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## The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in Their Professional Life<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in their professional life and bring forward recommendations for these challenges. Within the scope of the study, 33 visually impaired teachers working in Istanbul were reached by using chain sampling data collection method, and the data was collected by carrying out face to face interviews. In the interviews, the questions in the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers were asked to the teachers and the answers of the teachers were written down. As a result of the study, it has been determined that visually impaired teachers faced some challenges in their professional life due to their special condition. The challenges faced by visually impaired teachers were collected under the headings of the problems faced in teaching process, problems with school administration, problems with colleagues, problems with parents, accessibility of technological tools and physical accessibility of the school. These challenges were divided into themes and the codes related to the causes of challenges were tabulated together with their occurrence frequency. In addition, teachers' opinions regarding the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in business life were given with their own words.

**Keywords:** Impaired; impaired teacher; visually impaired; professional life

## Görme Engelli Öğretmenlerin İş Yaşamında Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar

### Özet

Bu araştırma, görme engelli öğretmenlerin iş yaşamında karşılaştığı sorunları belirlemek ve bu sorunların çözümüne ilişkin öneriler geliştirmek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında İstanbul ilinde görev yapan 33 görme engelli öğretmene zincir örnekleme tekniği kullanılarak ulaşılmış ve yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılarak veriler toplanmıştır. Görüşmelerde öğretmenlere araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanmış olan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formunda yer alan sorular sorulmuş ve öğretmenlerin verdikleri yanıtlar kayıt altına alınmıştır. Çalışma sonunda elde edilen bulgulara göre görme engelli öğretmenlerin iş yaşamında özel durumlarından dolayı bazı sorunlarla karşılaştıkları tespit edilmiştir. Görme engelli öğretmenlerin karşılaştığı sorunlar öğretim sürecinde yaşanan sorunlar, okul yönetimiyle yaşanan sorunlar, meslektaşlarıyla yaşanan sorunlar, velileriyle yaşanan sorunlar, teknolojik araçların erişilebilirliği ve okulun fiziksel olarak erişilebilirliği başlıkları altında toplanmıştır. Karşılaşılan bu sorunlar temalara ayrılmış ve sorunların nedenlerine ilişkin kodlar ortaya çıkma sıklıklarıyla birlikte tablolaştırılmıştır. Ayrıca görme engelli öğretmenlerin iş yaşamında karşılaştığı sorunlara ilişkin öğretmen görüşlerine birinci ağızdan yer verilmiştir.

1 This article is derived from first author's master thesis that completed in 2019 and presented in ECONDOR 2020.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the status of impairment is expressed as "disability" (WHO, 2014). The types of disability are categorized in general terms as follows: orthopedic handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired, language and speech impaired, mentally disabled, chronic illness, injury-deviation and incompetence (Öztürk, 2011, p. 18-20). Visual impairment, which is the subject of this research, is defined in legal and educational sense. Although all the corrections have been made, the impairment appearing when visual angle does not exceed 20 degrees and the visual acuity of the healthy eye is 1 in 10 or less, is legally considered as visually impaired. As defined in educational sense, it is the person who needs auditory and tactile tools in the educational platform (MEGEP, 2011, p. 11).

Disability is a condition that causes many disadvantages in both Turkey and the world. People with disabilities face various difficulties in every field, from their social life to their economic life, from their cultural life to their bilateral relations. The important point here is whether there are social policies that will facilitate the lives of people with disabilities, and if so, how sufficient they are. In today's world where working and getting rid of unemployment is accepted as one of the human rights, it is of course important for people with disabilities to produce and to be accepted in the society. The participation of the people with disabilities in production firstly contributes positively to the personal development and family economy, and then adds value to the national economy. For this reason, it is valuable for people with disabilities to participate in labor force (Öztürk, 2011, p. 29).

Individuals with disabilities are employed in education like as in other fields. Individuals with disabilities working in the education sector as teachers and administrators are likely to experience some challenges arising from their disabilities. It is important to eliminate the obstacles in the professional life and to create suitable conditions for the disabled employees to work in more efficient and equal conditions while taking part in professional life. Thus, social integration is ensured, and the disabled employee sees himself/herself as a part of the society. If these conditions are not met, the disabled employee feels alone, inadequate, and unsafe (Seyyar, 2003, p. 54).

In general, employers are not willing to employ individuals with disabilities unless there is an incentive or legal obligation. This is because employers do not think disabled individuals having sufficient education level or being qualified. There are many factors that negatively affect the participation of the disabled in the labor force. The fact that employers ignore the disability status, do not think their transportation as a problem, and consider them only as a workforce has a great effect. Generally, the severely disabled individuals are difficultly employed, and the recruitment of the mildly disabled and orthopedically disabled people is easier (Hasırcıoğlu, 2006, p. 112).

The positions for the disabled in governmental institutions, excluding the foreign organizations, was determined as 3% of the total number of officers in public institutions and organizations. In addition, the relevant provisions for the recruitment of the disabled as public personnel are specified in the regulation numbered 6103 on Disabled Public Personnel Selection Exam and on Recruitment of the Disabled to Public Service. (<http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/3.5.20145780.pdf>, 29.04.2019).

