

Happiness among Visually Disabled Adolescents

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Abstract:

The paper aims to explore the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents in Malaysia. The study applied qualitative methodology by utilising the single embedded case study design (Yin, 2009) together with the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A total of four respondents from the northern region of the Peninsular Malaysia have participated in this study. The data collection is by in-depth interviews. Such data collected were analysed using the method suggested by Schilling (2006). Three main sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents have been discovered in this study namely self-efficacy, supports, and spirituality.

Keywords: Adolescent, happiness, visual disable person, disability

1. Introduction

Being a disabled person is a very challenging situation. Prejudice, discrimination, and stereotype are examples of challenges that are common to disabled people. According to Chua et al. (2015), the stereotype represents the perceptions of an individual towards something, someone, or particular groups. It is something common for people with disabilities to experience stereotype from society, especially a negative form of stereotyping. Prejudice, according to Feldman (2001), refers to negative feelings that exist in an individual towards individuals in certain groups. Discrimination, on the other hand, relates to the manifestation of prejudice in the form of overt behaviours. As a person with a disability, running away from these phenomena such as stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination is something impossible.

The Malaysian Persons With Disabilities Act 2008 (*Akta Orang Kurang Upaya 2008*) has changed many policies regarding people with disability. Upon the enforcement of the Act, the concept of disability has changed from “welfare-based” to “rights-based” (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, 2013). According to this Act, disabled people have full rights to participate in all social activities. However, it is still unclear on how effective the 2008 Act is in fulfilling each and every requirement of the act in tackling complex disability issues. Zhang et al. (2014) have discovered that disabled Chinese with low self-esteem contribute a significant amount of variance to the perception of stigma from society. This finding is indeed true as many disabled people possess low self-esteem due to the adverse feedbacks from their surroundings as collaborating by the meta-analysis conducted by Wilson and Scior (2014) regarding people’s attitudes towards disabled people using the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald et al., 1998). The research has concluded that the majority of people carry negative implicit attitudes towards people with disability.

For many years, studies in the field of happiness have been the main focus of many scholars (Wilson, 1967; Diener, 1984; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2013; Durayappah, 2010). However, the few studies that have been carried out are inadequate, limited in scope or failed to explore the matter in-depth. Hence, this paper seeks to study and examine the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. In 2013, the Malaysian registration of persons with disabilities represents that

persons with visual disabilities are the fourth largest group of individuals with disabilities which are 46307 persons (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia, 2013). The only study that addresses happiness among disabled people in Malaysia is by Ferlis Bahari (2012, 2014). However, the study focuses on the population of individuals with physical disabilities.

This paper presents several types of research on happiness among disabled people. Firstly, Kortte et al. (2010) have conducted an investigation to determine whether life satisfaction can be predicted by positive psychological variables in people who are in the recovery period after spinal cord injury. Research findings indicate that hope and positive affect predict better life satisfaction compared to barriers variables such as depression, negative affect, and avoidance. The benefit finding variable does not predict an increase in life satisfaction. Subsequently, the association between age, distress, and orientation to happiness among disabled people has been studied by Terrill et al. (2015) and results have indicated that higher levels of distress are associated with lower level of happiness. Results also show that happiness moderately mediates participants age between 45 to 64 reported the lowest level of happiness and the relation between age and distress. The test for moderation has proven that young adults who are reported low levels of happiness are more distressed. Finally, from the three happiness orientation namely pleasure, meaning, and engagement, the only the meaning orientation is significantly mediated the relationship between age and distress (Terrill et al., 2015).

Uppal (2006) has investigated the impact of types, timing, and severity of disability on happiness level using the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey. Findings have suggested that persons who were born with a disability reported a higher level of happiness compared to those who acquired a disability later in life. Data also uncovered that individuals with a sensory disability are happier compared to people with physical disability. Mentally disabled people reported the lowest level of happiness.

The only research that focuses on visually disabled people has been carried out by Rosenblum et al. (2009). The research states that the majority of visually disabled parents said that their children are more compassionate and empathic, being able to accept differences of others, being more verbal and descriptive compared to typical children, being more mature, and growing up faster. Regarding the challenges experienced by visually disabled parents, the greatest obstacle stated was transporting their children followed by monitoring their children which include children's safety, concerns, and task completion. A few parents indicated that they experienced stigma from others regarding their capabilities of parenting and that their children are embarrassed for having a disabled parent. In the case of how parents know that their children are aware of their visual disabilities, blind parents reported that their children displayed awareness of their visual limitation through behaviors such as guiding their parents to something instead of pointing, bringing them books with braille, bringing objects to parents' hand to show rather than holding up the object, asking other adults to initiate in activities which involve vision, and imitating the parent walking with a white cane or searching for objects on the floor using their hands. In contrast, partially blind parents stated that their children only recognised their parents' visual limitation during late preschool years or early elementary school years. Some parents also reported that their children started to take on roles such as guiding their parents in the community or reading for their parents. According to Rosenblum et al. (2009) parents reported that they felt left out in activities which involve vision such as drawing and sports. To reduce the impact of their visual limitation, parents stated that they would ask someone to describe the activities that their children are engaging. The emotional impact of parenting with visual disabilities on children is still unclear.

