

An Exploratory Study Of Blind And Visually Impaired Persons As Professional Interpreters

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Abstract:

This study explores the cognitive abilities of blind and visually impaired individuals in relation to their potential to perform interpreting tasks, addressing a notable gap in the existing literature. While prior research has examined interpreter competencies and disability studies separately, few empirical investigations have focused on the aptitude of visually impaired individuals for cognitively demanding tasks such as interpreting. This research seeks to bridge that gap by empirically examining the cognitive strengths of this group- particularly in memory, attention, and language- thereby challenging prevailing assumptions and promoting inclusivity within the interpreting profession. It seeks to specifically investigate (1) the extent to which blind and visually impaired individuals demonstrate memory capacities aligned with the competences required in interpreting, and (2) how blindness influences interpreters' cognitive and professional performance. Data were collected from 32 Saudi secondary school students (18 male, 14 female) with varying degrees of visual impairment. A modified version of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment – Blind version (MoCA-Blind) was administered to assess three auditory-based domains: Memory (Delayed Recall), Attention, and Language. The findings indicate that visually impaired students- particularly females- demonstrate strong and consistent cognitive performance in memory, attention, and language, which are essential for effective simultaneous interpreting.

Keywords: Interpreting Services; Disability Studies; Visually Impaired; Employment; Interpreting; Accessibility Issues

INTRODUCTION

The field of disability studies has undergone significant changes in recent years, highlighting the urgent need to address the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, particularly visually impaired individuals. Research indicates that people with visual impairments encounter numerous obstacles in their daily lives, especially in professional contexts. In Saudi Arabia, these challenges are exacerbated by the cultural and systemic barriers that limit opportunities for meaningful employment and social integration. It is estimated that approximately 3.75% of the population experiences visual impairments, representing a substantial number of individuals whose abilities and talents often remain unacknowledged due to societal restrictions.

Interpreting involves translating spoken language either simultaneously or consecutively from one language to another. Historically, it has been seen as a sub-discipline of translation and translation studies (Pöchhacker, 2009). Reading services have typically been provided by sighted individuals, but recent trends encourage including people with disabilities, such as those who are visually impaired. This shift not only questions conventional views but also adds new competencies to the field. Studying visually impaired individuals in interpreting is important, as it draws attention to their valuable contributions and highlights the need for greater inclusion and innovation in interpreting services. At the same time, interpreting as a discipline has developed its own theoretical framework and is now recognized as independent from translation (Pöchhacker, 2022). According to Gile (2009), only 39 publications worldwide addressed interpreting in the 1950s, which later increased to 1,997 publications, with 26 PhD theses on interpreting studies. Although scholarly interest has grown, the volume of research in interpreting does not yet match that in translation overall. Yan, J. X., Pan, and Wang (2015) reviewed major articles on translation and interpreting from 2000 to 2012, focusing on academic training. Their corpus study revealed that keywords related to interpreting appeared less frequently in the top-ranked journal articles. The following figures are from Yan (J. X., Pan, and Wang, 2015).

Interpreters are crucial in facilitating communication among those with visual impairments; however, there is a significant shortage of trained professionals in this area. Recent federal funding initiatives have highlighted this issue, leading to the creation of programs designed to train educational interpreters. Despite these developments, many educational institutions struggle to attract and retain qualified interpreters who can effectively assist visually impaired students. Furthermore, existing literature on inclusivity and accessibility emphasizes the need for interpreting services to be flexible and responsive to diverse requirements. Current policy frameworks often neglect the specific situations faced by visually impaired interpreters, which undermines their effectiveness in interpreting services. By gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges through research, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies that not only improve service delivery but also promote inclusivity.

Interpreters play a key role in helping those with visual impairments. However, there is a shortage of trained professionals. Recent federal funding led to new programs to train educational interpreters. Still, many institutions struggle to attract and retain qualified interpreters for visually impaired students. Literature on inclusivity highlights the need for flexible interpreting services. Current policy frameworks often ignore the situations faced by visually impaired interpreters. This reduces their effectiveness. By understanding these challenges, stakeholders can develop better strategies. Effective approaches can improve service delivery and promote inclusivity.

