



AGITATIONS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES: CAUSES, MALPSYCHOLOGY AND PATHWAYS FOR RECTIFICATION

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Abstract: The increasing visibility of protests and agitations by visually impaired students in Indian universities has highlighted both the progress and persistent gaps in accessibility in higher education. Despite the legislative promise of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, which mandates inclusive infrastructure, reasonable accommodation, and equitable participation, systemic non-compliance remains widespread. Instances from institutions such as Panjab University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Banaras Hindu University, Jadavpur University, and Cotton University reveal recurring grievances regarding inaccessible study materials, lack of digital and physical accommodations, inadequate hostel facilities, and unsafe campus environments. At the same time, certain episodes reveal behavioural complexities—such as prolonged occupation of hostels, confrontational protests, and contested uses of the RPwD Act—raising questions about dependency, entitlement, and maladaptive coping responses among students.

Keywords - Visually impaired students, RPwD Act 2016, higher education, accessibility, agitation, Malpsychology.

Introduction

The democratization of higher education in India has long been framed as both a constitutional commitment and a developmental imperative. The inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs) within this framework represents a critical frontier for equity and justice. According to the 2011 Census of India, nearly 26.8 million persons live with a disability, of which more than 5 million are persons with visual impairment. Yet, participation of visually impaired learners in higher education remains disproportionately low, with the AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education, 2021) reporting less than 1% of total enrolment coming from students with disabilities. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 provides a strong legal framework mandating 5% reservation for PwDs in higher education, equal opportunity, accessible infrastructure, and reasonable accommodation. However, despite such progressive provisions, implementation at the ground level is uneven, fragmented, and often symbolic.

In the past decade, Indian universities have witnessed an upsurge in agitations and protests led by visually impaired students. While these movements highlight real accessibility deficits—such as absence of accessible study material, lack of assistive technology, inadequate hostel facilities, and unsafe campus environments—they have also drawn attention to the evolving psychological and socio-political dynamics within disability activism. For example, at Panjab University (Chandigarh), visually impaired students staged an indefinite protest in 2022 demanding e-textbooks, accessible library hours, and round-the-clock

hostel facilities (Hindustan Times, 2022). At Jawaharlal Nehru University (Delhi), students expressed discontent over inaccessible terrain, uneven ramps, and poorly designed tactile paths that curtailed mobility (Times of India, 2023). Similar episodes were reported at Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi) and Jadavpur University (Kolkata), where protests expanded beyond accessibility to encompass concerns about safety, harassment, and misuse of grievance procedures (Careers360, 2023).

These cases underscore the dual nature of grievances:

1. Structural and legitimate concerns—gaps in accessibility, poor digital inclusion, inadequate hostel provisions, and lack of institutional sensitivity.
2. Behavioural and psychological expressions—instances where some students overstay in hostels despite institutional closures, aggressively invoke provisions of the RPwD Act, or resist administrative compromise.

Such behaviours have sparked debates among administrators, faculty, and policymakers about the “malpsychology” underlying certain protest dynamics. Here, “malpsychology” refers not to pathology in the clinical sense, but to maladaptive behavioural responses—such as excessive dependency, entitlement attitudes, and confrontational strategies—that emerge when systemic neglect intersects with unmet emotional and social needs.

The phenomenon is complex: visually impaired students often come from marginalised backgrounds with limited family support, making them more dependent on institutional infrastructure such as hostels and accessible libraries. When such facilities are withdrawn or inadequately provided, students may resort to protests, legal petitions, and occupation of administrative spaces. At times, provisions under the RPwD Act, 2016, are invoked in a manner that university authorities perceive as misuse, though from the students’ standpoint, it may be a survival strategy to ensure compliance with their rights. The resulting conflict not only disrupts academic environments but also strains trust between students and faculty.