This study aims to conduct a thorough and in-depth exploration of how visually disabled people obtain happiness. The driving force in conducting this research is a statement by Argyle (2001) which states that most people, in general, want to know what the causes of happiness are.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study explored the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. The research was in the form of qualitative design. According to Flick (2007), qualitative research design is an empirical study utilising texts as the primary source of data and allows the researcher to explore broad domains in real life. Specifically, this paper has utilised the case study design (Yin, 2009) together with the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Case study design

According to Yin (2009), a case study is a research design that addresses the “how” or “why” of certain phenomena, which the researcher has no control over behavioural events, and the field being studied is based on a contemporary event. In simpler terms, a case study is a research design that enables researchers to observe contemporary, present, or current phenomena where the elicited behaviours could not be controlled.

The definition of a case study by Yin (2009) is in line with the objective of this study, which is to explore the sources of happiness of visually disabled adolescents in which happiness is an ongoing phenomenon and could not be controlled by the researcher. This paper applied a single case embedded design approach, where the main focus of the case is the happiness of visually disabled adolescents and the sub-units of the case will be adolescents with visual disabilities. In other words, adolescents with visual disabilities are the units of analysis and the main focus of the case is the sources of happiness. Yin (2009) has stated several explanations and rationale in conducting a single case study:

- I. The study represents a critical case.
- II. The study represents an extreme or unique case.
- III. The study is a representative or typical case.
- IV. The study is a revelatory case.
- V. The study is a longitudinal case.

The present study fulfils the requirements for the third and fourth rationale in conducting a single case study as outlined by Yin (2009). In fact, happiness is a typical phenomenon in every human being, regardless of whether the individuals are disabled or not. The present study could be a revelatory study in Malaysia since there is no similar study which explores the happiness of visually disabled adolescents.

Thematic analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data which organises and describes the data in a detailed manner. This thematic analysis is a flexible approach and has many advantages especially in psychology.

Respondents

A total of four visually disabled adolescents were recruited in this study which used purposeful sampling. The rationale underlying the decision to recruit adolescents as respondents for this research

is based on Erickson's theory of psychosocial development (Thomas, 2005) which indicates that adolescents are in the period of identity versus role confusion. Due to the identity-seeking characteristics, it makes them more vulnerable and sensitive to social discernment. Hence, the exploration of the sources of happiness among such population is crucial because negative attitudes directed to such population could disrupt healthy identity development as well as might impede the search of happiness. Regarding the size of the research sample, Galvin (2015) has stated that it is often difficult to identify the right amount of participants in qualitative research; however, what is important is the saturation of the data. From the samples recruited, 50% of respondents fall under the age of 16 years old, and another 50% of respondents fall under 18 years old. In terms of gender, respondents were equally distributed (male = 50% and female = 50%). As for the religion, the numbers were also equally distributed with 50% of respondents of Buddhist and 50% of Muslims. Respondents' ethnicity comprised of Malay and Chinese (N =2) respectively. All respondents in this study were born with visual disabilities. 25% of respondents were diagnosed with Persistent Hyperplastic Primary Vitreous, cataract (25%), glaucoma (25%) and only one respondent (25%) has developed a visual disability due to unknown reason. Subsequently, regarding the severity of visual disabilities, 50% of respondents are having limited vision whereas the remaining respondents are blind. Finally, only 50% of respondents reported the usage of assistive equipment such as Braille and white cane.

Procedures

Before the data collection through interviews, a permission letter to carry out this research was obtained from the faculty. Parents or guardians of each respondent were contacted to request the permission for their children to participate in this study. Briefing on the purpose of this research was carried out. Parents or guardians were notified that the confidentiality of their children is guaranteed. Parents and guardians provided their signatures on an inform consent letter upon permission for their children to participate in this study. In respect of participants who were staying in hostels or institutions, signatures were acquired from their teachers or instructors or caregivers in charge. Also, a set of interview protocol was developed as guiding questions during each interview.

Before the interview begins, each respondent was informed that the interviewing session would be recorded for the purpose of transcription and the confidentiality of their information is guaranteed. Respondents' signatures of permission to record the interviewing session were also obtained before the interview.

Data collection

Data were collected through in-depth interview sessions with all respondents, which mainly focused on respondents' life stories or events. Interview sessions were recorded using a digital audio recorder to assist in the transcription process. Follow-up interviews were conducted using telephone interviews.