International statistics indicate that 4% of people worldwide have visual impairments, while the Saudi Ministry of Health reports that there are one million people with disabilities in the Kingdom, of which 150,000 are visually impaired or blind. While these individuals may receive financial support from government and semi-government organizations, foreign language graduates who are visually impaired have not been offered adequate training for professional interpreting. Therefore, this study aims to fill a critical gap in understanding how visually impaired interpreters work in professional environments. It also provides insights for broader discussions on disability rights and accessibility in Saudi Arabia's interpreting sector. The study highlights the experiences

of visually impaired interpreters and considers the policy implications for creating a more inclusive environment (Ober, 2019; Kentab et al., 2015; Alkhouli, 2015. 16-20).

When considering career preferences, translation jobs are generally more appealing to translation program graduates compared to interpreting jobs. This preference may be due to the specific skills required for interpreting, such as strong working memory and keen hearing ability. This is clearly seen in the employment statistics found at the EU Parliamentary Research Service, which states that the EU employs 600 translators but only 270 interpreters, possibly due to the special skills interpreting requires.

This empirical study examines whether visually impaired and blind bilinguals have the competencies needed to succeed as interpreters. If confirmed, this could encourage ministries of labor and human resources to consider visually impaired and blind individuals for interpreting roles, or provide relevant training to improve their employability.

Disability studies emerged in the late 20th century, challenging traditional views that saw disability solely as a medical issue. This field emphasizes the social model of disability, which identifies societal barriers and discrimination as key factors, rather than viewing disabled individuals merely as people needing care. It redefines disability as the result of systemic inequality. Scholars argue that individuals with disabilities constitute a minority group facing discrimination akin to that experienced by marginalized racial or gender identities. Disability studies intersect with sociology, cultural studies, and feminist theories to explore how various forms of oppression affect people's lives.

Recent developments have focused on the economic and political contexts that influence the experiences of disabled individuals. Understanding these contexts is crucial to creating inclusive policies that promote equal opportunities. This approach critiques the current obstacles while providing insights into fairer environments. The impact of disability studies extends beyond academia to public policy, advocating for increased participation of disabled individuals in areas such as education, employment, and community engagement. This discourse broadens the scope of human rights and social equity. Overall, disability studies have transformed our understanding of navigating life with a disability, consistently challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusivity across all aspects of society (Altokheas, 2023, p. 21-25), (Alkhouli, 2015, p. 16-85), and (Hammer, 2013).

Influenced by sociological and minority rights perspectives, disability scholarship emphasizes the social model (Shakespeare, 2006). Disability Rights and Wrongs. Routledge. arguing that people are *disabled* because of societal barriers and attitudes rather than impairment alone. This paradigm shifts reframed blindness as a difference with distinct capabilities rather than a deficit. Internationally, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, Article 27) explicitly recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work "on an equal basis with others," obligating states to ensure accessible, inclusive employment environments. In practice, disability activists and scholars call for dismantling stereotypes and promoting inclusion: people with disabilities are a minority group entitled to participation and accommodation (for example, Altokheas, 2023; Alkhouli, 2015). In sum, disability studies promote a human rights view: blind and visually impaired professionals have equal rights and often unique strengths, provided that barriers (physical, attitudinal, and institutional) are removed.