The Ministry of National Education assigns teachers with disabilities every year. Article 10 of the Ministry of National Education Teacher Appointment and Relocation Regulation is related to the appointment of disabled people as follows:

Article 10 – (1) Except for those who have mental illnesses that may prevent them from performing their duties continuously, the appointment of disabled people as teachers is carried out within the framework of the provisions of the Disabled Public Personnel Selection Exam and Recruitment of the Disabled to Public Service, which was enacted by The Council of Ministers' Decision numbered 2014/5780 dated 2/1/2014.

(2) Those who will be appointed as teachers under this article; in terms of educational status, the graduation should be suitable for the subject matter teacher and the graduates of higher education institutions other than education faculties must have successfully completed the pedagogical formation education program, and those who have graduated from higher education institutions abroad must have their higher education and pedagogical formation documents equivalent to domestic higher education institutions or programs.

(3) Candidates with disabilities should receive reports from the health institutions specified in the Regulation on Disability Criteria, Classification and Health Board Reports to be given to the Disabled in the Official Gazette dated 30/3/2013 and number of disabled people, and their disability status should be suitable for teaching according to the subject that they apply.

(4) As limited to the number of staff allowed to be appointed to the Ministry, the number of disabled teachers to be appointed according to the provinces and subjects is determined by the Ministry, considering the needs and staffs.

According to data of Department of State Personnel, 311 disabled teachers were appointed in 2013, 600 in 2014, 723 in 2015, 498 in 2016, 1.319 in 2017, 474 in 2018 and 750 in 2019. As of February 2019, total 4675 disabled teachers were appointed between 2013 and 2019. The highest number of teachers was in July 2017 with 1,1139 people, and the least number of teachers was in July 2013 with 311 people (DPB, 2019).

In the literature, it was observed that there was a study on job satisfaction and working conditions (Kış, Gürgür & Akçamete, 2012) of teachers with disabilities, but no academic study related to the problems of teachers with disabilities was found. There is only a report about the study regarding the determination of the challenges faced by the visually impaired teachers while performing their duties published in 2015 by the Association for the Visually Impaired in Education (EGED, 2015). It has been observed that these studies are quite limited abroad (Anderson et al., 1998). In this respect, it is thought that this study is the first in this field and will contribute to the scientific studies to be carried out from now on. It is thought that this study will contribute to the Ministry of Education, Provincial and District Directorate of National Education and school administrations to determine the problems of visually impaired teachers and develop solutions for these problems. Determining and solving these problems of teachers will directly contribute to student success by ensuring them work more efficiently and happily. Also, this situation is expected to play an important role in reduction of prejudiced attitudes and behaviors faced by teachers with disabilities in professional life. In conclusion, it is thought that this study will be useful in determining the steps that can be taken for disabled teachers to enable them to work under equal circumstances and in an accessible environment, and in developing social policies. This study, which was prepared to fill this gap in the field, was carried out with the aim of determination of the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers due to their disabilities in professional life and to develop possible solutions to these challenges.

For this reason, answers to the following sub-problems have been sought.

1. What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in the teaching process?
2. What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in school administration?
3. What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in relations with colleagues?
4. What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in relations with parents?
5. What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in terms of accessibility of technology?
6. What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in terms of physical accessibility of schools?

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1. Study Design**

This study was designed with case study from qualitative research designs. McMillan (2000; cited in Büyüköztürk et al., 2016, p. 177) defines case studies as a method in which one or more cases, environment, program, social group, or other interconnected systems are examined in detailed. The visually impaired teachers are chosen to study together in this research and to gain in-detailed knowledge.

### **2.2. Study Group**

The study group of the research consists of one hundred percent visually impaired teachers working in Istanbul. According to the data received from the Directorate of Istanbul National Education, 80 visually impaired teachers whose candidacy has been removed in Istanbul have worked. The reason for the study to be carried out especially with the teachers whose candidacy has been removed is to benefit from experience of the teachers, if any, to have experienced their problems. The chain sampling technique was used in the study since clear statistical data and

information about teachers with disabilities were not available. Chain sampling technique is generally a method used in cases where it is difficult to reach the units in the universe and the number of these units cannot be determined exactly (Dragan & Maniu, 2013, p. 160) At the beginning of the study, two visually impaired teachers working in Istanbul were reached. The collection of data started from these teachers and other teachers were tried to reach. Each teacher gave one or more teachers' name that could be interviewed after him/her, and the interviews continued in this way. Within the scope of the study, a total of 33 visually impaired teachers were reached. Information about these teachers is given below.

**Table 1.** Information About Teachers in the Study Group

Gender	Male	19
	Female	14
	Total	33
Subjects	Religious and Moral	2
	Philosophy	2
	English	2
	Music	2
	Guidance	2
	Social studies	6
	History	6
	Turkish Language and Literature	6
	Turkish	5
	Total	33

As seen in Table 1, 19 of the teachers interviewed are male and 14 are female. 6 of the teachers are Social Studies, 6 are History, 6 are Turkish Language and Literature, 5 are Turkish, 2 are Philosophy, 2 are Religious and Moral 2 are English, 2 are Guidance, 2 are Music teachers. The age ranges of the teachers participating in the interview are between 25-42.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tool

The data were collected via a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Opinions of 3 academicians were asked during the preparation of the interview form. On the purpose of determining the comprehensibility of the questions, after interviewing two visually impaired teachers, the interview forms were finalized. In order to get the relevant interview form applied to disabled teachers working in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education, the necessary permission was taken from the Directorate of National Education of Istanbul and data were collected through face-to-face interviews in March- May in 2019. During the interviews, a voice recorder was used with the teachers' permission, and notes were taken in the interviews of teachers without permission. The data obtained from the interview were recorded on the computer on the same day. The interviews lasted between 30 and 55 minutes.