Data analysis

Data collected were analysed by using the method suggested by Schilling (2006). Such analysis began with transcription till the formation of themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) has defined themes as something that captures the crucial elements of the data collected which are related to the research question and explains the underlying meanings of the data set. At the paraphrasing stage, the analysis provided clearer and organised data set for the purpose of further analysis such as categorising and themes formation. A thematic map was constructed to summarise the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents.

RESULTS

From the analysis conducted, three major themes reflecting the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents were identified namely self-efficacy, support, and spirituality. A detailed explanation of the themes developed was provided in this section. Discussion of the thematic map constructed was contained in the subsequent section. Figure 3.1 presents the thematic map of the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents.

Self-efficacy

The majority of respondents reported that having self-efficacy could contribute to their happiness. In this context, respondents felt that they could perform tasks as capable as people without disabilities, able to compete with people without disabilities in academic settings, able to play music, able to walk around alone, able to be independent and being able to socialise. The following are the verbatim from respondent 1 (R1).

R1: And I am happy to be a blind person because I am..... I can do many things like.... Mmmm..... Sighted people. I can do things like swimming, use materials in studies like normal use sighted people.

Yes I do, and I also used to go out sometimes I go out with them to shopping mall, nowadays I also still keep in touch with them. When I go out to shopping mall, with them also sometimes during the holidays, hang out with them, I go to, i can go to shopping mall then watch a movie together without my parents.

From the verbatim (R1), it was proven that self-efficacy or the feeling of being able to carry out task contributes to the happiness of visually disabled adolescents. The theme self-efficacy was further divided into five separate components namely socialisation, acceptance, equality, accessibility, and achievements whereby each is leading to the sense of self-efficacy respectively. From the in-depth interviews conducted, socialisation referred to the opportunity to communicate with both disabled and non-disabled peers, having the same interest with friends, being able to carry out leisure activities with friends. It was the opportunity to socialise and communicate with others that provided the sense of self-efficacy and contributed to the happiness among visually disabled adolescents. Following is an example of verbatim from the interview conducted with respondent 2 (R2):

R2: If they play the game as well we will be able to talk about the game or find new games to play.

Well.... Many topics. Sometimes we talk about studies sometimes we talk about where we go for tours and sometimes we talk about things like news.

No no no no... Not playing audio games. It was like watching, watching um.... Watching uh... Shows like Avatar the Last Air Bender (researcher laughed (that kind of things. Some of them we, we are also quite interested in some card games like UNO, then we usually talked about other things but we the usual topic, some of them like to talk about studies as well.

Also, the feeling of acceptance also plays a major role in the happiness of visually disabled adolescents. The feelings of being accepted also provided a sense of self-efficacy for adolescents with visual disabilities because being accepted means they were not being sidelined hence giving the chance

for them to thrive. Acceptance was divided into two different components namely acceptance by family and acceptance by peers. Acceptance by family according to the majority of respondents occurred when their families did not criticise them for their visual disabilities and did not abandon them due to their disabilities.

R2: Actually, yes. My family is mostly. Because uh, even my situation they uh... They still love me. To what my mother said anyway. My sister, my brother, kept on taking care of me when I was young. Moreover, and my mother my father also didn't put me in an orphanage, and they love me.

Acceptance by peers referred to the perception that friends could mix around or associate with the visually disabled. It also included the feelings that their peers did not look down on them such as teasing or making fun of their disabilities and posting negative statements. The following were stated by respondent 3 (R3).

R3: Tak dak orang kata ei.... Tak Nampak, cacat la apa semua. Kalau sekolah tu dulu saya sekolah biasa ja. Ada la orang dok kata la kan. Kata la tak Nampak, mata besar la, mata empat la. Sekolah biasa dari darjah satu sampai darjah enam. Tingkatan satu dok sekolah B. Kat sekolah B tu kan macam ada kelas inklusif ni la. Orang tak kata la sangat. Tapi ada jugak yang dok pandang serong-serong, macam tak pernah tengok orang OKU ni. Ada gak. Sekolah B sampai tingkatan tiga lepas tu masuk sekolah C tingkatan empat pun sama ada ya yang tak puas hati. Kita lebih sikit depa kata la depa tu ingat inklusif semua bagi depa. Kalau tinggi sikit dalam kelas pun depa kata um.. depa inklusif, cikgu tolong, bagi soalan bocor la apa semua pada hal tak bagi pun.

