

Abstract

Abuse is a traumatic and pervasive phenomenon that affects the lives of many individuals with a disability. The aim of the study was to explore the lived experiences of abuse and coping in visually impaired individuals and to explore the mechanisms of attachment patterns and self-concept after abuse and coping. The study used a non-probability purposive sampling strategy. Semi-structured interviews of 10 participants (6 females and 4 males) were conducted and data was analyzed using the IPA method as described by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). The analysis revealed six superordinate themes: 1) stressful experiences of abuse/trauma, 2) psychological responses towards abuse/trauma, 3) challenges faced due to abuse/trauma (challenges to well-being, academic challenges, challenges to romantic relation), 4) coping strategies (emotion focused coping, problem focused coping, religious/spiritual coping), 5) attachment patterns (pre-morbid attachment pattern, attachment pattern after trauma and coping) and 6) Self-concept (self-concept after trauma, social-perception, self-concept after coping). The findings showed that the participants encountered various types of abuse, which had detrimental impacts on them, and that abuse impacted their attachment patterns and self-concept which also influenced their coping styles. Demographic differences related to gender, marital status and onset of blindness were noted. The study found that female participants were more likely than male participants to experience various forms of abuse, psychological symptoms, emotion-focused coping, insecure attachment patterns, and lower self-concept. The study also found that the participants who were blind from birth faced more abuse/trauma, while participants who became blind later in life had more intense psychological reactions,

challenges, problem-focused coping, and positive changes in their attachment and self-concept. The study suggested some implications for practice, policy, and research in this area.

Keywords: Abuse, trauma, coping strategies, attachment patterns, self-concept, visual impairment