### 2.4. Analyzing Data

Thematic analysis technique was used while analyzing the data. In the light of the collected data, themes, sub-themes, and codes were created. To maximize the comprehensibility, it was tabulated with the frequency of the interviews. Besides, teachers' opinions were given first-hand to support these themes and sub-themes. To ensure the validity of the research, the findings obtained because of the study were objectively expressed at the first hand and were shown by quoting directly from the answers given by teachers with disabilities. To ensure the reliability of 24 research, inter-coding reliability analysis was conducted for each sub-problem of the research with the support of other researchers. For this, Miles and Huberman (1994) 'Reconciliation Percentage = Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement) x 100 formula was used. According to the calculations, reliability was found 0.76 for the first sub-problem, 0.80 for the second sub-problem, 0.82 for the third sub-problem, 0.83 for the fourth sub-problem, 0.88 for the fifth sub-problem, and 0.78 for the sixth sub-problem. Since the reliability percentages of the sub-problems were over 70% (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011), the research was accepted as reliable.

**2.5. Scientific Research and Publication Ethics**

In the study, all the rules specified to be followed by the *"Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive"* were complied with. None of the actions specified in the 2nd part of the Directive, titled *"Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics"*, were carried out.

**2.5.1. Ethics Committee Approval**

The research data were collected before the year 2000, and therefore, there is no ethics committee approval.

**3. FINDINGS**

In this section, themes and subthemes have been created from the responses of participating teachers. These have been presented in the form of tables, and direct quotes from the teachers' responses have been placed beneath the explanations.

**3.1. Findings Regarding the First Sub-Problem**

During the interviews made with teachers with disabilities, Responses for the sub-problem "What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in the teaching process?" are themed as Classroom Management and Assessment and Evaluation. The sub-themes and codes related to these themes these views are shown with the frequency of expressing in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in the Teaching Process?

Theme	Sub-Themes	Codes Related to Causes	f
Classroom Management	Students' Failure to Follow Rules	Children' communication in writing among themselves	17
		Children' playing games among themselves.	15
		Students' using tools such as mobile phone during lesson.	10
		Students' standing and walking in the classroom.	5
		Students' failure to seat according to specified seating arrangement	5
	Teaching of Lesson	Calling Upon Students to Speak	16
		Limitation of Movement in the Classroom	6
	Management of Problematic Behaviors	Lack of eye contact	25
		Problems in recognizing and choosing students.	16
		Homework check	16
Children' dealing with other lessons in the lesson.		7	
Problems faced while filling the class notebook		28	
Assessment and Evaluation	Inaccessibility of Documents	Problems in attendance check	19
		Failure to form a paper layout for a written examination.	26
	Preparation of Exams	Inability to use visual material for a written examination	20
		Refraining from asking open-ended questions	18
	Implementation and evaluation of exams	Copying of exam papers	10
Problems experienced while applying exams	28		
Problems experienced while assessing exams	25		

Classroom management theme is divided into 4 sub-themes according to the responses of the participants during the interview: Students 'Failure to Follow The Rules, Teaching of Lesson, Management of Problematic Behaviors, and Inaccessibility of Inaccessibility. The most striking ones of the problems experienced by the teachers were determined as the problems they had in filling the class notebook and failure to make eye contact with the students. 28 of the participants stated that they had problems while filling the class notebook. The number of teachers who had problems while checking attendance in the same sub-theme was 19. The four teachers' opinion on this situation are as follows.

*“Filling the class notebook is a problem in itself. You always need someone. I wish I could do this process by using a computer.”*

*“Once, while I was taking attendance, I noticed that students had changed classes. They said ‘Absent’ when I asked, but the class was full. Later I learned that the students were jokingly displaced.”*

*“Taking attendance was a real problem in the early years of the profession. But after memorizing students' voice and location, everything has been getting easier, but someone is always required to be in writing on the class notebook. I would like to thank to my colleagues, because they help in this regard.*

*“Since I work in high class, I request a student I trust to take attendance and fill the class notebook. I wish these problems could be solved in an accessible way in digital media.”*

As can be understood from the teachers' opinions above, teachers always need the help of others because the documents that disabled teachers have to fill are not fully accessible. Since the tasks required others' help are official documents, they indicate that they often feel uneasy. Also, 25 of the teachers stated that they had difficulty in attracting the attention of the students from time to time because of failure to make eye contact with their students while the lesson was being taught. Some of the teachers' opinions about this situation are as follows;

*“If I could make eye contact, I would be more effective and efficient. My friends who see less often state that they are more comfortable in classroom management because they can make eye contact.”*

*“I think that being able to make eye contact means always being able to attract the attention of the student in the lesson. I definitely feel the lack of it.”*

In addition to these opinions, 16 of the teachers talked about the problems they had in recognizing and choosing students. Nearly half of the participants stated that frequent changes of students' classes and locations posed a problem in recognizing them, but almost all of the teachers said that they recognized the students over time. A teacher opinion on this situation is as follows.

