

An Overview of Disability in Indian Context: A Study

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Abstract

Disability is universal and disabled people are found in all societies irrespective of caste, class, creed, region, religion, race, language etc. According to UN Development programme, eight per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. The number of people with disability in developing countries is increasing due to malnutrition, poverty, violent conflict, HIV/AIDS, work related injuries, traffic accidents and lifestyle diseases such as heart diseases and diabetes. Disabled people in developing countries have both lack of awareness and lack of proper treatment which gives rise to high level of stigma regarding their condition. It may lead to disabled people being robbed off of their right to be cured and attended to. This study therefore was undertaken to explore and to find out the **magnitude of disability, type of disability, disability by sex and residence and disability by age in a developing country i.e; India**.. The study further tried to find out the **extent of disability** in Indian States and Union Territories by adopting **Content Analysis** technique.

Key words: Disability, disability by age, type of disability, disability by sex, India

1. Introduction

Disability is universal and is found in all parts of the world. The situation of disabled people has far reaching consequences for their personality which need to be rehabilitated. Therefore there is great scope to study the problem of disabled in Indian context. There has been no systematic recording of the history of disabled peoples experience in India and the experiences can not be generalized in case of a country like India, a cultural diversity in itself. Special education and social welfare policy programmes are the ones that highlighted the condition of the disabled. Special education institutions for the hearing and visually disabled were established in 1880s in Amritsar and Mumbai, respectively, by Roman Catholic missionaries. The first census of disabled people also started during British rule but this practice was discarded in the postcolonial period and restarted in 2001 after a lot of demonstration. It was in 1990s that the disability groups in India led to what is known as the “Modern Disability Movement”. The disability movement across the country was successful in getting reservations for disabled persons in education sector, government employment sector, tax and travel concessions etc¹. Thus, the disability movement was successful in creating awareness among the disabled persons about their rights and in giving reservation benefits to them in India in almost every sector.

With the passage of time, India witnessed some international happenings related to people with disability like the year 1981 was declared as ‘International Year of Disabled Persons’, the years 1983

to 1992 as ‘Decade of Disabled Persons’ by General Assembly of United Nation, and the years 1993 to 2002 was declared as ‘Decade of Disabled Persons’ by UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific). These international deeds again bring the focus on ‘people with disability’. Further, the World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), have encouraged many countries, including India to think about the welfare of people with disability. India is also signatory to the Declaration on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region. India is also a participant of the Biwako Millennium Framework for contributing in building an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was signed in 2007 by India which was enacted later in 2008.²

1.2. Magnitude of Disability in Indian Context

As per Census 2011, in India, out of the 121 Cr population, about 2.68 Cr persons are ‘disabled’ which is 2.21% of the total population. In an era where ‘inclusive development’ is being emphasized as the right path towards sustainable development, focused initiatives for the welfare of disabled persons are essential. In India, data on disabled persons is collected through the Decennial Population Census and through NSSO surveys. The Census 2011, conducted by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, is the source for latest data on disabled persons in India. Better and improved methodologies were used during Census 2011 for collecting required information related to the disability in India³. The statistics shown below is based on the results of the Census 2011 and the discussions are on number of disabled, distribution of disabled by various types of disabilities, their residence, their sex, age groups, and disabilities by social groups, educational level, and marital status.⁴

Table: 1.1. Disabled population by Sex and Residence in India: 2001-11 Disabled Population by Sex and Residence India, 2011

Residence	Persons	Males	Females
Total	26,810,557	14,986,202	11,824,355
Rural	18,631,921	10,408,168	8,223,753
Urban	8,178,636	4,578,034	3,600,602

Source: Census of India, 2011

The data obtained from Census reports reveal that among the disabled population of 2.68 Cr, almost 1.5 Cr are males and 1.18 Cr are females. Further, the data shows that the majority of the disabled population resided in rural areas (1.86 Cr disabled persons in rural areas and 0.81 Cr in urban areas). It becomes clear from the above data that disability is found more among the rural residents than the people residing in urban settings.

