

A Survey of Facilities and Services Available for Students with Special Education Needs in Universities

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Abstract

In the present study the researchers conducted a survey of universities of Lahore to study the type of services and facilities available to the students with special needs. A sample of 60 students with special needs was selected through snowball sampling technique from seven universities of Lahore City. Three self developed and validated questionnaires were used to elicit responses of students with special needs (hearing impaired, visually impaired and physically handicapped). The reliability of questionnaire developed for students with hearing impairment was .725 (Cronbach alpha). The questionnaire for students with visual impairment contained reliability of .845 (Cronbach alpha). The questionnaire for students with physical disabilities had reliability of .762 (Cronbach alpha). The respondents were asked to respond on three point criteria. Frequencies of responses along with percentages were calculated. The results indicated that majority of the universities were providing facilities and services such as free transportation, hostel and total exemption of fee charges, talking computer labs, scholarships and computer education to all students with special needs.

Keywords: Facilities, services, students with special needs, talking computer labs

Introduction

Students with special needs are defined as individuals who face physical, mental, or emotional challenges. In most instances, the label of "special needs" applies to mental or physical disabilities or circumstances that create an exceptional situation requiring individualized educational programs, physical accessibility or primary care requirements (Betty & Sue, 1997). Before the end of the 1970s, there were only a small number of colleges and universities that were accessible for students with disabilities. Many of these institutions were segregated colleges and universities such as Gallaudet University, U.S.A. which focuses on educating students who are deaf. After the universal movement of inclusive education for students with special needs, attention

has been focused on improving access to higher education for these students (Henderson & Cathy, 1999).

Students with special needs have unique educational needs which are most effectively met through using a team approach comprising professionals, parents and students. In order to meet their unique needs, students with visual impairment must have specialized services, books and materials in appropriate media (including Braille, large print, pictures etc.). Students with hearing impairment require sign language interpreters and readers. Students with learning disabilities may require to take course exams in quiet environments with certain technical stipulations to enable them to most effectively compete with their peers in universities and ultimately in society (Tinklin & Hall, 1999).

Facilities support people with disabilities or their caregivers in selecting, acquiring, or using adaptive devices. Main services and facilities are academic facilities such as appropriate adapted curriculum, availability of trained teachers, use of appropriate teaching methods, admission facilities, financial facilities like exemption of fees, provision of scholarships, transport services, hostel and residential services, assistive technology and devices (Lance, 1996). Moreover, many co-curricular activities like debates, poetry, dramas, and sports activities are also services and facilities that are seen while accommodating students with special needs in universities. Both public and private universities are required to provide necessary services and support for students with disabilities to participate in both academic and social activities at campus (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).

Facilities can provide a conducive environment to people with disabilities accomplish daily living tasks, assist them in communication, education, work or recreation activities to help them achieve greater independence in life (Henderson & Cathy, 1999). Facilities are also important for improving physical or mental functioning, overcoming a disorder or impairment, and strengthening a physical or mental weakness. The present survey was conducted to highlight the services and facilities available for students with special needs at the universities of Lahore City.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify facilities and services available for students with hearing impairment in universities.
- To find out facilities and services available for students with visual impairment in universities.

- To identify facilities and services available for students with physical disabilities.

Procedure of the Study

The population of the study consisted of Students with Hearing Impairment (SWHI), Students with Visual Impairment (SWVI) and Students with Physical Disabilities (SWPD) studying in universities of Lahore City. A sample of 60 students with special needs (SWHI=8, SWVI=32, SWPD=20) was selected from seven universities of Lahore City by employing snowball sampling technique. It included 40 students from University of the Punjab, 11 from Government College University, 01 from University of Management & Technology, 01 from University of Central Punjab, 01 from Superior University, 03 from University of Education and 3 were from Lahore College for Women University. 70% of respondents were male and 30% were female. The age of respondents was between 20-25 years.

After reviewing related literature the researchers developed three questionnaires. One questionnaire was for students with hearing impairment; second one for students with visual impairment and third one for students with physical disabilities. Each questionnaire contained two parts. First part was related to demographic information and second to description of services and facilities. The questionnaire for students with hearing impairment consisted of 31 items. The questionnaire for students with visual impairment included 47 items and questionnaire meant for students with physical disabilities comprised 38 items. The students were required to respond on three point scales (ranging from 1 to 3 i.e. 3=Yes, 2=To Some Extent and 1= No). The questionnaires were validated by five highly educated persons with special needs. After validation, certain omissions and additions were incorporated to the

questionnaires. The reliability of questionnaire developed for students with hearing impairment was .725(Cronbach alpha).The questionnaire for students with visual impairment contained reliability of .845(Cronbach alpha).The questionnaire for students with physical disabilities had reliability of .762(Cronbach alpha).

Data Collection Procedure

Initially the students with special needs studying in different universities were identified with the help of persons

with disabilities. The researcher personally visited the respective universities after getting consent of students with special needs. Data from students with hearing impairment were collected with the help of a sign language interpreter.

Data Analysis

The data were tabulated and analyzed and frequency distribution of responses was made.