*“In the early years of my profession, one of the the subjects that I had most trouble was to recognize the students. This is because you can get to know the student from his/her voice and frequency of attending classes. But over time, I got over it. If I take the same classes I attended the previous year, everything will be much more comfortable for me and my students.”*

In addition, 16 of the teachers emphasized the problems experienced during the homework check during the interviews. Most of the teachers indicated that they could not duly perform their homework check without the help of someone else because of their visual impairment. Two teachers' opinions about this are as follows:

*“Homework check was as hard as reading the exam papers for me. It is almost impossible to do without someone else's help. I wish I could assign and control homework in digital media.”*

*“My students did not do any homework at first, thinking that I would not see them. However, when I became a follower of the subject, everything was reversed. But I have always followed up with a student's help. I wish there was a system that we could do this by ourselves.”*

As understood from the opinions above, the follow-up and control of the homeworks cause a problem for teachers with visual impairments because someone else is required for the reading and evaluation of the homework. In addition, 6 of the teachers interviewed stated that they had some problems while calling upon the students to speak, 6 of them stated that they had some problems with the movement area in the classroom. Two teachers' opinions on these problems are as follows:

*“While I am calling upon students to speak in some classes during the lesson, I have problems as a result of the students' being silent. I usually choose from the list.”*

*“In cases where there is no U-class order, because my movement area is narrow I sometimes have difficulties in controlling the students.”*

Another important sub-theme is the challenges that the teacher experiences in classroom management due to the fact that the students fail to follow the rules. Among these, the one emphasized by 17 of the teachers to communicate in written each other. A teacher states his/her opinion as follows:

*“In the early years of my profession, one of my classes was so quiet. Later I learned that my students communicated in writing each other. It was one of those moments when I felt very bad.”*

As it is understood from the teacher opinion above, some of the students show some undesired behaviors in the classroom due to the teacher’s visual impairment. In addition to this situation, 11 of the teachers stated that students played games from time to time, and 10 of them stated that students used tools such as mobile phones and mp3 in the lesson. Teachers' views on this are as follows:

*“One of my students dealt with the cell phone in the lesson, thinking somehow I couldn’t see. I noticed it from the sound, and when I said ‘whose phone that is, bring it now!’, the class suddenly fell into silent.”*

*“From time to time, I realize that students play with the cell phone in the lesson. This is not nice at all.”*

Besides classroom management, another problem faced by disabled teachers is the assessment and evaluation phase. In the study, two sub-themes were created under the theme of the preparation of exams and the implementation and evaluation of exams. 26 of the teachers stated that they had problems in forming the paper layout while preparing the exam paper. Two teachers’ opinions regarding this are as follows:

*“The most common problem I faced while preparing the exam paper is not being able to form paper layout.”*

*“I haven’t faced any problem while preparing the exams but I can not be sure when forming the latest paper layout. In the end, I request one of my colleagues to check.”*

In addition to the above opinions, 20 of the teachers expressed their problems in using visual materials while preparing the exam. A teacher’s opinion on this issue is as follows.

*“Since I work in primary school, I want to ask questions including visual materials to my students, but I can't use them most of the time because the visuals are not fully accessible.”*

Also, 16 teachers indicated that they avoided from asking an open-ended question. In addition, 10 of the teachers emphasized that for copying of the exam papers, they encountered problems due to the inaccessibility of the photocopy devices. Teachers' opinions on these two challenges are given below.

*“As a matter of my subject matter, I have to ask open-ended and interpretation questions. However, I prefer the questions with clear answers to avoid problems during reading.”*

*“I think the hardest part is to copy. My colleagues always help but I wish there was an accessible system that I could do myself.”*

In the interviews, some of the solution suggestions applied by the teachers for these problems mentioned above are as follows: The teachers stated that they made classroom management more effective by constantly moving in the classroom, addressing students with their names, and memorizing students' seating arrangements. Also, at the end of the interview, it was emphasized that the teachers evaluated with their subject matter group after preparing their exams in the assessment and evaluation stage, and they generally received support from their colleagues for copying of the exams. In addition, it was stated that during the implementation of the exams, the teachers with visual impairment who work in primary school do not have any problem because of working as class teacher, and the participants in high school do not have any problems since other teachers in high schools are assigned as supervisors because the exams are common. Only teachers working in secondary schools stated that they needed another teacher during the implementation process of the exams. According to the data obtained in the interviews, the hardest challenge of the teachers with visual impairment that they experience is the evaluation process of the exam papers in the assessment and evaluation stage. Almost all the participants stated that they needed someone else's help during the evaluation of the exams. They emphasized that they received support from their colleagues, university students, or a student called as "assistant students" during the voiceover of the exam papers. Participants underlined that they took support from their students in taking attendance, filling in class notebooks, and filling general documents that are not related to students.

### **3.2. Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Problem**

During the interviews with teachers with disabilities, the responses for sub-problem "What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in school administration?" are divided into three sub-themes Prejudice, Discrimination and Mobbing under the theme of Negative Attitude. Table 3 shows the themes, sub-themes, opinions about the causes of these themes and the frequency of their occurrence.