Gile (2009) and Pöchhacker (2009, 2022) charted the interpreting field's growth from a sub-discipline of translation studies into an autonomous field of inquiry,

emphasizing that interpreting- particularly simultaneous interpreting (SI)- is a highly demanding bilingual activity requiring concurrent comprehension and production. In SI, the interpreter “listens to the incoming information” in one language while “producing a full and fluent” utterance in another, under severe time pressure. This task imposes an intense cognitive load: interpreters must rapidly decode spoken messages, mentally store details, and articulate target messages almost simultaneously. As Kalina (2000) notes, professional interpreters must “use one’s memory as efficiently as possible,” retaining *micro*-level details and the *macro*-structure of the discourse, along with contextual and situational knowledge. The core competencies of interpreters, therefore, include five domains. First, working memory stores and manipulates the speech stream (micro- and macro-information) under time pressure. Second, attention and multitasking, which function as listening, processing, and speaking concurrently, manage dual tasks with flexible cognitive control. Third, language proficiency functions as a near-native command of both source and target languages, including colloquialism and specialized vocabulary, to ensure accurate and idiomatic renditions. Fourth, cultural competence functions as a deep understanding of relevant cultural norms and contexts to convey nuances and avoid miscommunication (interpreters often act as cultural mediators as well as translators). Fifth are professional skills that function as ethical awareness, interpersonal sensitivity, and continuous training (e.g., note-taking in consecutive interpreting, familiarity with emerging technologies).

Moreover, Al-Salman and Al-Khanji (2002, p. 608) proposed a model consisting of linguistic and non-linguistic skills and competences that are required for interpreters. They affirm that interpreters must master both languages and have solid knowledge of the language pair. While this is also required in the case of translators, interpreters’ language mastery is crucial for interpreting because of their limited resources at the interpreting event and the time limitations for them to consult resources. Interpreters also need to enjoy some personal qualities, such as the ability to analyze the ST and synthesize the TT in such a short timeframe. Other skills include the ability to cope immediately with the speaker’s change in the subject. They also need to have a good ability to focus their ears on audio, and in some instances, their public speaking ability is required. Finally, yet importantly, the model suggests that both short- and long-term memory are required for interpreters.

A robust body of empirical research indicates that individuals with congenital or early onset blindness often develop enhanced auditory and memory abilities. Numerous studies have found that blind participants outperform their sighted people in verbal short-term and working memory tasks. For example, blind children (~10 years old) significantly outperformed sighted peers on the digit-span and listening-span tasks (Withagen, et al. 2013). Similarly, Sepúlveda-Palomo, et al. (2024) found in a study based on a systematic review and meta-analysis of 21 studies that blind individuals show distinct adaptations in working memory (WM) function compared to sighted adults. These adaptations vary by modality (verbal vs. spatial) and by age of vision loss (early vs. late blindness).

Basic auditory perception is often superior in individuals with early blindness. Blind adults had lower pitch discrimination thresholds for speech and music stimuli than sighted controls, indicating finer auditory processing. Ménard et al. (2018) conclude that congenitally blind listeners exhibit “compensatory auditory mechanisms” that sharpen pitch and speech sound processing. Neuroplastic changes (e.g., recruitment of “visual”

cortical areas for auditory tasks) are thought to underlie these advantages. In contrast, some studies note that blind individuals may lag in non-verbal or visual-spatial tasks. For instance, Rindermann et al. (2020) found that while working memory was higher in blind children, verbal-comprehension scores were on average ~13 IQ points lower than in sighted peers. Taken together, the literature indicates a cognitive profile of blindness characterized by enhanced auditory/verbal memory and attention skills at the expense of vision-dependent skills. These auditory-verbal strengths align well with interpreting demands (listening and memory), suggesting the theoretical potential for visually impaired individuals to interpret their roles.

The role of interpreters is dynamic and varies based on situational context and client needs. In educational environments, they may assist with tutoring or classroom support, while in legal settings, they ensure that all parties comprehend proceedings by translating complex legal language into accessible terms for the deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals. Collaboration is essential, as interpreters often work with professionals such as educators and healthcare providers to foster inclusive communication. This teamwork underscores the importance of creating environments in which individuals with disabilities can fully participate. Despite facing challenges such as emotional dynamics and differing client expectations, ongoing professional development is vital for interpreters to stay current with best practices and to enhance their effectiveness in diverse situations (Alzahrani, 2022, pp. 1-15).