The third sub-theme that contributed to happiness among visually disabled adolescents was equality. According to the in-depth interview, equality reflected the feelings that they were given the opportunity to communicate with people and to participate in social activities and competitions such as forums, storytelling, public speaking, and others. In addition, the feeling of equality also manifested when they were given the chance to obtain prizes or awards alongside their peers, invited to perform in occasions, able to use and enjoy similar gadgets as those used by their sighted peers, being able to play games, and being treated as a normal person. Furthermore, equality also reflected the feeling of fairness, that punishment was crucial, even for individuals with disabilities when undesirable or destructive behaviours were exhibited. Last but not least, the sense of equality also applies to society's understanding the rights of persons with disabilities to public transportation services. The following were stated by respondent 1 (R1), respondent 2 (R2), and respondent 3 (R3).

R1: I mean, I am not segregated I mean that I am not being put aside as a blind person, and I've given I am always given the opportunity to mix around with people and go for and also go for function like forums, storytelling, even with the normal people, public speaking and others, and even playing the violin. People invited me to play the violin on certain occasion.

Would describe my joyfulness as very happy I can say. To be a blind person and, to mix around, to be a blind person, to mix around with friends, to use the gadgets like the sighted people and to be given an opportunity like the sighted person to go out to and perform, going for forums, and others.

R2: Yeah. However, sometimes the teachers... uh not to say unfair but then, but sometimes the teachers uh when they want to punish the whole class something they did not punish us. I, I, I just feel well, if you want to punish why didn't you just do it. Because it became a bit unfair to the normal people. For example, the whole class is talking, and we are talking as well we should be punished but why you only punish the normal people (assertive tone). Because I know some of the normal people will think why when I did wrong you punish me but why when he did wrong you didn't. Not that I like punishment but then... unfair.

R3: Ada kemudahan la orang sedia untuk OKU dalam monorail kita sedia la kerusi untuk OKU. Tapi orang yang tak OKU pun ada jugak yang duduk kan.

Ada macam depa tak kesian ka tengok orang dok berdiri. Dengan kaki tak ni ka apa ka. Mana nak tau. Tengok tak kesian ka ada yang buat tak heran ja.

The next component in self-efficacy was accessibility. Accessibility referred to the design or construction of products, services, or environments for persons with disabilities to permit such population to use it to their full potential. Accessibility was further divided into several components namely accessibility to technologies, accessibility to assistive learning tools, accessibility for entertainment, accessibility for mobility, and accessibility to educational materials.

Accessibility for entertainment referred to the phenomena where persons with visual disabilities could play games just like the non-disabled. Their opportunity to enjoy playing games was due to the aid of screen reader software. Following is an example of verbatim from Respondent 2 (R2).

R2: Allows us to uh... Play some games... Well. There are many what we called audio games. Mostly they use sound to convey information to us, and some of the games are quite nice. There are many genres of audio games. There are fighting, puzzles, or first person shooter, whatever. There are many.

Subsequently, accessibility to technologies referred to the ability to use gadgets and play games. It was also due to the aid of a screen reading software used by persons with visual disabilities, usually those without vision to identify the contents in the display. For individuals with visual disabilities where the severity of the disabilities was moderate, accessibility to technologies refers to the design and appearance of gadgets such as having a bigger screen and bigger fonts which allowed them to browse through the contents without straining their eyes. Following were verbatim from Respondent 1 (R1), Respondent 2 (R2), Respondent 3 (R3), and Respondent 4, (R4).

R1: For the computers, there is talking software that is called JAWS or NVDA. Moreover, whatever we press the key, it will read for us. Whereas for handphone, I use the iPhone, and there is a VoiceOver installed originally on the phone, and you just turn it on, and I could be able to use it. The function keys are not like the normal handphone but are quite very user-friendly for the blind people.

R2: I feel very grateful because without those things it is a bit difficult to do whatever we want. Without the talking thing on the computer, it is a bit tricky to go to the internet, without the thing on the iPhone or whatever then it is a bit for us to go to the internet let's say for WhatsApp WeChat, it is a bit difficult without the talking.

R3: Susah. Tangan terketar-ketar nak tulis. Beli hat besar. Hehehe. Tulisan dia besar. Rasa tak susah la kita nak tengok. Rasa gembira la sebab tak pernah dapat. Dok guna kecil kotek ja.

R4: Kalau macam hat kecil-kecil tu tak Nampak la. Tulisan besar. Sebab senang. Tak sakit mata.

The subsequent component was the accessibility to assistive learning tools. This element referred to specific utilities that could be used by persons with visual disabilities to participate fully in educational settings. Among the tools that could assist persons with visual disabilities in copying notes and doing homework were braille machines and computers with screen readers installed as stated by respondent 2 (R2).