Table: 1.2. Disabled Population by Sex and Residence in India Disabled Population by Sex and Residence India: 2001 and 2011

Percentage of Disabled to total Population India,2001			
Residence	Persons	Males	Females
Total	2.13	2.37	1.87
Rural	2.21	2.47	1.93
Urban	1.93	2.12	1.71
Percentage of Disabled to total Population India,2011			
Residence	Persons	Males	Females
Total	2.21	2.41	2.01
Rural	2.24	2.43	2.03
Urban	2.17	2.34	1.98

Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011

According to Census 2001, out of the total population of India, 2.13 per cent were found to be disabled, out of which 2.37 per cent were males and 1.87 percent were found to be females. The report of 2011 Census however, indicates that the percentage of disabled in India has increased to 2.21 per cent showing a decadal increase of 0.08 per cent. Further, the data furnished by both the Census 2001 and 2011 reveals that higher percentage of disabled people are found in rural areas as compared to urban areas in the country.

Table: 1.3. Disabled Population by Type of Disability in Percentage in India, 2011

Proportion of Disabled Population by Type of Disability

Type of Disability	Persons	Males	Females
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
In Seeing	18.8	17.6	20.2
In Hearing	18.9	17.9	20.2
In Speech	7.5	7.5	7.4
In Movement	20.3	22.5	17.5
Mental Retardation	5.6	5.8	5.4
Mental Illness	2.7	2.8	2.6
Any Other	18.4	18.2	18.6
Multiple Disability	7.9	7.8	8.1

Source, Census of India, 2011

According to the 2011 Census data, out of total population of India, 20.3 per cent were declared disabled in movement. Among whom 22.5 per cent male are having disability in movement, 18 per cent each has disability in seeing, in hearing while 7.8 per cent of them suffered from multiple disability. In the case of the female disabled, 20 per cent each has disability in seeing, in hearing, 17.5 per cent has disability in movement and 8 per cent of them are having multiple disabilities. Thus, the data clearly reveals that disability in seeing and in hearing was found much among females than in males.

Table: 1.4. Percentage Share of Disabled Population by Type of Disability among Social Groups in India

Disabled Population by Type of disability Among Social Groups India: 2011

Type of Disability	Total	SCs	STs
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
In Seeing	18.8	19.1	20.0
In Hearing	18.9	17.4	19.3
In Speech	7.5	5.2	5.3
In Movement	20.3	20.5	22.5
Mental Retardation	5.6	5.1	4.9
Mental Illness	2.7	2.4	2.6
Any Other	18.4	22.9	16.5
Multiple Disability	7.9	7.3	8.9

Source: Census of India, 2011

Among the social groups, SCs were found to have less disability in mental illness (2.4 percent) followed by disability in speech (5.2 per cent) .Similarly, STs have less disability in mental illness (2.6 percent) followed by disability in mental retardation. The data further reveals that disability in seeing, hearing and movement and multiple disabilities is more among STs than that of SCs and others. Similarly disability in speech and mental retardation is more among others than that of SCs and STs.

The data in the below table indicates the proportion of disabled population in the respective age groups by sex.⁵

Table: 1.5. Disabled Population by Age and Sex in India, 2011 Disabled Population by Age and Sex India: 2011

Proportion of Disabled Population in the Respective Age Groups India: 2011			
Age Group	Persons	Males	Females
All Ages	2.21	2.41	2.01
0-4	1.14	1.18	1.11
5-9	1.54	1.63	1.44
10-19	1.82	1.96	1.67
20-29	1.97	2.22	1.70

30-39	2.09	2.41	1.77
40-49	2.31	2.66	1.94
50-59	2.83	3.16	2.47
60-69	4.15	4.41	3.89
70-79	6.22	6.26	6.19
80-89	8.41	8.33	8.48
90+	8.40	7.88	8.85

Source: Census of India, 2011

From the above data, it is obvious that according to the Census 2011, male disabled percentage is more as compared to female disabled percentage in India. While going through the data in detail, it becomes evident that disability among males is higher up to the age group of 70-79 while disability among females is higher thereafter. Furthermore, the data shows that disability from the age of 60 onwards is higher in comparison to the lower age groups.