In light of these challenges, real-world employment of blind interpreters remains limited. Very few studies have directly addressed this niche. One notable exception is Kapperman et al. (2023), who described a program training Spanish interpreter with visual impairment. They reported that sightless interpreters found interpreting “*poses less challenges to this group ... as it requires no access to images and written content.*” Blind participants worked effectively in legal and conference settings through audio channels. This suggests that blind and visually impaired individuals *can* competently perform interpreting tasks when adequately trained. Industry sources echo this potential; for example, employment blogs encourage the consideration of blind candidates for voice-based language jobs, noting that auditory skills are a primary requirement.

In the Arabic-speaking world, however, literature is virtually silent on blind interpreters. Available research on disability and employment focuses on persons with disabilities. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, approximately 3.75% of the population has visual impairment, and cultural/systemic barriers severely limit employment opportunities. An Arab News report (2011) lamented that many Saudi employers view disability as an insurmountable obstacle, leading even well-qualified deaf or blind job seekers to remain unemployed. No published studies have evaluated the training or use of blind interpreters in Middle Eastern contexts, and specialized interpreter training programs for the visually impaired appear absent. On the other hand, the CRPD (ratified by most Arab states) and national policies nominally mandate non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation in employment (e.g., quotas and accessible training). For example, Saudi labor policy has established hiring targets (quota schemes) for persons with disabilities, although enforcement and awareness remain uneven.

In practice, some international initiatives hint at these possibilities. In the United States, services such as Aira (2024) act as “visual interpreters,” pairing blind users with sighted agents; however, this is the opposite dynamic (making the blind person *client* rather than practitioner). This paper focuses on blind persons who act as language

interpreters for others. Organizations in Europe and North America are beginning to include blind candidates in interpreter recruitment and training. For example, AMN Healthcare (2025) highlights “interpreter careers” for blind and low-vision individuals, advocating inclusive hiring and specialized training. In contrast, in Saudi Arabia, disability employment research is scarce, and existing interpreter services (e.g., sign-language interpreting) do not typically involve blind interpreters. Overall, the literature suggests that while no regional studies specifically address Arabic–English blind interpreters, global evidence – combined with disability rights frameworks – supports efforts to develop this workforce.

Interpreting services are fundamentally rooted in inclusivity, which is essential for enabling individuals with varying abilities to fully engage in social, educational, and professional settings. Beyond legal compliance, inclusivity reflects a commitment to recognizing and valuing contributions from everyone, particularly visually impaired interpreters whose unique perspectives should be acknowledged. In these services, inclusivity fosters effective communication among diverse parties, which is crucial in fields such as healthcare, education, and legal systems, where miscommunication can have serious consequences. Inclusive practices enhance interpreters' linguistic skills and provide specialized training for visually impaired clients. Techniques, such as tactile signing, can significantly improve the understanding and experience of those they assist. Additionally, inclusive interpreting promotes respect and empowerment for visually impaired interpreters, encouraging them to pursue careers in this field and enriching the talent pool. It also establishes standardized practices across sectors, ensuring consistent support tailored to clients' needs through accessible technology and appropriate accommodation. The impact of inclusivity extends beyond individual interactions and reshapes societal views on disability and capability. By highlighting the strengths of visually impaired interpreters, organizations challenge stereotypes and inspire future generations to embrace diversity as integral to community involvement. This shift not only benefits current practitioners but also paves the way for a more inclusive society. See references: (TIGTA, 2021, pages 6-10), Interpreter Services Overview (2025), Nature (2025), Court Interpreters, North Dakota Court System (2025), and (Hammer, 2013).