**Table 3.** The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in School Administration

Theme	Sub-Themes	Codes Related to Causes	f
Negative Attitude	Prejudice	The idea that the teacher will fail in classroom management.	17
		The idea that the teacher can't master the class.	16
	Discrimination	Failure to treat equally like other teachers.	20
		Not giving equal number of lessons to other subject matters	15
		Not assigning a duty in the activities such as travel, ceremony etc.	5
	Mobbing	Subject to offensive behavior	8
No Problem		5	

In face-to-face interviews with visually disabled teachers, when asked about the problems they faced with their school administration, half of the teachers answered “prejudice”. Some teachers’ opinions regarding this situation are given below.

*“I called my administrator on the day I was appointed for giving information. My administrator replied to me how you would do without seeing my teacher. I couldn't answer at that moment. I was very sad.”*

*“At the beginning of my profession, one of my administrators told me I could fail in classroom management, so I said that even the teachers without visual impairment had problems in classroom management, and I emphasized that there would not be any problems as I got used to the students.”*

*“One of my administrators thought I could not be an academically successful teacher. He always wanted to assign me low-grade classes.”*

Another finding of the study is the fact that more than half of the teachers stated they encountered discriminatory attitudes and behaviors in their professional lives. Teachers' views on discrimination are as follows:

*“My school administration did not give me the same class hours as my other colleagues due to the thought that I would be unsuccessful. I objected that. I insisted that everyone should be given equal lesson hours. I finally showed that I deserved it with my performance.”*

*“When my administrator gave my school schedule, I noticed that I only attended elective courses. When I asked the reason of his decision, he said because I could work more comfortably in this way. I also said that I wanted to primarily attend my own subject matters. After all, I am also a teacher and I receive a salary.”*

*“My administrator offered to give me quiet but unsuccessful classes so that I could work comfortably when I started the profession. I know he behaved completely in a good faith, but all I need is to show me the same attitude to my colleagues. I personally do not want any positive or negative discrimination.”*

*“I could not attend my classes on my own, claiming that I was a candidate teacher in my first year in the profession because she/he did not believe that I would perform as a teacher.”*

*“Being ignored in any event annoys me so much. Inability to see does not mean that I can't participate in them.”*

*“I feel that I have been exposed to discrimination when I have not been asked when deciding about any subject that I have a voice in. After, I put them into the words.”*

As understood from the teachers' opinions above, visually impaired teachers are sometimes exposed to discrimination by school administrations. Many of the teachers stated that they are object to all kinds of discrimination, positive or negative. In addition, the teachers who stated that they were not discriminated against by their directors emphasized that they were working more efficiently and happily. The opinions of the two teachers related to this issue are given below.

*“My school administration helps me a lot, so I feel very lucky.”*

*“Since the day I first started to work, my administrators have endlessly supported me about my profession environment and made me feel that they trusted me. Thus, both I work more pleasantly and feel more efficient.”*



Also, in the interviews, 8 of the teachers stated that they were exposed to offensive behavior by their administrators. Three teachers' opinions related to this issue are the following.

*“My administrator entered the classroom quietly and listened to the lesson while I was teaching. I noticed after the students' actions then I felt very sorry.”*

*“One of the students shot my video in the lesson and showed it to my administrator, claiming that I was not enough in the lesson. Instead of questioning this wrong behavior of the student, my administrator told me that I should act more carefully in the lesson. It was very sad.”*

*“I was subjected to discourses constantly about opening investigation. It is not nice to work on tenterhooks.”*

In the light of the above teachers' views, it was understood that some of the teachers interviewed were exposed to offensive attitudes and behaviors. Most of the teachers underlined that they are constantly trying to prove themselves in order not to be negatively affected by their administrators, and not to be exposed to prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors. This situation poses an obstacle for teachers to perform effectively and efficiently. The fact that the teachers feel constantly under pressure will not only deteriorate their performance but will also affect the school atmosphere negatively.

**3.3. Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Problem**

During the interviews with teachers with disabilities, the responses for sub-problem "What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in relations with colleagues?" are divided into two sub-themes as Discrimination and Self-Seeking under the theme of Negative Attitude. Table 4.3 shows the themes, sub-themes and the occurrence frequency of these opinions.

**Table 4.** The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in Relations with Colleagues

Theme	Sub-Themes	f
Negative Attitude	Self-Seeking	3
	Discrimination	2
	No Problem	30

As seen in the table above, 3 of the visually impaired teachers participating in the interview stated that they were exposed to discriminatory attitudes and behaviors by their colleagues. Teachers' opinions on this issue are as follows:

*“My colleagues tried to take more lessons than me. When I asked why, they answered in case I would get tired. To me, it was so weird.”*

*“I had the colleagues trying to give me unsuccessful classes.”*

Besides, 30 of the teachers said that they did not face any problems with their colleagues. Teachers' views on this issue are given below.

*“I did not face any problems with my colleagues due to my disability. On the contrary, they mostly support and help me.”*

*“What problem! On the contrary, they are always with me in everything I need.”*

*“We get along great with my colleagues. We see each other not only at school but also outside the school. This reflects positively on the school atmosphere.”*

As can be understood from the words of the teachers mentioned above, most teachers stated that they did not have problems with their colleagues due to their disabilities. This is a happy finding. However, it is hoped that some discriminatory and self-seeking behaviors will not be encountered. The disabled teachers stated that they got the support of their colleagues and emphasized that this positively reflected on their professional life. Cooperation and working in harmony of teachers in the same school is very significant both for the happiness of the teachers and for the academic and social success of the students. This will contribute positively to the education of the country and provide an opportunity for our disabled citizens to take place in the society more fairly and effectively. Also, cooperation established between teachers is very important in terms of creating a positive role model for students.

