

Navigating Life Transitions for Young People with Vision Impairment: A Community-Based Participatory Research Approach to Accessibility and Diversity

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Abstract : Objective: This study aims to explore the unique challenges faced by young individuals with vision impairment (VI) during key life transitions, utilizing a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to identify limitations and positive aspects of existing support systems, with a focus on accessibility and diversity. Design: The study employs a qualitative CBPR design, engaging young participants with VI through online and in-person working groups over six months, prioritizing their active involvement and diverse perspectives. Methods: Twenty-one young individuals with VI from across the UK and with different VI conditions were recruited to participate in the study via a climbing and virtual reality event and stakeholders' support. Data collection methods included open discussions, forum exchanges, and qualitative questionnaires. The data were analyzed with NVivo using inductive thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns related to the challenges and experiences of life transitions for this diverse population. Results: The analysis revealed barriers to accessibility, such as assumptions about what a person with VI can do, inaccessibility to material, noisy environments, and insufficient training with assistive technologies. Enablers included guidance from diverse professionals and peers, multisensory approaches (beyond tactile), and peer collaborations. This study underscores the need for developing accessible and tailored strategies together with these young people to address the specific needs of this diverse population during critical life transitions (e.g., to independent living, employment and higher education). Conclusion: Engaging and co-designing effective approaches and tools with young people with VI is key to tackling the specific accessibility barriers they encounter. These approaches should be targeted at different transitional periods of their life journey, promoting diversity and inclusion.

Keywords : vision impairment, life transitions, qualitative research, community-based participatory design, accessibility

Conference Title : ICDD 2025 : International Conference on Disability and Diversity

Conference Location : Vancouver, Canada

Conference Dates : January 11-12, 2025