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A study of visual impairment among primary school children in Herat province of Afghanistan

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Background: Visual impairment has a significant impact on public health and socio-economic status of a country. Assessment of visual acuity and early detection of visual impairment in children leads to significant visual improvement and an increase in their quality of life.

Aim: This study aims to analyze the magnitude of visual impairment among primary school children in Herat province of Afghanistan.

Methods: This study assessed the magnitude of visual impairment among school children aged between 5 to 10 years, in Herat province of Afghanistan. The vision of school children were examined for visual acuity using standard Snellen chart. Statistical analyses were performed in statistiXL computer package.

Results: A total of 2847 students were examined, of which 1878 (65.96%) were male and 969 (34.04%) were female. Of the children under study, 75 (2.63%) were five, 336 (11.80%) were six, 862 (30.28%) were seven, 775 (27.22%) were eight, 661 (23.22%) were nine and 138 (4.85%) were ten years old. Of 2847 children under study, 2158 (75.80%) had unaided visual acuity of 6/6 or better, and the remaining 689 (24.20%) had unaided visual acuity of 6/9 or worse. Of those with visual impairment, significantly higher number were suffering from 6/9 vision ($p=0.00$). A decrease in the number of low-vision children was noted with increasing visual impairment. Only one student had unaided visual acuity of 6/60. Significantly higher rate of visual impairment was found in girls and children aged 7-9 years old.

Conclusion: One in every three girls and one in every five boys aged between 5-10 years were suffering from visual impairment in Herat province of Afghanistan. Hence, it can be concluded that this problem is more prevalent in children aged between 7 to 9 years.

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