Table No.1: Frequency distribution of responses of students with hearing impairment

Sr. No.	Statements	%	%	%
		Yes	No	To some extent
1	Are you given any help in the admission process?	37.5	62.5	
3	Is there any Disability guidance cell in your institute?	–	100	–
4	Do your teachers teach you according to your disability?	25	75	–
5	Do your teachers help you in your assignment or project?	75	12.5	12.5
6	Are you provided with reading material in sign language?		100	–
7	Have you been provided with computers in your department?	100		–
8	Are you given extra time in exam?	87.5	–	12.5
9	Has a sign language interpreter been appointed in your institution?	12.5	87.5	--
10	Has your admission fee been exempted?	100	---	–
11	Are you getting scholarship on the basis of disability?	100	---	---
12	Do you have hostel facility?	100		–
13	Is there any sign language interpreter in hostel?		100	-
14	Is your hostel residence free of cost?	100		–
15	Have you provided with transport facility?	100		

Table No.2: Frequency distribution of responses of students with physical disabilities

	Statements	% Yes	% No	% To some extent
1	Are you given any help in the admission process?	–	25	75
2	Is there any Disability guidance cell in your institute?		100	–
3	Do your teachers teach you according to your disability?	5	40	55
4	Do your teachers help you in completing your assignment or project?	15	–	85
5	Have ramps been constructed in your institution?	5	95	
6	Do you have access to the library?	10%	90%	
7	Have you been provided with computers in your department?	70	30	
8	Are you given extra time in exam?	–	100	–
9	Has your admission fee been exempted?	100		–
10	Are you getting scholarship on the basis of disability?	55	45	–
11	Is your hostel residence free of cost?	90	10	–
12	Have ramps been constructed in your hostels?	45	55	
13	Are you provided with assistance in moving from one place to another?	–	55	45
14	Is it easy for you to use transport facility provided by your institute?	10	90	–
15	Are you provided with an opportunity of taking part in sports?	5	95	–
16	Are you encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities?	–	15	85
19	Are you provided with the desks in classrooms?	10	90	–

20	Are your classrooms accessible for you?	90	10	–
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Table No. 3: Frequency distribution of responses of students with visual impairment

Sr. No.	Statements	%	%	%
		Yes	No	To some extent
1	Are you given any help in the admission process?	75	25	
2	Is there any Disability guidance cell in your institute?		100	–
3	Do your teachers teach you according to your disability?	43.8	18	37.5
4	Does your teacher help you in your assignment or project?	37	9.4	53.1
5	Is your building barrier free?	31.2	31.2	37.5
6	Is the library of your department accessible for you?	75	24.10	–
7	Has JAWS software been installed in computers of your institutions?	59.4	40	–
8	Are you given extra time in exam?	78%	22	–
8	Has your fee been exempted?	100	–	–
9	Have you been provided scholarship on the basis of your disability?	92.2	18.8	–
10	Is your hostel residence free of cost?	100	–	–
11	Are you provided with assistance by your department in moving from one place to another?	31.25	68.75	
12	Has shuttle service been provided to you by your institution?	34.37	65.65	–
13	Are you provided with an opportunity of taking part in sports?	59.4	40.5	
14	Are you encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities?	68.8	12.5	18
15	Are your classrooms well illuminated?	78.1	3.1	18.8

16	Are you provided with the magnifiers?	28.1	71.9	–
17	Are you provided with the required material in large print?		65.6	_34.4
18	Are you provided with the tape recorders and cassettes for lecture recording?	31.2	68.8	–
19	Are you allowed to take exams in the alternative modes such as,(Braille, audio recording, computer and writer).	31.2	68.8	–
20	Are you provided with the facility of Braille books, or large print in your library?		100	–
21	Does your university provide you facility of mobility training?	3	97%	
22	Does your university provide you with white canes and other assistive devices?		100%	–
23	Have you been provided with facility of Magnifier or CCTV for watching TV in your hostel?	–	100	–

Findings of the Study

Major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Most of the students with special needs were given admission on special reserve seats or quota. Some universities also gave admission on open merit.
2. Majority of students from all disabilities responded that they were provided with help in admission process by the universities.
3. Almost all of the students with special needs responded that they were exempted from fee.
4. Almost all of the students with special needs responded that they were being provided with free hostel facility.

Findings related to students with hearing impairment

1. Reading material in sign language was not being provided to students with hearing impairment.
2. Teachers were not using proper instructional methods for teaching to students with hearing impairment..

3. Computer softwares were not available to facilitate learning of students with hearing impairment.
4. Sign language interpreters were not available in universities.

Findings related to students with physical disabilities

1. Playgrounds of the universities had not been adapted to the needs of students with physical disabilities.
2. Most of the universities were providing free transport to students with physical disabilities.
3. Many universities had exempted hostel fee.
4. Most of the universities were not providing wheelchairs to the students.
5. Ramps were not constructed in universities near the classrooms and libraries.

Findings related to students with visual impairment

1. Braille books, talking computer and talking labs were not available in the universities.

2. Infrastructures of the buildings were not according to the needs of the special students.
3. Disability Guidance Cells had not been established in universities.
4. Most of the universities were not providing specific facilities in the playgrounds.
5. White canes were not being provided to students with visual impairment in universities.
6. Large screen displays for visually impaired students were not available in universities.
7. Free transport was being provided to students with visual impairment in many universities.
8. Majority of the blind students responded that universities were providing scholarships to the students.

Discussion

Present study shows that in our society universities are not providing appropriate services and facilities to the students with special needs. But there are some services and facilities which are being provided to these students such as free transportation, talking computer labs to the blind students, scholarships to all special students, and computer education to all students with special needs. It is a matter of concern that sign language

interpreters have not been appointed in the universities to facilitate students with hearing impairment. Ramps have not been constructed in universities for the ease of wheel chair users. Moreover, Disability Guidance Cells have not been established in universities. Authorities and the society should provide such type of resources that meet the individual needs of all students with special needs.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, following recommendations are made:

1. Wide scale research may be conducted to investigate this problem in-depth.
2. Specific services and facilities should be provided in playgrounds in the universities for the students with special needs.
3. The physical layout of the buildings may be adapted for the students with physical disabilities.
4. Guidance and counseling services should be provided to the students with special needs.
5. Universities should provide the sign language interpreters for the hearing impaired students.
6. Universities must provide talking computers, text books in Braille or large print material and other assistive devices for the students with visual impairment.

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