### 3.4. Findings Regarding the Fourth Sub-Problem

In the interviews made with teachers with disabilities, the responses for sub-problem "What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in relations with the parents?" are divided into two sub-themes as Prejudice and Discrimination under the theme of Negative Attitude. Table 4.4 shows the themes, sub-themes, and the occurrence frequency of these opinions.

**Table 5.** The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in Relations with the Parents

Theme	Sub-Themes	f
Negative Attitude	Prejudice	8
	Discrimination	5
	No Problem	25

When the teachers with disabilities who were interviewed were asked to explain their problems with the parents, most of them stated that they did not face a huge problem stemming from their disability and emphasized the problems generally arising from a teacher-parent relationship, not because of their visual impairment. In addition, 8 of the teachers stated that parents acted biasedly with the thought that they were inadequate. The teachers' opinions about the prejudice of the parents are as follows:

*"At the beginning of my profession, when one of my students went home and told to her family that I was visually impaired, and on the next day the parents went to the director and said I should not enter their child's course. It was really one of the sad situations I encountered because it was my first day at work."*

*"I had a parent who claimed that the failure of his child stemmed from my disability, but the student was not only unsuccessful in my lesson but also in other courses."*

As seen from the opinions of the teachers given above, teachers with disabilities have been exposed to the prejudicial attitudes and behaviors from their parents due to similar reasons as they have faced from school administration. Also, 5 of the teachers stated that they were exposed to discrimination by their parents just because of their disability. A teacher's opinion on this issue is given below.

*"The parent wanted to take her child to one of my other colleague's classes, just because I cannot see it. I am not able to see but this does not mean I am not a good teacher."*

However, 25 of the teachers interviewed stated that they did not encounter any negative attitude by their parents. Some of the teachers' views on these situations are as follows.

*"I have no problems with my parents. They support me a lot. Sometimes we have the dialogue which every teacher establishes with their parents. This is so normal."*

*"The best feedback I had in my professional life was given by my parents. At the parents-teacher meeting, she described my disability as not a disadvantage for his child but rather a great awareness and gain. It was an indescribable feeling for me. I think it is a great approach to raise awareness about disability in our country."*

Cooperation between parents and teachers is one of the indispensable processes of the education-teaching. The positive attitude of parents towards teachers with disabilities is a very pleasing situation in terms of perception of disabled people in society and working happily. This will be a great opportunity for raising awareness from generation to generation, which will enable students to show positive attitude towards their disabilities.

### 3.5. Findings Regarding the Fifth Sub-Problem

In the interviews made with teachers with disabilities, the responses for sub-problem "What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in terms of accessibility to technology?" are described under The Accessibility Problem. Table 5 shows the theme and the occurrence frequency of these opinions related to the reasons of this theme.

**Table 5.** The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in Terms of Accessibility to Technology

Theme	Sub-Themes	f
Accessibility Problem	Inaccessibility of Interactive Boards	28
	Fully Inaccessibility of EBA (Education Information Network) portal	25
	Inaccessibility of Other Technological Devices in School	22
	Inaccessibility of Ready Course Material	19
	Inadequately Description of Course Materials	18

As can be seen in Table 5, teachers with disabilities encounter problems in terms of accessibility to technology. 28 of the teachers emphasized that interactive boards are not accessible. Some of the teachers' opinions about this issue are as follows.

*“Having interactive boards is really important for the teacher and student, but unfortunately I cannot use it fully on my own since there is no screen reader.”*

*“I can only use smart boards by connecting it to my computer. Otherwise, it is not accessible to us.”*

*“Smart boards are very important in terms of teaching quality, but I cannot use them without someone's help because of its accessibility.”*

As can be understood from the teachers' opinions given above, the fact that interactive boards are not accessible poses a big obstacle for visually impaired teachers to use this technological tool effectively and efficiently. Also, 25 of the visually impaired teachers stated that they could not effectively use the Education Information Network (EBA) because of not being fully accessible. A teacher's opinion on this issue is as follows:

*“The EBA portal is important and valuable. The Ministry of National Education has taken serious steps for making the EBA accessible to teachers and students with disabilities, but it is still not fully accessible to us.”*

Besides, 22 of the participants stated that they could not use the technological tools and equipment in the school because they are fully accessible. Two teacher opinions regarding this are given below.

*“None of the technological tools in the school are accessible to a visually impaired teacher. This is a disadvantage for us.”*

*“Sometimes I must do something at last minute, but I can't do anything since the computers at school are not accessible to us. I always must carry my personal computer.”*

The materials used by teachers for teaching effective and productive courses are really important, however, the fact that the materials to be used by visually impaired teachers are not fully described constitutes the biggest obstacles for us to use these materials. 19 of the teachers complained that the ready-made course materials were not accessible, and 18 complained that the materials were not fully described. Especially disabled teachers working in primary and secondary schools focused on this issue in the interviews. A teacher's opinion on this issue is as follows.