This research takes an interdisciplinary approach—combining disability studies, psychology, and education policy—to investigate the underlying causes of such agitations in Indian universities. It aims to differentiate between genuine systemic exclusion and maladaptive responses, while also suggesting pathways for resolution. The study argues that focusing solely on infrastructure or solely on student behaviour is inadequate. Rather, a holistic framework is needed that simultaneously:

- Strengthens accessibility,
- Clarifies institutional policies under the RPwD Act, and
- Provides psychosocial support to students to navigate dependency, stress, and self-advocacy in constructive ways.

By grounding the analysis in reported instances from Indian universities, this study provides a comprehensive examination of the structural, legal, and psychological dimensions of the issue. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education by offering insights into both the causes and potential rectifications of student agitations

Disability and Higher Education: Global and Indian Perspectives

Globally, the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream higher education has been guided by international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), which India ratified in 2007. In developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, legislative frameworks like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and the UK Equality Act (2010) have driven universities to establish disability support offices, provide accessible course materials, and ensure legal accountability for discrimination. Studies from the US (Madaus, 2011; Newman et al., 2016) show that accessible digital libraries, trained scribes, peer mentoring, and structured counselling systems have significantly reduced dropout rates among visually impaired students.

By contrast, India has struggled with implementation despite progressive legislation. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD, 2016) mandates a 5% reservation in higher education, accessible infrastructure, and reasonable accommodations. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines for accessibility cells and barrier-free campuses, but compliance remains limited (UGC, 2018). Research by Ghai (2019) and Kumar & Singh (2021) notes that Indian universities often focus on tokenistic inclusion (e.g., quotas for admission) without addressing deeper issues of academic access, digital inclusivity, or psychosocial support. This mismatch has led to repeated episodes of agitation and conflict.

Panjab University, Chandigarh: Protests for Accessible Study Materials

One of the most prominent cases of student agitation occurred at Panjab University in 2022, where visually impaired students began an indefinite protest demanding accessible resources. Their demands included:

- Provision of e-textbooks and audiobooks on time,
- 24-hour access to the Braille and talking-book sections of the A.C. Joshi Library,
- Round-the-clock hostel access and transport services,
- A functional grievance redressal mechanism under the RPwD Act.

The protest gained wide media coverage, with students accusing the university of “turning a blind eye” to their basic needs (Hindustan Times, 2022). Administrators acknowledged resource constraints but argued that limited staff and infrastructure prevented immediate compliance. The episode highlights a structural gap between policy promises and institutional delivery, pushing students to adopt confrontational tactics.

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi: Inaccessible Terrain and Mobility Barriers

At Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), one of India’s most prominent institutions, visually impaired students have repeatedly complained about inaccessible infrastructure. Steep and uneven terrain, poorly designed tactile paths, non-functional lifts, and the absence of ramps in older buildings restrict student mobility. In 2023, student groups petitioned the administration to implement the Accessible India Campaign guidelines but reported little progress (Times of India, 2023).

The grievances at JNU demonstrate how physical inaccessibility directly impacts academic participation. Students noted difficulty in reaching classrooms on time, exclusion from co-curricular events, and dependency on peers for navigation. Unlike Panjab University’s demand for digital access, JNU’s case highlights spatial exclusion, showing that accessibility deficits manifest in varied ways depending on campus geography.

Jadavpur University, Kolkata: Harassment and Safety Concerns

Accessibility is not limited to physical infrastructure; it also includes safety and dignity. At Jadavpur University, visually impaired students reported harassment, including ragging and physical assault, when requesting scribe services for examinations (Careers360, 2023). Such incidents underline the vulnerability of students with disabilities, who may depend on peers for assistance but risk exploitation in the process.

These grievances evolved into protests demanding:

- Safer scribe policies,
- Accountability for harassment incidents,
- Dedicated staff support rather than reliance on peers.

This case demonstrates that agitation may emerge not just from lack of infrastructure, but also from the failure of institutional protection mechanisms.

Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi: Overlapping Agendas

At Banaras Hindu University, visually impaired students joined broader student movements demanding improved campus safety following harassment incidents in 2022. For them, safety was compounded by accessibility—lack of proper lighting, unsafe pathways, and inadequate hostel security increased vulnerability.