This study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature on the cognitive abilities of visually impaired individuals in the context of interpreting. While previous research has explored various aspects of disability studies and interpreter competencies, there remains a paucity of empirical investigations specifically focusing on the aptitude of blind and visually impaired individuals for highly demanding cognitive tasks, such as interpreting. This research aims to bridge this gap by providing empirical evidence of the cognitive strengths of visually impaired individuals, particularly in areas critical for interpreting, thereby challenging traditional perceptions and advocating greater inclusivity in the field of interpreting. Our findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the unique capabilities of visually impaired individuals in professional interpreting services. This study, however, aims to explore the relationship between visual impairment and interpreting performance by addressing the following questions: to what extent do blind and visually impaired individuals demonstrate memory capacities aligned with the cognitive competences required in interpreting? How does blindness influence interpreters' professional performance and cognitive functioning?

METHOD

The present study investigates the memory retention among 32 Saudi high school students (14 female, 18 male). The study aimed to assess whether visual impairment influences interpreting competence and to explore whether heightened auditory and memory abilities contribute to superior performance in this domain. The participant selection process for this study was carefully designed to include blind and visually impaired secondary school students. The focus was placed on learners with visual impairments, whose participation is vital to understanding how such conditions may affect interpreting performance. Eligible participants were required to be active secondary school students with foundational bilingual communication skills, ensuring their ability to engage meaningfully in tasks involving simultaneous interpreting and memory retention. This approach seeks to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges faced by visually impaired interpreters (Binbakhit, 2020, pp. 81-230).

To evaluate participants' cognitive abilities—particularly memory and attention—a modified version of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment – Blind version (MoCA-Blind) was administered. The MoCA-Blind, originally developed by Nasreddine and Patel (2016), is an adaptation of the standard Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) designed for individuals with visual impairments or blindness. The original MoCA is a well-established tool for detecting mild cognitive impairment and early dementia, assessing domains such as attention, memory, language, executive function, visuospatial ability, and orientation. Because many of its components depend on visual tasks such as drawing, copying, or image interpretation, the MoCA-Blind was created to remove those visual elements while maintaining the assessment's diagnostic validity and sensitivity. In the present study, the MoCA-Blind was further refined to better suit the target group. Specifically, abstraction and orientation items were omitted, while *Memory Delayed Recall* (5 points), *Attention* (6 points), and *Language* (3 points) were retained, yielding a 14-point version focused entirely on auditory-based cognitive processing. This modification provided a standardized and equitable measure of participants' cognitive performance, free from visual bias, aligning with the study's objective of exploring how visual impairment influences interpreting competence. Following approval, the assessment was carried out in collaboration with school administrators and special education coordinators, ensuring that all participants demonstrated sufficient cognitive readiness to engage meaningfully in the interpreting and memory-retention tasks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All 32 participants (14 females and 18 males) were successfully included in the analysis, with no missing data across any of the three variables Memory (Delayed Recall), Attention, and Language. This indicates a complete dataset with 100% valid cases for each variable.

Table 1. Participants

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Memory (Delayed Recall) * Gender	32	100.0%	0	0.0%	32	100.0%
Attention * Gender	32	100.0%	0	0.0%	32	100.0%
Language * Gender	32	100.0%	0	0.0%	32	100.0%

Table 2. Gender-Based Comparison of Mean Values through T-Test Analysis

Gender	Memory (Delayed Recall)	Attention	Language
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Female	Mean	4.79	6.00	2.71
	N	14	14	14
	Std. Deviation	.579	.000	.469
Male	Mean	4.17	5.72	2.17
	N	18	18	18
	Std. Deviation	.985	.669	.383
Total	Mean	4.44	5.84	2.41
	N	32	32	32
	Std. Deviation	.878	.515	.499

The descriptive statistics presented in the table provide an overview of the performance of male and female students across three core cognitive domains assessed by the MoCA-Blind test: Memory (Delayed Recall), Attention, and Language. The findings indicate notable gender-based differences across all three domains, consistently favoring the female participants. As for Memory (Delayed Recall), female students achieved a higher mean score ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 0.579$) compared to their male counterparts ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.985$). This disparity suggests that female participants exhibited stronger abilities in retaining and recalling information following a brief delay—a critical skill in tasks such as simultaneous interpreting. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation among females reflects greater consistency in their memory performance, whereas the wider variability observed among males indicates greater fluctuation in recall ability.