R2: To be honest I prefer to use a more, I can say more silent things like computers and like. Because when you wear headphone, you will not be disturbing the others too much. Yes. Moreover, actually, Braille is a bit problematic to this one. Because got braille... I know that computer is heavy and uh... slower to turn on but braille are very noisy and uh, can easily be spoiled. Computers are not so because for braille you uh... say you uh.... force something into the hole or something you There is a slot then ... it's a bit uh.... it will be easily spoiled but computer there are no such slots for anything to be (laugh) to be trap inside and then uh... braille also need paper which I don't really like. I am.. I am more of uh.... I am I like to save paper, and I prefer to use a computer because if we want to read we will be able to read immediately without taking papers out everything... it's easier. Because we don't need to file anything. Just place it in a folder in your computer or anything. For example, if you need to do homework if you take your braille you need to take your paper, and everything is a bit troubling compared to the computer where you just take the computer itself.

Accessibility to educational materials referred to the materials provided specially to persons with visual disabilities such as tactile diagrams or three-dimensional sculpture to facilitate their understanding especially in a subject like science, mathematics, and geography. The following were verbatim articulated by respondent 2 (R2)

R2: Um.... In general, I feel quite happy because even though they are quite confusing, they allow me to understand something better, for example, um.... The brain structures, or whatever for science, or and the trigonometry for mathematic and it will be easier to understand so, in general, I am quite happy. Well, I do not know if this is possible but if improvements can be made I think it would be nice if the diagrams are 3D uh... you know more three dimensional because if it is solid enough that we would be able to see better because uh.... for example some of the diagrams like the brain they have the left, right, top, and bottom part. If it is represented in 2D, it could be quite confusing so if it is at all possible then that will be the most helpful improvement.

The final component was accessibility to mobility as articulated by all the respondents. Accessibility to mobility meant that persons with visual disabilities could move around from places to places with their white cane, as well as transportation systems that allowed persons with visual disabilities to utilise the services fully. For instance:

R1: Um... yeah, it helps. Because there are announcements in trains. Moreover, many places in KL with trains so its easier for us rather than we have to find which place are there any trains over there. With the announcements, we know the stations. Moreover, actually the train is the timing for the train quite suitable for me and because the train will come after a while. The one after another will come after a while. And, the train is better than the bus. The reason I say can be found anywhere because if some place does not have train we have to use the bus and the doesn't have the announcement and it is very difficult for us to know where is the direction.

Finally, the factor that leads to the sense of self-efficacy is through achievements. All respondents stated that they were happy with their accomplishments in academic because it allowed them to receive awards together with the non-disabled as well as feeling happy and satisfied that people's efforts in helping them attain those achievements were not wasted. The Following was verbatim from R1 (respondent 1).

R1: Yeah. I always think like why I could not get the prize I could not get any prize. However, finally I get a prize. Finally I got a prize. But not the first or second prize. I got one of the for one of the subject I got the highest. Standard 5 and 6. The subject is Kajian Tempatan. I feel quite happy because I can, i can get prize together with my normal peers. Moreover, very grateful. I am grateful to take the prize together with my friends. Because I can be at the same level as them.

Support

Support was another main source of happiness for visually disabled adolescents. Support referred to the assistance or help that was obtained. From the analysis conducted, support was divided into three different sources namely support from family, support from teachers, and support from peers.

Support from family referred to the assistance that was obtained by persons with visual disabilities from their parents or family members who usually served as their source of strength through emotional support or attachment.

R1: I always say that I also blame them sometimes; I said why you delivered me as a blind person and why God is so unfair! Moreover, they explain everything to me that I am quite lucky. Can do better than people with other disabilities. So, after all, I feel very, quite happy and can live, can live like normal.

R2: They try to help me as much as possible. Let's say if I drop something small, when I ask maybe they will be able to guide me. Like Saying that thing is in front of you, or in front a bit to your right, and then sometimes in the study also they can say when I wanted to look at diagrams, and they could help.

Support from teachers referred to the assistance received by persons with visual disabilities. However, this usually took place in school settings. Support from teachers included physical prompts, attention, and preparing special materials. Support from teachers also referred to emotional support in helping adolescents with visual disabilities to cope with their condition.

R2: Because they would help us when we need it and they would read the notes, the homework, and they are quite lenient because usually for the homework we need to pass to our, our resource teacher to translate from our, our Braille to sighted. They are quite lenient because

they know that this kind of thing would happen, and they are more lenient. They are more patient. They will not say that they give homework today, and you will have to pass up tomorrow because the translation takes time. If I do not understand something, then they will enlighten us. For some diagrams they would describe it, for example, they actually say this diagram actually shows a nervous system or whatever something like that. Like sometimes if we do not understand a diagram like, let's say the teacher wants to explain about the properties of a cube, for normal people they might understand by seeing but for us the teacher will show us the actual cube. Well...

The sub-theme support from peers emerged when respondents stated that they were happy when they had friends to assist them regarding mobility such as getting from places to places, reading notes for classroom activities as well as academic support through study groups.

R2: If you did not have the time to copy things they would lend us their book. And sometimes they would be able to read things for us like when the teacher writing then, they will sit beside us and say and read whatever the teacher is writing, and we would be able to jot it down.