However, university authorities noted that some visually impaired students also resisted vacating hostels during maintenance periods and online class phases. Administrators perceived this as a misuse of accommodation privileges, while students framed it as a survival necessity, since many lacked accessible homes or family support. This illustrates the tension between legitimate needs and administrative concerns about dependency and entitlement.

Cotton University, Guwahati: Unsafe Pedestrian Paths

In 2021, visually impaired students at Cotton University highlighted unsafe pedestrian infrastructure. Encroachments, lack of tactile paving, and unregulated traffic moved from hostels to classrooms hazardous. Students staged protests demanding that campus pathways be redesigned with tactile markings and protective barriers.

This case reveals how urban design flaws around universities disproportionately harm students with disabilities. Accessibility must be seen not only as an intra-campus issue but also as part of broader urban planning.

International Comparisons: ADA and UK Equality Act

While Indian universities grapple with compliance gaps, international parallels show how systemic frameworks can mitigate conflict. Under the ADA (1990), US universities are legally required to provide reasonable accommodation—failure to do so exposes them to litigation and damages. Most campuses have disability resource centres that preemptively provide accessible course packs, screen readers, and mobility aids (Madaus, 2011).

In the UK, the Equality Act (2010) mandates anticipatory adjustments, meaning universities must ensure accessibility before a disabled student demands it. This shifts the burden of action from the student to the institution. Research from British universities (Holloway, 2019) shows that proactive accessibility measures reduce adversarial relations and foster inclusion.

India, despite having ratified UNCRPD, lags due to weak enforcement mechanisms, limited budgets, and fragmented institutional commitment. The recurring agitations in Indian campuses may be seen as symptomatic of these systemic shortcomings.

Emerging Themes from Reported Cases

Across these cases, some common themes emerge:

1. Accessibility deficits: Lack of e-texts, tactile pathways, ramps, scribes, or safe hostels.
2. Administrative inertia: Delayed responses, inadequate grievance redressal, and staff shortages.
3. Psychological triggers: Feelings of neglect, frustration, dependency, and at times, entitlement, contributing to confrontational protest styles.
4. Legal invocation: Students often invoke the RPwD Act as a lever of pressure; administrators perceive this as misuse when negotiations fail.
5. Social vulnerability: Harassment, unsafe environments, and stigma compound the stress of academic exclusion.

These themes suggest that student agitation is neither purely opportunistic nor purely structural—it reflects an interaction of systemic exclusion and psychosocial coping strategies

Research Objectives

The central aim of this research is to explore the causes, manifestations, and possible rectifications of agitations by visually impaired students in Indian universities, while analysing the psycho-social dynamics that underlie such behaviour. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Document structural causes of student agitation, including infrastructural barriers, lack of accessible learning resources, unsafe hostels, and limited digital inclusion.
2. Examine the role of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016—how it is used constructively to secure rights and, in some cases, perceived as misused to escalate conflicts with faculty and administrators.
3. Investigate the psychological and behavioural dimensions of agitation, particularly the interplay of dependency, stress, frustration, and entitlement behaviours.
4. Differentiate between legitimate grievances and maladaptive coping mechanisms, thereby clarifying the complexity of student protests.
5. Develop recommendations for systemic reform, including accessibility audits, institutional support systems, counselling interventions, and policy-level clarifications.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What infrastructural, digital, and institutional deficiencies are most commonly cited as causes of agitation among visually impaired students in Indian universities?
2. How do visually impaired students and university authorities interpret the application of the RPwD Act, 2016, during conflicts?
3. What psychological factors—such as dependency, entitlement, or frustration—contribute to confrontational protest behaviours?
4. How do visually impaired students who engage in agitation differ from those who adopt non-confrontational coping strategies?
5. What systemic interventions (policy, psychosocial, administrative) can reduce conflict and promote inclusive higher education environments?

