

Social Identity of Blindness and Its Impact on Well-being During The Pandemic

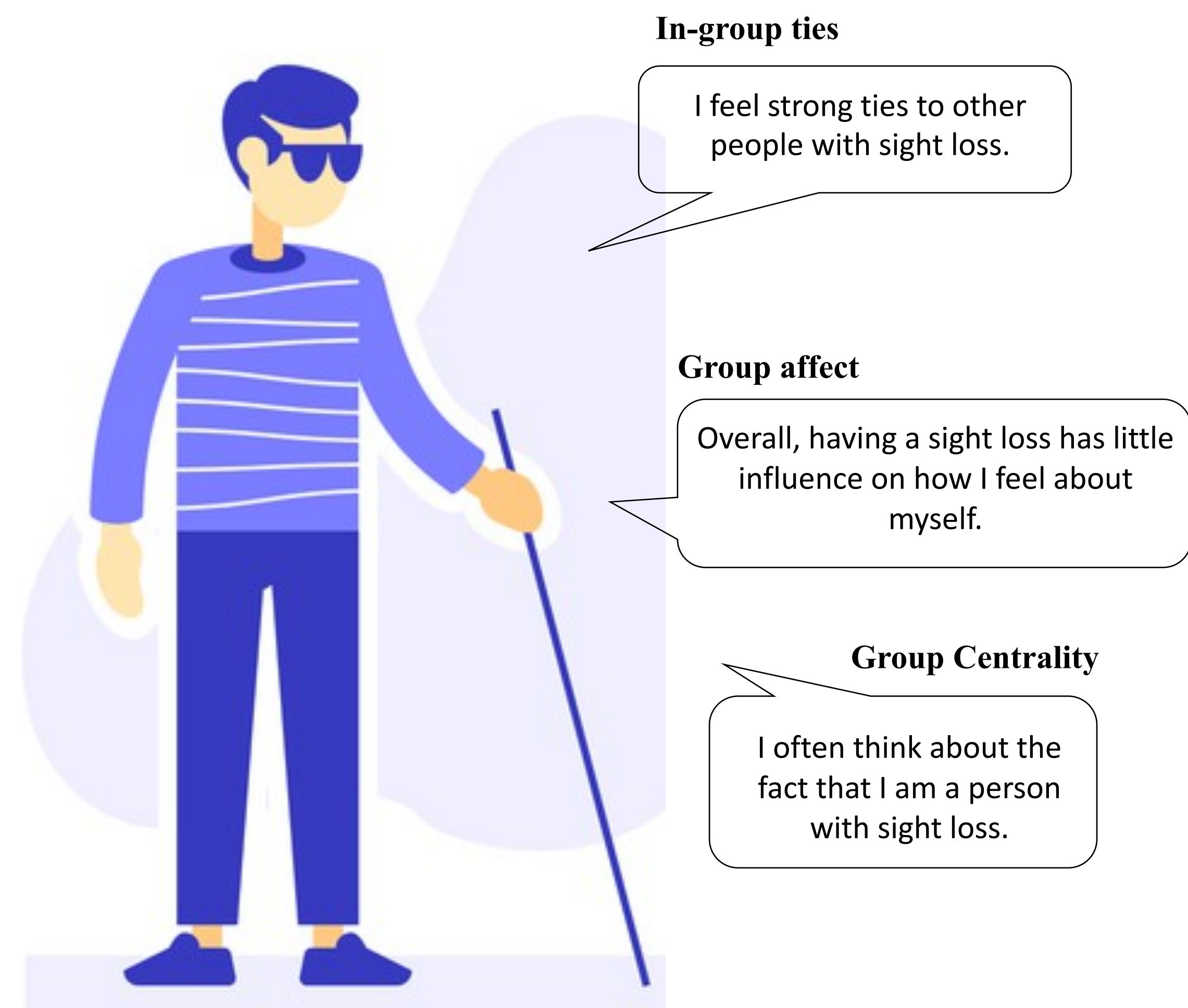
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Abstract

The present study explored the social identity of Canadians with sight loss in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The goal of the study was to determine if measures of sight loss can predict social identity described by three factors: group centrality, group affect and in group ties. Bivariate correlations indicated that age of onset of the sight loss, severity of sight loss and activity impairment due to sight loss did not predict strength of identification with sight loss community. However, individual's acceptance of their sight loss and their openness to share experiences related to sight loss significantly correlate with the strength of their identification with the Canadian sight loss community. The second goal of the study was to determine if sight loss social identity can play a role in well-being of individuals with sight loss during the Covid-19 pandemic. Bivariate correlations showed that stronger identification with the sight loss community predicted lower levels of Covid-19 related stress for 3 factors of social identity.



Research Questions

Rationale

- Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s).
- Social identity can have a positive impact on psychological well-being of members of stigmatized groups under stressful situations.
- Social identity of sight loss has not been studied and the implications of this identity are unknown

Questions

1. What are the factors that determine if a person with sight loss will identify with sight loss community?
2. Can this social identity facilitate coping with stress during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Method

- Data from CNIB clients via online survey (N= 223)
- Sight Loss measures:
 - Age of onset
 - Severity of sight loss (Mild-Severe)
 - Impairment of daily activity (Never-Always)
- Social Identification Questionnaire ($\alpha=0.75$)
 - Group Centrality
 - Group Affect
 - In-group ties
- Acceptance and Self-Worth Adjustment Scale ($\alpha=0.78$)
- Openness Measure ($\alpha=0.76$)
- Perceived Stress Scale/PSS-10 ($\alpha=0.88$)

Results

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations

	Stress	Age of Onset	Severity	Activity Impairment	Acceptance	Openness
Social Identity	-0.26**	-0.15	-0.05	-0.12	0.34**	0.38**
Centrality	0.35**	0	-0.03	0.32**	-0.47**	-0.2**
Affect	-0.38**	-0.24**	0.01	-0.33**	0.66**	0.44**
Ties	-0.34**	0.02	-0.07	-0.13	0.28	0.39**
Perceived Stress	--	-0.1	-0.15	-0.17*	-0.55**	-0.45**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Discussion

- Sight loss social identity is independent of the age of onset of the sight loss, severity of sight loss and impairment of daily activity experienced by individuals.
- Individuals who are more accepting of their sight loss and those who are open to talk about their sight loss strongly identify with sight loss community.
- People who incorporate sight loss social identity experience lower Covid-19 related stress.

Future Directions

Cognitive centrality of sight loss identity is correlated with higher levels of Covid-19 related stress while group affect and in-group ties predict lower Covid-19 related stress. Further research is needed to explore the mechanisms of three factor social identity model in the sight loss population.

IMAGE
https://www.freepik.com/premium-vector/blind-man-with-sunglasses-cane-walking-flat-illustration_10387931.htm