*“I need to use visual materials as an English Teacher, but I cannot use them efficiently because of a few materials described well. I wish all the materials we needed were accessible.”*

It has been determined that almost all the teachers with disabilities interviewed are under 40 years of age and are good at technology. Almost all of them stated that they wanted to use technological tools in the courses. However, they emphasized that they had some problems due to the inaccessibility of these tools.

They indicated that one of the solutions which visually impaired teachers interviewed could apply to access technological tools in schools was to use their computer with screen readers provided through their own means by connecting them to interactive boards in their schools. However, it was emphasized that this situation is not valid for all visually impaired teachers and is not sustainable. They added that they were often inadequate on their own in solving other accessibility problems.

### 3.6. Findings Regarding the Sixth Sub-Problem

In the interviews made with teachers with disabilities, the responses for sub-problem "What are the challenges faced by visually impaired teachers in terms of physical accessibility of school?" are described under Physical

Accessibility Problem. Table 6 shows the theme and the occurrence frequency of these opinions related to the reasons of this theme.

**Table 5.** The Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Teachers in Terms of Physical Accessibility of School

Theme	Codes Related to The Reasons	f	
Physical Problem	Accessibility	Lack of tactile paving (way for the disabled)	18
		No Problem	15

As seen in the table above, 18 of the participants emphasized that having a tactile paving in school corridors and yards would make their lives easier. Two teachers' opinions regarding this are as follows.

*"I wish there were tactile paving in the school corridors and yard. My mobility in this environment would have increased even more."*

*"I have no problem in finding classes, but it would be better for us to have a tactile paving in the corridors."*

As can be understood from the related teachers' opinions, more than half of the visually impaired teachers said that they faced some problems due to the lack of tactile paving in schools. Also, 15 of the teachers emphasized that they did not have any problems in this issue. It was emphasized that the visually impaired teachers participating in the interview could not find solutions for the physical accessibility of the schools on their own.

#### 4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

This research was carried out to determine the problems faced by teachers with disabilities in business life and to propose solutions to these problems. In the light of the data obtained at the end of the study, it has been observed that teachers with disabilities encounter some problems due to their special condition in business life. The challenges faced by disabled teachers due to their disabilities in business life have arisen in the teaching process, in-house communication, in communication with parents, in the accessibility of technological tools in schools and in the accessibility of the physical facilities of the school.

Classroom management is one of the most common problems faced by visually impaired teachers in business life. That students do not follow the rules by misusing their teachers' special conditions and the level of accessibility of the classroom environment have been identified as the main reasons why visually impaired teachers have problems in classroom management. In addition, although teachers' inability to make eye contact with their students is considered as an obstacle that reduces effectiveness in classroom management, teachers stated that they try to solve this problem by memorizing students' seating arrangements and getting to know their students from their voices. Also, it has been determined that visually disabled teachers have problems with homework check and observed that teachers constantly needed someone else's help during their homework check. Besides, it was determined that they faced problems due to the inaccessibility of documents such as the class book, etc., which visually impaired teachers have to fill in at school. It is observed that visually impaired teachers feel anxiety about this situation from time to time because the documents formally lay a burden on them. According to the report (EGED, 2015) of determining the problems faced by visually impaired teachers during performing their duties prepared by the Teachers and Employment Commission of the Visually Impaired Association in Education, it was found out that most of the announcements in the school were made in writing and the written documents were not in an accessible format, so the visually impaired teachers could not follow the correspondence in a healthy way. The inaccessibility problem of documents revealed as a result of our research is similar to the result of EGED (2015) report.

Besides, the difficulties they encounter during the assessment and evaluation process is one of the other important problems faced by visually impaired teachers found out as a result of the study. It was observed that the participants could not use adequate visual materials in their exams since the visual materials were not fully described and accessible during the preparation of the exams. The main reason underlying the problems experienced during the preparation of the exams is that the materials to be used in the exam preparation process are not fully accessible. However, due to the problems that visually impaired teachers encounter / may encounter during the evaluation stage, they choose to ask the questions with clear answers or multiple-choice questions in the exams; and this special condition leads the visually impaired teachers to apply the exams to assess the knowledge level of students even if they do not want. It has been determined that the teachers working in primary and high schools during the implementation of the exams did not encounter very important problems with the

support of the classroom teachers in primary school, and thanks to implantation of common exams in high school. However, it was seen that all the teachers participating in the interview needed help during the evaluation process. During the interviews, the participants stated that they received support as a reader from a colleague, students they trust or students studying at the university during the evaluation process of the exams. Here, it was stated that the persons also called as assistant students by the visually impaired teachers support them only at the stage of voicing their written papers and underlined that these teachers themselves do grading and evaluation works. However, this situation is not sustainable. There is a need to bring forward the concrete solution suggestions for this.

Another problem faced by visually impaired teachers in business life is in-house communication. The heading of in-house communication includes the problems that disabled teachers experience with their school administrators, colleagues, and parents due to their special conditions. According to the data obtained from the interviews, it has been determined that teachers with disabilities experience problems with prejudice, discrimination and mobbing with school administration from time to time. According to the report published by EGED (EGED, 2015), it was observed and emphasized that the visually impaired teachers were allowed only to attend elective courses, refrained them from their active participation in school activities, and not given adequate lessons (EGED, 2015, p. 39). This supports the findings of school administration in our study.