Spirituality

Spirituality was a complex concept. It referred to the feelings of attachment to something more powerful and also the search for the meaning of life which was experienced universally by human beings. According to the in-depth interviews carried out, the majority of the respondents obtained the sense of spirituality through faith, thankfulness which was known as “*syukur*” in the Malay language, and also acceptance or “*reda*” in the Malay language.

R2: I feel very touched and uh, very, how you say? um..... Very thankful. Very grateful to them and very thankful to God that I got such a loving parents. I, when I pray I usually thank them and yeah. When I pray, I keep them in my heart. I also like to pray to God, and everything. To bless my parents, bless the family. He gave me so many good things. Like my Actually, it does because um... I know I could not probably help them as much as they helped me and if I pray to God or whatever I just hope God would help me bless them and everything and so it makes me happy that I could help them at least spiritually somehow. Parents, my teachers, my friends, and other, other good things as well. I would actually say many things. For example, a peaceful country to live in, um... many friends and God also allows me to do many like my studies everything even though I am disabled uh... such opportunities are uh... able to be you know.... I can benefit from it and uh... many other things as well like making my family proud, making my family healthy, and everything.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to explore the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. From the analysis conducted utilising the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), three main themes on the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents have been discovered namely self-efficacy, support, and spirituality. The analysis has identified five additional sub-themes that contribute to the sense of self-efficacy among visually disabled adolescents such as socialisation, acceptance, equality, accessibility, and achievements. This section discusses the thematic map as per Figure 3.1 and the three most important sources of happiness among adolescents with visual disabilities. Finally, this study highlights the importance and limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

As per Figure 3.1 which presents the thematic map, themes are arranged in a hierarchical format with happiness at the highest level. Overarching themes are connected with upwards arrows, signifying that themes in the lower level contribute to happiness. The thematic map clearly illustrates that happiness among visually disabled adolescents is influenced by three main sources namely self-efficacy, support, and spirituality which are at the second level of the hierarchy. However, the lowest level of the hierarchy which is the third level is the source that promotes the feelings of self-efficacy among visually disabled adolescents which contributes to their happiness.

In other words, self-efficacy, support, and spirituality are independent contributors to happiness, but, the sources at the lowest level such as socialisation, acceptance, equality, accessibility, and achievements only contribute to happiness through the feeling of self-efficacy. In order to facilitate a clearer understanding, explanation of each main contributor to happiness among adolescents with visual disabilities is provided.

According to Bandura (1977, 1982), self-efficacy refers to the beliefs of one's capability in achieving task objectives in daily life. In simpler language, self-efficacy is a person's perception of his or her ability to accomplish certain things in certain circumstances. In this case, self-efficacy also can be interpreted as the specific form of self-esteem. Hence, Bandura, (1977) has argued that self-efficacy is evaluated based on performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback. Bandura's proposition of self-efficacy is suitable in explaining one of the main contributors of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. Based on what respondents have articulated, self-efficacy reflects the feelings of being able to engage in various activities as well as compete with others. The feelings of self-efficacy are further facilitated by socialisation, acceptance, equality, accessibility, and achievements.

Bandura (1977) states that performance outcome refers to a person's judgment of his or her capability in accomplishing tasks from the past experiences. Hence, the achievements domain fits this proposition by Bandura. The individual's experiences of past accomplishments, either positive or negative shape their self-concept and self-worth in the present. According to the in-depth interviews, respondents' sense of achievements was mainly reflected by their school grades such as being a top student or being proud of their results. Hence, having excellent achievements in the past provided a sense of competence within adolescents with visual disabilities.

Bandura (1977) also states that individual's self-efficacy is also influenced by vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion. Vicarious experiences or vicarious reinforcement is a phenomenon where a person develops his self-efficacy by watching others perform. On the other hand, verbal persuasion is encouragements or discouragements from others that shape our self-efficacy. If we received positive feedbacks from others, we would most likely be motivated and that, in turn, will heighten our sense of self-efficacy. Both vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion explain the socialisation and acceptance domain in leading to the sense of self-efficacy. Socialisation allows adolescents with visual disabilities to engage in vicarious experiences, in other words, their peers, thus, serve as their role model, and positive verbal persuasion provides the sense of acceptance by others which this study refers to acceptance by family and peers.

Several components have not been satisfactorily explained by Bandura's concept of self-efficacy such as equality and accessibility. From the in-depth interviews conducted, equality referred to the feelings of being given the chance to participate in various social activities as well as society's awareness of the rights of disabled persons. Being able to take part in social activities and promote the

sense of being able to contribute, and being able to contribute leads to the sense of self-efficacy. Likewise, society's awareness of the rights of disabled persons reflects that society is aware of the needs of disabled people, which will help them participate in social activities.