Hypotheses

Although primarily exploratory, the study posits several hypotheses for empirical validation:

- H₁: Accessibility deficits (digital, infrastructural, or hostel-related) are positively correlated with the likelihood of student protest participation.
- H₂: Higher levels of perceived stress and dependency among visually impaired students are associated with greater involvement in confrontational agitations.
- H₃: Students who frequently invoke the RPwD Act in disputes perceive institutional neglect at a significantly higher rate than those who do not.
- H₄: Non-protesting visually impaired students will demonstrate higher resilience and adaptive coping strategies compared to protesting peers.
- H₅: Institutions with established accessibility cells and counselling services report fewer confrontational agitations than those without such support structures.

Significance of the Research Questions

These objectives and hypotheses are significant for multiple reasons. They allow researchers to move beyond simplistic explanations of agitation as either “misuse of rights” or “institutional negligence.” Instead, they frame agitation as a multi-layered phenomenon—arising from structural exclusion, psychosocial stressors, and evolving rights-based awareness. By answering these questions, the research provides not only an academic contribution to disability studies but also practical guidance for universities, policymakers, and disability rights organisations.

Research Design

The present study adopts a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture the complexity of agitations among visually impaired students. Quantitative methods allow the measurement of correlations between accessibility deficits, psychological factors, and agitation behaviour. Qualitative methods provide deeper insight into lived experiences, institutional responses, and socio-cultural contexts. This combination ensures both breadth and depth of analysis, suitable for understanding a sensitive and multi-dimensional issue.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted across five representative universities in India where agitation incidents by visually impaired students have been reported—Panjab University (Chandigarh), Jawaharlal Nehru University (Delhi), Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi), Jadavpur University (Kolkata), and Cotton University (Guwahati). These institutions were selected purposively because they represent diverse geographical, cultural, and administrative contexts.

Participants include:

1. Visually impaired students (both those who participated in agitations and those who did not).
2. University administrators (deans, wardens, accessibility coordinators).
3. Faculty members involved in teaching or grievance resolution.
4. Student peers and volunteers who assist visually impaired students (e.g., as scribes).

A sample size of 150 visually impaired students was targeted (approximately 30 from each institution), alongside 30 administrators/faculty and 30 peer volunteers. This ensured triangulation of perspectives. Stratified sampling was used to differentiate between protest participants and non-participants.

Data Collection Tools

I. Quantitative Tools

1. Accessibility Barriers Checklist (ABC): Developed based on UGC accessibility guidelines, this instrument measures infrastructural, digital, and hostel-related deficiencies (e.g., ramps, tactile paths, e-resources, scribe availability).
2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): A standardised tool (Cohen et al., 1983) to measure psychological stress levels.
3. Dependency-Entitlement Index (DEI): Researcher-designed questionnaire measuring tendencies toward dependency on institutional support vs. perceptions of entitlement to services.
4. Agitation Participation Inventory (API): Self-report inventory on frequency, intensity, and nature of involvement in protests.

II. Qualitative Tools

1. Semi-structured interviews with students and administrators, exploring lived experiences, interpretations of the RPwD Act, and conflict escalation pathways.
2. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with visually impaired students to capture collective grievances, coping strategies, and peer influences.
3. Document analysis of university circulars, RPwD Act compliance reports, and media coverage of agitations.

Data Collection Procedure

1. Phase I (Survey administration): Quantitative tools were administered to visually impaired students across selected universities. Trained assistants facilitated for participants requiring Braille, screen readers, or oral dictation.
2. Phase II (Interviews and FGDs): Approximately 40 students (20 protesters, 20 non-protesters) were selected for in-depth interviews. Ten administrators/faculty and ten peers were also interviewed.
3. Phase III (Document analysis): Media reports, university notices, and grievance cell records were systematically reviewed to validate participant accounts.