Besides, it is clearly seen that almost all the participants have no problems with their colleagues because of their disabilities. Support of the colleagues given to the participants in their business life had positive reflections on the school environment. This situation reveals that teachers with disabilities do not encounter a major problem with their colleagues due to their disability and it corresponds to the data in the report published by the Visually Impaired Association in Education (EGED, 2015, p. 39).

This situation is like the communication with the parents. According to the data found out as a result of the interview, it has been determined that teachers with visual impairments do not have any problems with their students' parents due to their disability, except for minor problems. In the EGED report, it is shown that teacher-parent communication situations are positive at around 93% (EGED, 2015, p. 40).

One of the prominent problems in the interviews is that the educational technology tools in schools are not fully accessible for the visually impaired. In the interviews, the most emphasized issue of teachers with disabilities in terms of technological accessibility is that the interactive boards are not fully accessible. The main reason why interactive boards are not accessible is determined as the lack of a compatible screen reader program on the board. In addition, although the contents of the Education Information Network have been improved compared to the past, it has been observed that it is still not fully accessible. Also, it is understood that the devices such as the computer, copy machine etc. in the school are also not accessible for the visually impaired.

In terms of working conditions, it has been revealed that schools do not have sufficient arrangements for teachers with disabilities to work in accessible environments and that the working conditions of disabled teachers should be rearranged (Kış et al., 2012, p. 272-294). This situation is like the results obtained from our study. More than half of the teachers interviewed underlined that the school yard and corridors are not fully accessible for visually impaired teachers and stated that this problem could be easily overcome with the improvements to be made.

For solutions to these problems, great responsibilities fall on the Ministry of National Education, Provincial and District National Education Directorates, school administrations, teachers, parents, and student. Recommendations regarding the problems experienced by the visually impaired teachers are listed below.

1. Studies should be carried out to raise awareness among school administrators, teachers and students about disability and necessary trainings should be organized. In-house activities should be organized especially in order to raise awareness of students about disability and increase empathetic behavior.
2. A department should be established in the Ministry of National Education to work on the problems of teachers with disabilities. Thus, a system can be developed in which the problems faced by teachers with disabilities can be directly addressed and resolved without sticking in bureaucracy. In addition, the structuring of these departments within the provincial organization can be beneficial in establishing direct communication between the teacher and the ministry.
3. Even though the computer use levels of visually impaired teachers are high (EGED, 2005), their effective use of interactive boards in schools under the Fatih project is low. Its main reason is that

interactive boards are not accessible. For interactive boards to be used more effectively and efficiently by visually impaired teachers, screen readers and supplementary software should be loaded on the boards and the necessary trainings should be provided by experts in this field. Solving this problem will enable the visually impaired teachers to act more independently and to teach courses more effectively in this way.

4. Since the demand for access to the course resources requested by visually impaired teachers is high in digital formats (EGED, 2005), studies should be conducted to make the course resources in digital media accessible, and the images in the books should be depicted.
5. Education Information Network (EBA) is a social education portal which contains e-content and is open to the participation of all individuals, created by the General Directorate of Educational Technologies. EBA is a platform appropriate for the requirements of our age and plays significant role in the teaching process. However, this network is not fully accessible for visually impaired teachers and students. The EBA should be reorganized to meet the needs of visually impaired students and teachers, and the ideas of visually impaired students and teachers should be consulted at the reorganization stage. Providing visually impaired teachers access to technology and resources will also contribute to equal opportunities and potentials among teachers.
6. A digital and accessible system should be developed in line with the requirements of the age in order to minimize the problems experienced by visually impaired teachers such as filling course books, taking attendance, filling generally documents, following the correspondence at school. This system will not only facilitate the lives of all visually impaired teachers but all teachers in the system and will be an important step in saving time and money.
7. In the interviews, based on the conclusion drawn from the fact that teachers with visual impairments are allowed to attend only elective courses by some school administrations and are not given equal course hours and are not allowed to attend some activities, studies should be carried out to take the necessary precautions in this regard. Disabled teachers should be provided to participate in business life equally and fairly and policies to remove discrimination should be developed.
8. Considering the problems experienced by the visually impaired teachers in the implementation and evaluation stages of the exams, it is thought that organizing the exams in a digital environment in accessible and appropriate manner to requirements of our age will be an important step for the entire educational community. Also, during courses of the community service practices taken by university students in the short term, students can be provided to work as an assistant to a disabled teacher for one semester. In this way, it is ensured that both some problems experienced by teachers with disabilities are minimized and a study is conducted to raise awareness about disabled people as a society.
9. In the interviews, the visually impaired teachers emphasized that schools are not accessible physically. Relevant institutions should plan for schools to be fully accessible for disabled teachers and students.
10. For the visually impaired teachers to work more effectively and efficiently, a class can be allocated for the visually impaired teachers and the classroom arrangement can be organized for the needs of the visually impaired teachers.

## 5. DECLARATION

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**Scientific Research and Publication Ethics:** In the study, all the rules specified to be followed by the *"Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive"* were complied with. None of the actions specified in the 2nd part of the Directive, titled *"Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics"*, were carried out.

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**Ethics Committee Approval:** The research data were collected before the year 2000, and therefore, there is no ethics committee approval.

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**Statement of Researchers' Contribution:** 1st author's contribution: %60 (The 1st author contributed to data collection, analysis, and the conclusion section), 2nd author's contribution: %40 (The 2nd author contributed to the problem statement and the discussion section).

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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