When examining the Attention component, an even greater difference emerges between male and female participants. Female participants achieved a perfect mean score of 6.00 ($SD = 0.000$), indicating that every female student attained the maximum possible score in this domain. Conversely, male participants recorded a mean score of 5.72 ($SD = 0.669$), reflecting slightly lower and more variable levels of concentration. This result underscores the females' superior ability to sustain focused attention—a fundamental cognitive skill in interpreting tasks that demand simultaneous listening and speaking. With respect to the Language component, female students once again outperformed their male counterparts, achieving a mean score of 2.71 ($SD = 0.469$) compared to 2.17 ($SD = 0.383$) among males. This difference reflects stronger linguistic competence among female participants, encompassing both comprehension and expressive abilities—skills that directly enhance accuracy and fluency in interpreting tasks. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation among females indicates greater consistency in linguistic performance across the group. Examining the overall mean scores across all participants ($N = 32$), the average results were 4.44 for Memory, 5.84 for Attention, and 2.41 for Language. These figures suggest that both male and female participants generally performed at satisfactory to high levels across the three domains. Nonetheless, the consistently higher mean scores and lower standard deviations among females reinforce the conclusion that female students exhibited both stronger and more stable cognitive abilities overall.

Table 3. Group Statistics and Gender Comparison

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Memory (Delayed Recall)	Male	18	4.17	.985	.232
	Female	14	4.79	.579	.155
Attention	Male	18	5.72	.669	.158
	Female	14	6.00	.000	.000
Language	Male	18	2.17	.383	.090
	Female	14	2.71	.469	.125

The Group Statistics table presents a comparison between male and female participants across three key cognitive domains—Memory (Delayed Recall), Attention, and Language—which are essential for effective performance in simultaneous interpreting tasks. The results clearly indicate that female students outperformed their male counterparts across all three domains, exhibiting both higher mean scores and greater consistency in performance.

1. Memory (Delayed Recall)

For the Memory (Delayed Recall) component, female participants achieved a mean score of 4.79 (SD = 0.579), whereas male participants obtained a mean of 4.17 (SD = 0.985). This difference suggests that females demonstrated stronger short-term memory retention and recall ability than males. Given that simultaneous interpreting requires the temporary storage and rapid retrieval of information while translating in real time, the superior mean score among females indicates a more effective capacity to meet the memory-related cognitive demands of interpreting tasks. The lower standard deviation observed among females (0.579 vs. 0.985) also signifies more uniform performance, whereas the higher variability among males reflects greater fluctuation in memory ability across individuals.

2. Attention

In the Attention domain, female participants achieved a perfect mean score of 6.00 (SD = 0.000), signifying that every female student reached the maximum attainable score. In contrast, male students recorded a mean score of 5.72 (SD = 0.669), indicating slightly lower and more variable levels of sustained concentration. This result highlights the females' exceptional and consistent capacity for maintaining focus and cognitive vigilance. Considering that attention is a critical skill in simultaneous interpreting—enabling interpreters to process incoming speech, extract meaning, and produce output simultaneously—the female participants' performance reflects a heightened readiness to manage complex and multitasking interpreting conditions effectively.

3. Language

With respect to the Language component, female participants once again outperformed males, achieving a mean score of 2.71 (SD = 0.469) compared to 2.17 (SD = 0.383) for males. This difference suggests superior linguistic competence among females, encompassing both comprehension and expressive proficiency—skills that are foundational to accurate and fluent interpretation. Although the slightly higher standard deviation among females (0.469) suggests minor individual variation, the overall group performance remained consistently higher than that of males.

In summary, the findings indicate that female visually impaired students performed better and with greater consistency than their male peers in memory retention, sustained attention, and language use. These results imply that female participants may possess a modest cognitive advantage in areas critical to successful simultaneous interpreting, reflecting both enhanced readiness and high cognitive adaptability despite their visual impairment.