The final component that leads to the feeling of self-efficacy among adolescents with visual disabilities is accessibility which includes accessibility to technologies (being able to use gadgets with the assistance of screen reader software), accessibility to assistive learning tools (equipment that allow them to participate fully in education such as braille machines and computers with installed screen readers software which assists visually disabled adolescents to do homework and jotting down notes), accessibility for entertainment (being able to play games), accessibility to mobility (being able to move around from places to places with the help of tactile pathways and inclusive transportation systems and services), and accessibility to educational materials (special materials that allow them to understand diagrams). Such accessibilities to those things allow persons with disabilities to fully participate in society and interact with the environment which naturally evokes the sense of self-efficacy. Likewise, Rosenblum, Hong, and Harris (2009) has stated that the greatest challenge of parenting with visual disabilities is the issue of transportation. This matter does not apply only to parents with visual impairments, but also persons with various forms of disabilities from different developmental stages as most transportation systems and services are not accessible.

Also, Fredrickson (2001) describes that contributions of socialisation, acceptance, equality, accessibility and achievements towards self-efficacy which leads to happiness could be related to the broad-and-build theory. In her theory, Fredrickson states that positive emotions expand the scope of individuals' thoughts and actions which result in the acquisition of durable resources that help people to flourish. In this case, five components at the lowest level such as socialisation, acceptance, equality, accessibility, and achievements are trigger positive emotions among visually disabled adolescents which change their perception of being more competent which is the self-efficacy, hence, leading to happiness. Furthermore, Ferlis Bahari (2014) discovers eight sources of happiness among persons with physical disabilities, namely caretakers' support, support from peers, support from equipment, accessibility, elimination, achievements, equality, and support from institutions. It proves that some sources of happiness for physically disabled people could also be applied to individuals with visual disabilities for instance self-efficacy, equality, achievements, and accessibility. This study also discovered that acceptance plays a major role in boosting the happiness of persons with visual disabilities which might not apply to individuals with physical disabilities. Pinqart and Pfeiffer (2015) conclude that self-efficacy is a crucial foundation for individuals with visual disabilities.

The term support refers to the assistance given to someone to help them in achieving optimal functioning. This study discovered that besides self-efficacy, support also plays a major role in the happiness among visually disabled adolescents. Support was divided into three components namely support from family (explaining diagrams and emotional support), support from teachers (preparing special materials and advice), and support from peers (reading notes and mobility). As a person with visual disabilities or any other disabilities, being independent is a great challenge, and to achieve the highest possible level of independence, a certain degree of assistance is crucial to functioning optimally. Similar findings have been presented by Ferlis Bahari (2014) on the happiness of physically disabled persons namely caretakers' support, support from peers, support from equipment, and support of institutions). Singh et al. (2004) discover that mindfulness caregiving can increase the level of happiness among persons with profound multiple disabilities. The same situation could apply to individuals with visual disabilities where support, characterised by mindfulness caregiving could contribute to their happiness. Moreover, Rosenblum et al. (2009) state that parents felt left out in

activities of their children which involve vision such as drawing and sports. To reduce the impact of their visual limitation, parents state that they would ask someone to describe the activities that their children are engaging. This situation illustrates the role of support in assisting persons with disabilities.

One possible explanation of how support could lead to happiness among adolescents with visual disabilities is through Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is proposed by Vygotsky (1934) and Thomas (2005). ZPD refers to how much a person could achieve by himself or herself and through the process of scaffolding, the person could reach optimal functioning. In this context, happiness is the main objective of adolescents with visual disabilities. Without assistance (support), happiness could be a challenging task to achieve. However, through support from others which is known as scaffolding by way of ZPD, for instance, support from family, teachers, and peers, adolescents with visual disabilities could achieve optimal happiness.

In this study, the theme spirituality reflected the respondent's feelings of gratefulness (*syukur* in the Malay language), acceptance (*reda* in the Malay language), as well as faith. The majority of respondents stated that they were grateful even though they were born visually disabled because they still had supported from families, teachers, and friends. Moreover, another two separate relevant constructs were spirituality and religiosity. Spirituality refers to a broad concept of connectedness to something powerful as well as the searching for a meaningful life. Religiosity, in contrast, relates to a specific commitment to one's own religion and beliefs. However, Higashida (2016) states that integration between religion and spirituality could serve as a powerful tool in assisting persons with disabilities.

In a study by Baldwin et al. (2015), the concept of spirituality in the perspective of adolescents with disabilities is characterised by the importance of their beliefs or faith, personal foundations for comfort and strength, finding purpose in helping others, the importance of personal connections, and strengths-oriented concepts of disabilities. All of these concepts discovered by Baldwin et al. (2015) carry the meaning of life domain. In this case, the ability of respondents to accept their disabilities, being grateful of what they possess, being given supportive environments by God establish the meaning of life. Bahari (2014) discovers that spirituality is an important dimension in his study on happiness among persons with physical disabilities.