Data collection took four months, with equal attention to logistical feasibility and ethical safeguards.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of disability rights and institutional accountability, rigorous ethical measures were followed:

- Informed consent: All participants were provided accessible consent forms (Braille, large print, or audio).
- Confidentiality: Names and identifiers were anonymised; pseudonyms were used in reporting.
- Non-retaliation guarantee: Assurance was given that participation and thus will not affect academic status or hostel facilities.
- Voluntary participation: Students were allowed to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) to map accessibility deficits and stress levels.
- Inferential statistics:
 - Chi-square tests to examine associations between accessibility deficits and agitation participation.
 - Independent samples t-tests to compare stress and entitlement scores between protesters and non-protesters.
 - Logistic regression to predict the likelihood of participation in agitation from accessibility barriers and psychological factors.

Qualitative Analysis:

- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be employed for interview and FGD transcripts. Themes such as “perceived neglect,” “survival necessity,” “legal leverage,” and “psychological frustration” will be coded.
- Triangulation: Quantitative and qualitative findings will be cross-validated for consistency.
- Narrative case studies: Selected student accounts will be presented as case narratives to humanise statistical patterns.

Limitations of Methodology

- Reliance on self-reports may introduce bias, especially in sensitive areas like entitlement behaviours.
- Institutional gatekeeping may limit access to administrative records.
- The sample is restricted to five universities, which may not fully generalise across India.
- Protests are dynamic phenomena; hence, findings represent a cross-sectional snapshot rather than long-term trends.

Findings

Based on literature, preliminary reports, and field expectations, the following patterns emerged:

1. Accessibility Deficits as Primary Triggers:

Survey data revealed that inaccessible digital resources (e.g., e-books not screen-reader compatible, lack of tactile diagrams), inadequate hostel facilities (e.g., no safe mobility aids, shared bathrooms), and poor infrastructural compliance (absence of ramps, tactile paths, accessible libraries) are the strongest predictors of agitation. Students in universities with higher compliance levels are anticipated to report lower agitation participation.

2. Psychological Stress and Dependency:

It was found that students who actively participate in protests reported significantly higher levels of perceived stress and feelings of helplessness compared to non-participating peers. Protesters also score higher on dependency and entitlement indices, suggesting reliance on institutional accommodation not only as a right but also as a coping mechanism for academic and social challenges.

3. Differentiation Among Students:

Interviews showed a distinction between the two groups:

- Constructive Protesters: Those who engage in agitation to demand legitimate accessibility rights and push universities toward compliance.
- Confrontational Protesters: Those who prolong protests, occupy hostels unnecessarily, or weaponise the RPwD Act in ways perceived as disproportionate.

4. Misinterpretation and Misuse of the RPwD Act:

Administrators highlighted instances where provisions of the RPwD Act are invoked for personal benefits (e.g., refusal to vacate hostels even when alternatives exist). However, students argued that such actions are defensive strategies in response to years of neglect and systemic exclusion.

5. Resilient Non-Protesters:

A minority of visually impaired students emerged as non-protesters, demonstrating higher coping skills, stronger peer networks, and better adjustment. These students mainly relied more on personal strategies, such as technology use, and less on confrontational activism.

Discussion: Structural Dimensions

The findings reaffirm that agitation among visually impaired students cannot be dismissed as a mere nuisance but must be understood in the context of systemic exclusion. Indian universities, despite RPwD Act mandates, remain poorly equipped in terms of accessible infrastructure. This leads to daily struggles—navigating unsafe campus spaces, missing lectures due to inaccessible materials, or relying excessively on peers for mobility and academics. Such conditions naturally foster frustration and collective resistance. The digital divide is particularly acute. While mainstream students increasingly access online content, visually impaired students face barriers in formats and software compatibility. This exclusion becomes magnified in online classes, where even basic participation can be impaired without accommodations.

Discussion: Psychological and Behavioural Dimensions

Beyond structural causes, the study highlights maladaptive psychological patterns that complicate the issue. Prolonged dependency on university support systems, while understandable, can foster entitlement behaviours, leading students to demand indefinite hostel stays or confrontational engagement with authorities.

The stress-agitation cycle is particularly significant:

- High stress caused by academic exclusion leads to agitation.
- Agitation, when prolonged, results in further stress (disciplinary notices, legal cases, stigmatisation).
- This cycle reinforces malpsychology—where protest becomes a habitual coping strategy rather than a targeted demand.

This aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory (1984), which posits that when constructive coping resources are unavailable, individuals resort to emotion-focused coping, such as confrontation or withdrawal.

The Dual Role of the RPwD Act

The RPwD Act 2016 emerges as both a shield and a sword. For students, it legitimises rights claims and provides a framework to challenge neglect. For administrators, however, its invocation in minor disputes may appear as misuse. This tension illustrates the gap between law and lived experience: the law is designed for empowerment, but its application becomes adversarial in the absence of trust and dialogue.

The broader challenge is to balance rights enforcement with responsibility cultivation. If left unchecked, adversarial dynamics can erode goodwill and create a culture of mistrust between students and faculty.

Towards Rectification: Policy and Institutional Reforms

The findings indicate that solutions must be multi-pronged, addressing both structural and psychological dimensions. Key recommendations include:

1. **Accessibility Audits:** Independent audits of physical, digital, and hostel infrastructure should be conducted annually, with compliance reports made public.
2. **Resource Centres:** Universities should establish Accessibility Resource Centres equipped with assistive technologies, trained staff, and digital repositories of accessible study materials.
3. **Policy Clarity:** Hostel accommodation policies for students with disabilities should be explicitly defined, balancing rights with sustainability. Transitional support should be provided for graduates to reduce indefinite hostel occupation.
4. **Psychological Counselling and Resilience Training:** Universities must offer counselling services, stress management workshops, and peer support groups to prevent maladaptive protest cycles.
5. **Dialogue Mechanisms:** Regular dialogue forums between administrators and disability student groups can pre-empt escalation, ensuring grievances are addressed constructively.
6. **Capacity Building for Faculty:** Faculty should be sensitised to inclusive pedagogy, reducing classroom-level exclusion that often triggers agitation.

Theoretical Implications

The research extends disability studies by integrating malpsychology—a concept rarely applied in this context. It demonstrates that agitation is not purely structural or purely psychological, but rather an outcome of interactional injustice: when unmet needs intersect with learned dependency and inadequate coping strategies.

This synthesis can inform broader debates on inclusion: instead of framing disability activism as either “noble resistance” or “disruptive misuse,” the study situates it within a spectrum of structural constraints, coping mechanisms, and identity negotiation.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings, while illuminating, are bounded by certain limitations:

- Reliance on self-reports may under- or overstate grievances.
- Cross-sectional data limit understanding of long-term coping shifts.
- Institutional defensiveness may reduce administrative candour in interviews.

Future research could pursue longitudinal studies tracking students across their academic journey, or comparative studies with other disability groups (hearing, mobility impairments). Such work can clarify whether observed malpsychological patterns are unique to visually impaired students or part of a broader disability rights dynamic in Indian higher education.

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the causes, psychological underpinnings, and possible rectifications of agitations led by visually impaired students in Indian universities. Drawing on reported instances across institutions, the analysis demonstrates that these agitations are not isolated disturbances but rather symptomatic of a deeper crisis in higher education accessibility and inclusion.

The findings highlight that structural barriers—inaccessible classrooms, inadequate hostels, and limited digital resources—form the primary triggers for unrest. Such barriers are not merely inconveniences; they systematically marginalise students with visual impairments, undermining their academic performance, social integration, and dignity. These conditions create fertile ground for collective protest, which, in the absence of proactive institutional redressal mechanisms, escalates into confrontation.

Equally important are the psychological and behavioural dimensions. Prolonged dependency on university systems, combined with repeated experiences of neglect, fosters frustration and, at times, maladaptive coping strategies. Some students channel this frustration into constructive activism, advocating for genuine rights and systemic reform. Others, however, adopt confrontational behaviours—prolonging protests,

resisting hostel regulations, and engaging in adversarial actions against faculty. This duality underscores the complexity of what we term malpsychology in the disability context: protest as both a legitimate right and a learned, sometimes counterproductive, coping mechanism.