Overall Interpretation

Across all three cognitive domains, female participants not only achieved higher mean scores but also demonstrated greater performance stability, as reflected by lower variability. This consistent pattern implies that female visually impaired students in this sample possessed stronger and more stable cognitive abilities relevant to interpreting performance—particularly in maintaining attention, retaining information, and applying

language effectively. Conversely, while male participants also performed at a generally competent level, their lower mean scores and higher standard deviations indicate more variability and potentially less stability in certain cognitive processes.

Taken together, these findings suggest that gender may influence cognitive performance among visually impaired interpreting students, with female participants displaying a modest yet consistent advantage in the cognitive skills most crucial for successful simultaneous interpretation. This advantage likely reflects greater cognitive adaptability and readiness to handle the dynamic demands of the interpreting process. This descriptive statistical analysis confirms the strong cognitive performance of visually impaired students in areas critical for simultaneous interpreting, namely memory (Delayed Recall), Attention, and Language. The findings, provide a quantitative basis for understanding the cognitive strengths of the study participants. The consistently high mean and median scores, coupled with relatively low standard deviations, particularly for female students, underscore their readiness and capability to perform simultaneous interpreting tasks efficiently. This analysis reinforces the original study's assertion that visually impaired individuals possess essential cognitive abilities to excel as simultaneous interpreters, challenging traditional perceptions and advocating for greater inclusivity in the field.

While this study provides compelling evidence for the cognitive suitability of visually impaired individuals for simultaneous interpreting, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Although the sample size was sufficient for an exploratory study in Saudi Arabia, it may limit the generalizability of these findings to a broader population of visually impaired individuals on a larger scale. Furthermore, this study focused specifically on cognitive abilities as measured by the MoCA Blind test; future research could incorporate a wider range of assessments, including practical interpreting performance evaluations, to provide a more holistic understanding of their capabilities. Moreover, while this study highlights cognitive strengths, it does not delve into the practical challenges and accessibility issues that visually impaired interpreters might face in real-world professional settings, such as access to specialized equipment or workplace accommodations.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study provides compelling evidence that visually impaired individuals possess significant cognitive strengths, particularly in memory, attention, and language, which are highly conducive to successful simultaneous interpreting. It highlights the urgent need for inclusivity within interpreting services, particularly as these professionals face systemic barriers and societal misconceptions as visually impaired interpreters often encounter skepticism regarding their abilities, which can impede their professional acceptance and recognition. Moreover, their experiences underscore the importance of adaptive strategies and technologies that enhance their effectiveness in various settings. Incorporating diverse perspectives is not merely a matter of representation; it enriches the interpretative process itself. Drawing from their lived experiences, visually impaired interpreters provide crucial insights into communication dynamics that sighted interpreters may overlook. These insights not only improve service delivery but also foster a deeper understanding among users about the capabilities and potential of individuals with disabilities. It is essential for policymakers to recognize the importance of creating frameworks that support the inclusion of visually impaired

interpreters in professional environments. Initiatives aimed at raising awareness of accessibility challenges can help dismantle stereotypes and promote equitable opportunities for these professionals. Furthermore, ongoing training programs should be implemented to prepare both visually impaired interpreters and their sighted counterparts with the necessary skills for effective collaboration across different interpretative scenarios.

Future research should continue to investigate areas such as technological innovations specifically tailored for visually impaired individuals involved in interpreting roles, as well as longitudinal studies that assess career trajectories within this group. Such efforts will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how inclusivity can fundamentally transform interpreting services. By advocating for inclusive practices, we not only improve outcomes for visually impaired interpreters but also enhance society's overall ability to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts. This research calls on educational institutions, organizations, and communities as a whole to embrace diversity in interpreting practices and recognize it as a crucial element of successful communication. This study is of prime importance to the ministry of Human Resources. It is hoped that the findings of this study will lead to a new ministerial resolution to give priority to visually impaired and blind bilingual graduates to work as conference interpreters. A new career path is hoped and anticipated to be opened for the visually impaired and blind bilinguals.

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