Several studies have noted the positive impact of spirituality. For instance, Shah et al. (2011) discover that spirituality provides significant improvements in the quality of life among schizophrenia patients. Levenson et al. (2006) indicate that spirituality reduces negative feelings and increases positive feelings; and spirituality contributes to positive psychological outcomes among adolescents regarding decreasing disruptive behaviours, and depression, as well as promoting well-being and self-esteem. This fact explains why spirituality emerges as a contributor to happiness among adolescents with visual disabilities. Notably, Lun and Bond (2013) highlight that spirituality is significantly associated with happiness, however, cultural factors do exist. This study argues that compared to Western cultures which emphasise on individualistic practices where spirituality might not emerge in the sense of happiness but, in Asian cultures, which are the target of this study, it emphasises the value of collectivism hence spirituality be highly present. It is further supported by Warner and Vroman (2011) which state that although spiritual behaviours do not show significant influence on happiness, the result might differ in communities that engage more in spiritual behaviours.

The findings from this study clearly suggested that happiness among visually disabled adolescents was mainly driven by others. Although the term self-efficacy was usually associated with

the specific version of self-esteem, it was a different perspective in the context of visually disabled adolescents. In the perspective of adolescents with visual disabilities, their self-efficacy was mainly constructed through socialisation, acceptance, accessibility, and equality which were mostly provided by others. It is undeniable that real achievements also lead to the sense of self-efficacy. However, the complete form of self-efficacy among adolescents with visual disabilities was not complete without the contributions and help from others such as socialisation, acceptance, accessibility, and equality.

This study strongly argued that the support factor be essential for visually disabled adolescents to achieve optimal happiness. Support was divided into support from family, teachers, and peers. This study strongly suggested that happiness in the context of visually disabled adolescents is influenced heavily by society due to the central theme of support and self-efficacy.

Also, this study also discovered that spirituality plays a major role in happiness among adolescents with visual disabilities. The theme spirituality was characterised by acceptance (*reda*), gratefulness (*syukur*), and faith. Through the discovery of this theme, it clearly showed that the construct of spirituality should not be sidelined or neglected in the effort of measuring happiness especially in communities that value spiritual practices.

Additionally, results from this study were similar to the findings by Bahari (2012). According to Bahari (2012), the phenomenon of meaningful happiness among physically disabled people in Malaysia is represented by social interaction, support, social justice, and the qualities of the self. The findings of this study, for example, the theme support, followed by excellent achievements which were related to the qualities of the self-efficacy, an equality which was related to social justice and socialisation which was closely related to social interaction were all similar to Bahari (2012). Although the themes accessibility, self-efficacy, and spirituality do not appear in findings by Ferlis Bahari (2012), these themes have been supported by Bahari (2014) with the dimensions of happiness among physically disabled people such as spirituality, emotion, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with accessibility.

One major contribution of this study was a clear understanding of what influenced happiness among visually disabled adolescents. Without this study, society might believe that adolescents with visual disabilities obtain happiness the same way as other people do. This study proved that in obtaining happiness, adolescents with visual disabilities required assistance from others namely support from family, teachers, and peers, as well as developing the sense of self-efficacy by socialising, gaining acceptance and real achievements, and having the appropriate accessibilities and equality. Hence, the findings also might be able to assist policy makers regarding occupation, education, as well as other societal activities in constructing appropriate programs with relevant assistance that allow adolescents with visual disabilities to function optimally and achieve happiness.

Although this study only comprised of a small number of samples ($N = 4$), nonetheless, it could be a stepping-stone to future investigations since there is no study conducted to explore the sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. Another limitation of this study is the application of the qualitative research design which makes it impossible for any generalisation as it lacks the statistical power which could not serve as a baseline for advance investigations.

This paper suggests that larger samples are necessary when conducting future studies. Although the themes discovered in this study were nearly saturated, it has to be taken into account that the number of participants in this study only encompasses the northern region of the Peninsular Malaysia.

Hence, larger samples that cover another region of Malaysia might yield and further contribute to the discovery of new themes. Moreover, future studies should also focus on the search of dimensions of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. Finally, the development of a psychological instrument that specifically measures happiness among visually disabled adolescents is also an imperative step so that quantitative measures could be applied in the investigation of happiness among adolescents with visual disabilities.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this study could be a significant contribution to the field of happiness as there are no theories and empirical evidence which have addressed the issue of happiness among visually disabled adolescents. The results of the thematic analysis conducted indicated three main sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents namely self-efficacy, support, and spirituality. Hopefully, this paper could be a stepping stone towards advance studies of happiness among visually disabled as well as a great foundation for building a more inclusive society.

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