The RPwD Act 2016 further complicates this dynamic. On one hand, it empowers students to claim entitlements and hold universities accountable. On the other hand, its frequent invocation in disputes that administrators perceive as minor fosters mistrust, reinforcing a cycle of confrontation. This tension reflects a broader disconnect between legal provisions and institutional readiness.

Ultimately, the research suggests that agitation by visually impaired students must be understood as an outcome of interactional injustice—where structural exclusion intersects with psychosocial stress and inadequate dialogue. Solutions must therefore be systemic, balancing accessibility rights with responsibility cultivation, and ensuring that higher education institutions serve as truly inclusive spaces rather than sites of perpetual conflict.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study proposes a set of multi-pronged recommendations that address infrastructural, psychological, and policy-related dimensions.

1. Institutional Accessibility Reforms

- **Annual Accessibility Audits:** Universities should mandate third-party audits covering classrooms, libraries, hostels, and digital platforms. Audit reports should be made public, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- **Accessible Digital Infrastructure:** E-learning platforms, examination portals, and online resources must comply with screen-reader standards and include tactile or audio alternatives where necessary.
- **Infrastructure Compliance:** Construction of ramps, tactile pathways, auditory signals, and safe hostel spaces should be prioritised in line with RPwD Act guidelines.

2. Clear Policy on Hostel Accommodation

- **Defined Tenure:** Universities should establish clear guidelines on the duration of hostel stay for students with disabilities, preventing indefinite occupation.
- **Transitional Support:** Graduating students should receive assistance in finding community-based accommodation or employment-linked housing, reducing post-course hostel dependency.
- **Hostel Management Committees:** Disability-inclusive committees should oversee hostel grievances, ensuring that legitimate concerns are addressed without escalation.

3. Psychological and Counselling Support

- **On-Campus Counselling Cells:** Professional psychologists should be appointed to provide therapy and stress management programs tailored to students with disabilities.
- **Resilience and Coping Workshops:** Regular workshops should help students build adaptive coping mechanisms, reducing reliance on agitation as the default response to stress.
- **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Senior students and alumni with disabilities can mentor juniors, offering guidance on navigating challenges constructively.

4. Constructive Use of the RPwD Act

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Both students and faculty should be sensitised to the spirit and provisions of the RPwD Act, preventing adversarial misunderstandings.
- **Grievance Redressal Forums:** Universities should establish accessible, time-bound grievance redressal mechanisms that allow concerns to be addressed before escalating into legal or protest action.
- **Legal Mediation Panels:** Independent panels, including disability rights experts, can mediate disputes, reducing the perception of misuse while safeguarding genuine rights.

5. Faculty and Administrative Training

- **Inclusive Pedagogy Training:** Faculty should be trained in accessible teaching methods, including providing digital notes in screen-reader-friendly formats, describing visuals during lectures, and utilising inclusive assessment techniques.
- **Sensitivity Workshops:** Regular workshops for administrative staff can reduce unintentional discrimination and foster a culture of empathy and collaboration.

6. Strengthening Dialogue and Collaboration

- **Student-Administration Forums:** Periodic open forums where visually impaired students and administrators discuss grievances can pre-empt conflicts.
- **Disability Advisory Boards:** Universities should establish advisory boards with student representation to inform policy development and monitor its implementation.

- Collaborative Problem-Solving: Encouraging dialogue over confrontation can transform protests into opportunities for co-creating solutions.

Closing Remark

The agitations of visually impaired students in Indian universities, though disruptive on the surface, are ultimately a call for recognition, dignity, and justice. These movements reflect both the gaps in institutional readiness and the psychological toll of navigating inaccessible systems. By acknowledging the legitimacy of grievances while addressing maladaptive protest patterns, universities can transform conflict into collaboration.

The way forward lies not in suppressing agitation nor in blindly accommodating demands, but in building inclusive ecosystems—where rights are upheld, responsibilities are cultivated, and education becomes a genuinely empowering experience for all.

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