves and felt positive about themselves despite their visual impairment, increasing from 58.8% to 82.4% in the post-test result, and 17% agreed that they liked themselves; however, they wanted to be like other normal persons without impairment.

**Table 5.** Evaluation of Happiness.

Level of Happiness	Pre-test	Post-test
Strongly Agree	-	8 (47.1%)
Agree	10 (58.8%)	9 (52.9%)
Disagree	5 (29.4%)	-
Strongly Disagree	2 (11.8%)	-

**Table 5.** reveals that in the pre-test 58.8% of respondents agree about their happiness, 29.4% disagree and the remaining 11.8% of the respondents strongly disagree about their happiness. However, the post-test results showed that 52.9% of respondents agreed and the remaining 47.1% strongly agreed they felt happy. Thus, the intervention sessions and activities helped enhance their acceptance and perspective.

**6.1 Developmental Knowledge and Needs**

The research observes a significant improvement, as the portion of respondents who became aware of and knowledgeable about themselves increased from 52.9% in the pre-test to 100% in the post-test. With regard to physical development and developmental needs, the majority of respondents (88.2%) had only limited knowledge before the intervention, whereas the post-test showed that 88.2% had acquired a lot of knowledge about physical development and developmental needs. In the pre-test, the researcher found that 70.6% lack knowledge about menstruation and personal hygiene. However, the post-test results indicated that 94.1% had acquired good knowledge in this area through the intervention program. Further, the study found that, before the intervention 52.9% of the respondents felt very stressed about their physical changes, however, post-test results showed that the majority (76.5%) no longer experienced stress and anxiety about their physical changes after gaining knowledge and motivation from the intervention sessions. Likewise, 76.5% of the respondents find interaction difficulties with others however, post-test result showed that majority (70.6%) no longer experienced difficulties in interacting with others after getting motivation and acquiring knowledge from the intervention sessions. Study shows that in pre-test 47.1% doesn't know how to manage loneliness and anger while, post-test result showed vast majority (82.4%) had learned how to manage these emotions, as the intervention sessions and activities helped enhance their skills in handling loneliness and anger.

## 6.2 Self-Esteem Evaluation

The research observes a significant improvement, with adolescent girls strongly agreeing they like and felt positive about themselves despite their visual impairment, increasing from 58.8% to 82.4% in the post test result. Furthermore, the study found a significant improvement, with respondents (11.8%) strongly disagreed about happiness in the pre-test to 47.1% felt strongly agreed with happiness in the post-test. Thus, intervention sessions and activities helped enhance their acceptance and perspective.

## 6.3 Discussion

The literature review reveals that visually impaired individuals make significant adjustments in thinking, behaviour, and emotions and may need special assistance. Visual impairment also limits an individual's participation in family life, school, and social roles, influencing relationships with the environment. However, studies show that supportive and involved parents, along with caring peers and teachers, have a positive impact on visually impaired children, whereas neglect, overprotection, or broken homes can negatively affect visually impaired adolescent girls. The study revealed that most visually impaired adolescent girls experience low self-esteem due to their impairment and the various challenges and needs they face during this crucial stage of life. Challenges experienced by them can also hinder their positive development in many ways. Findings from the study also observe that these adolescent girls have limited knowledge about self-esteem and their developmental needs. Additionally, difficulties in academic and co-curricular activities, along with physical changes, often contribute to feelings of depression.

Further, study notes that 76.5% of respondents said they need acceptance and love from others. Thus, it is crucial to identify and understand their difficulties to provide them love, support, and care. By addressing their conditions, issues, and needs, they can be positively empowered and supported. During the intervention sessions, the children were encouraged to reflect on their issues and offered knowledge relate to their developmental needs to help build self-esteem and bring positive change within individuals, groups, and the wider community. The intervention also demonstrated significant improvements among the visually impaired adolescent girls. On an individual level, it led to greater awareness on various intervention session topics and areas of focus including skill development. Additionally, it fostered teamwork and offered opportunities for students to develop their attitudes, perspectives, and practical skills contributing to their growth and development.

## 6.4 Recommendations

Based on this study, it provides the following recommendations: 1) There should be greater student participation in decision making and co-curricular activities. 2) Greater love and acceptance are required to share with visually impaired adolescent girls at home, schools, and other various groups. 3) Proper socialization from childhood is a key requirement. Greater parental focus on their children is needed to ensure proper development.

## 7 Conclusion

Identifying potentials and setting goals are effective tools that help individuals especially visually impaired adolescent girls, develop self-esteem from an early stage. Participation in co-curricular activities, along with proper motivation, can significantly contribute both individual and group development. As this young and dynamic group of children has big dreams, acquiring skills, developing their potential, and knowledge can support their personal growth. By addressing their needs and challenges, social work interventions can promote skill development, knowledge acquisition, and positive personal change. These efforts can create a supportive environment in schools, homes, and communities, enhancing self-esteem and overall development of visually impaired adolescent girls.

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