Exploring the psychosocial dimensions of glasses use among school-aged children with refractive errors

Azlina Mokhtar[1], Siti Husna Hussein[1], Maimunah Abdul Muna'aim[1], Mohd Hafiz Jaafar[2], Amirah Azzeri[2], Tengku Amatullah Madeehah Tengku Mohd[2]

[1]Ophthalmology Unit, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, [2]Public Health Unit, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai , Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Refractive errors are one of the leading causes of visual impairment in children and, if left uncorrected, can significantly impact educational outcomes, social development, and quality of life. In Malaysia, the burden is disproportionately higher among children from low-income (B40) families due to financial, logistical, and awareness-related barriers. While previous studies highlighted the prevalence and financial burdens associated with refractive errors, less is known about the psychosocial dimensions influencing spectacle use. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of school-aged children who wear corrective eyewear. **Materials and Methods:** A qualitative approach was employed involving 23 school children aged 7–12 from B40 households in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. These children received spectacles following a school-based vision screening program. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using child-friendly questions to explore emotional responses, peer and family influence, and daily usage challenges. Thematic analysis was applied to the transcribed data to identify patterns and core themes. **Results:** Five major themes emerged: (1) Visual and academic improvement — children reported clearer vision and better engagement in class; (2) Initial resistance — some experienced discomfort and shyness; (3) Parental and peer influence — encouragement boosted consistent use, while disapproval led to discontinuation; (4) Emotional adjustment — a mix of growing confidence and lingering self-consciousness; and (5) Practical barriers — issues such as broken or misplaced glasses. These findings reveal that while spectacles offer clear educational benefits, their consistent use depends on social support and emotional acceptance. **Conclusion:** Glasses significantly improve vision and learning potential for children with refractive errors. However, psychosocial factors such as self-image, family dynamics, and peer interactions influence long-term use. Holistic interventions involving vision education, ongoing support, and accessibility must be integrated into school health programs to ensure sustained impact.

Keywords: Refractive error, school children, corrective eyewear, psychosocial adaptation, vision care