

## Visual impairment Among Children Attending a Pediatric Ophthalmology Unit of a Tertiary Hospital in Central Saudi Arabia

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### ABSTRACT

Visual impairment (VI) during childhood has an impact on the quality of life, social interactions, educational performance, and earning potential in the future. The aim of this study was to examine the prevalence rate of VI in children and their associated predictors among patients attending the pediatric ophthalmology clinic of a tertiary hospital in central Saudi Arabia in 2021. This was a prospective cross-sectional observational study that was conducted between February and December 2021 in the pediatric ophthalmology clinic at University Hospital, Qassim region, Saudi Arabia. All children aged twelve years or younger who attended the pediatric ophthalmology clinic during the study period were included. pediatric ophthalmology consultant performed a comprehensive eye examination for the study sample. The World Health Organization's recommended definitions of VI were used. The prevalence rate of VI, strabismus, and refractive error were estimated. In a year, 300 children attended the clinic. The prevalence rate of unilateral SVI, bilateral MVI, unilateral MVI, and amblyopia were 7 /1,000 (95% CI 5.7 – 7.6), 20/1,000 (95% CI 22 – 25), 43/1,000 (95% CI 41 – 46), and 4.7% (95% CI 2.3; 11.1), respectively. Blurred vision was the presenting symptom in 35.7% of children. Strabismus was found in 134 (44.6%) children. Refractive error was present in 221 (73.7%) children. Only 94 (42%) children with RE used spectacles at presentation. Comprehensive assessment in pediatric ophthalmology clinics is crucial for children's eye care. A low rate of VI but substantial cases of strabismus and amblyopia is worth noting. Early detection and continuous monitoring of children with eye ailments is recommended.

**Keywords:** Childhood blindness, Cycloplegic refraction, Refractive error, Strabismus, Visual impairment

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