

Letter to the Editor

Social Challenges of Mothers with Blindness in Iranian Setting

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Mothering is a major developmental event in women's life. It is not necessary for mothers to be perfect and flawless, but it is required to play the role of mothering satisfactorily.¹ If mothering occurs with a disability, it will be more challenging. Some studies reported that mothers with blindness face limitations in meeting their children's willings and social needs.^{2,3} Some training programs such as rehabilitation are needed for blind mothers, but these programs are not conducted in Iran.

They face major restrictions to access appropriate health services. Shamshiri et al pointed out that current caring culture in Iran is not appropriate for people with blindness, and the concept of blindness is not fully understood by health care professionals in Iranian context.⁴ Pagulica et al mentioned that health professionals can not provide appropriate enough care for mothers with blindness.⁵

Social anxiety is an important barrier in Iranian social structure which prevents mothers to play their complete mothering roles. While the mothers with blindness are able to manage their childcare, they are considered as disabled persons in the society.² Congruently, Frederick declared that mothers with blindness are regarded as wholly incompetent for raising their children.⁶ These mothers are scrutinized by social public and the stigmatized interactions are created with a profound fear and concern. Goffman introduced blindness as an important example of stigma.⁷ They wish to receive love and companionship, but not pity and humiliation.

Limited mobility and transportation, social fear, shame and scorn, skepticism, and traditional culture of Iranian community caused them to have the feeling of being imprisoned. These experiences make mothering role and child bearing more difficult. According to Tuttle, people with blindness have a high tendency to be more socially isolated.⁸

In our society, mothers with blindness don't receive enough social support. Family provides the majority of support for these women; as Melson et al⁸ reported. Levitt et al also emphasized on spousal support particularly from the infant's

maternal grandmother.⁹

Mothers with blindness face challenges beyond physical and visual impairments. It is important for healthcare professionals to learn the specific needs of blind mothers. In addition, the people in the society should not neglect this group. They are facing negative attitude of people in the society which stems from the lack of knowledge of public regarding blind mothers. Thus, society needs to promote the understanding of the abilities of people with visual loss. A national program for mothers with blindness will help and empower them.

Authors' Contribution

SS: the first author who did the project and wrote this letter. MS: counselor. SG: the second supervisor. ZBM: The first supervisor. This is the part of thesis of the first author.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Statement

Not applicable.

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