The Census 2011 revealed that, Among State/ UTs, the proportion of disabled persons to the total population is highest in Sikkim (2.98 per cent), followed by Odisha (2.96 per cent), Jammu & Kashmir (2.88 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (2.68 per cent), and Maharashtra (2.64 per cent) and the proportion of disabled persons to the total population is lowest in Daman & Diu (0.9 per cent), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (0.96 per cent), Mizoram (1.38 per cent), Delhi (1.4 per cent) and Chandigarh (1.4 per cent). Talking about the states, the highest number of disabled persons is from the State of Uttar Pradesh. Nearly 50 per cent of the disabled persons belonged to one of the five States namely Uttar Pradesh (15.5 per cent), Maharashtra (11.05 per cent), Bihar (8.69 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (8.45 per cent), and West Bengal (7.52 per cent). At all India level, 7.62 per cent of the disabled persons belonged to the age group 0-6 years. Bihar (12.48 per cent) has the highest share of disabled children in the population of disabled persons of the State followed by Meghalaya (11.41 per cent). In Kerala, only 3.44 per cent of the disabled persons belonged to the age group 0-6 years, which is the lowest among the State. The State of Uttar Pradesh is home for the highest number of disabled children (0-6 years). Four States namely, Uttar Pradesh (20.31 per cent), Bihar (14.24 per cent), Maharashtra (10.64 per cent), and West Bengal (6.48 per cent) together have the burden of more than 50 per cent of the disabled children.⁶

At all India level, 36.34 per cent of the total disabled population is reported as 'workers'. Among the State, Nagaland (51.92 per cent) has the highest share of workers in the respective population of disabled persons followed by Sikkim (49.04 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (44.69 per cent). The proportion of disabled workers to the corresponding total disabled persons is lowest in Lakshadweep (Union Territory) (19.88 per cent), followed by Kerala (23.59 per cent) and NCT of Delhi (Union Territory) (27.92 per cent). Among the disabled workers, the highest number of workers are from Uttar Pradesh (14.84 per cent), followed by Maharashtra (12.81 per cent), which have also the highest number of disabled persons.

At all India level, 54.52 per cent of the disabled persons are literates. Among the State /UTs, the highest literacy rate among disabled persons is in Kerala (70.79 per cent) followed by Goa (70.31 per cent). The lowest literacy rate among disabled persons is in Arunachal Pradesh (38.75 per cent) followed by Rajasthan (40.16 per cent). At all India level, 8.53 per cent of the disabled literates are having

educational qualification of graduate and above. Among the State /UTs, the highest share of graduates in the disabled literate population is highest in Chandigarh (19.68 per cent) followed by Delhi (17.43 per cent) and the lowest share is reported from Lakshadweep (2 per cent) followed by Meghalaya (3 per cent). Under the various categories of disability like disability in seeing, in hearing, in movement, mental retardation, mental illness, any other and multiple disability, Uttar Pradesh, has the highest number while Bihar has the highest number of persons with disability in speech. The highest percentage of disabled children (5-19 years) presently attending educational institution has been reported from Goa & Kerala (73 per cent) followed by Maharashtra and Lakshadweep (70 per cent). The percentage of disabled children never attended educational institution is highest in Nagaland (39 per cent) followed by Assam (35 per cent). The percentage of never married among the total disabled persons of the State / UT is highest in Meghalaya (56 per cent) and lowest in Rajasthan (31 per cent) whereas the percentage of currently married among the total disabled persons of the State / UT is highest in Maharashtra (51 per cent) and lowest in Mizoram (31 per cent).⁷

Women with disabilities are considered as liability and as a burden on her family, society or the state, a dependant for the rest of her life.⁸ One in every two disabled non-workers is dependent on their respective families. Among the male disabled non –workers, nearly 33 per cent are students, while the same among the corresponding category of females is 22 per cent.⁹ The World Bank report reflects that having a disability reduces the probability of being employed for males and much higher for females.¹⁰ One of the myths about persons with disabilities (PWDs) is that they are unqualified and not productive, which is not generally the case. A study was conducted by American India Foundation, New Delhi (2014) which revealed that PWDs along with their skills and abilities are seen to exhibit strong loyalty and low rates of absenteeism with the result the growing number of companies are now finding it profitable to hire PWDs. From sociological and developmental perspective, participation of PWDs, more particularly disabled women in the labour force is crucial. Productive engagement of PWDs serves to optimize the human resources of the nation, increases individual well- being and contributes to the national output. Further, it promotes human dignity and social cohesion when all the members of a society have access to opportunities to choose the direction of their lives and fully realize their potential and talents.¹¹ Entrepreneurship is perceived by policy-makers as a means of tackling labour market disadvantage and social exclusion more generally.¹²

Discussion

The experience and identification of disability occurs on a daily basis within the social context, whether at home, neighborhood, workplace, market or while watching a television programme. It is because of this fact that sociology, which is a discipline that examines interactions, social relationships and the social structure, provides a key perspective to understand the identification process and the experience of living with a disability. The data shows that the majority of the disabled population resided in rural areas (1.86 Cr disabled persons in rural areas and 0.81 Cr in urban areas). It becomes evident here that disability is found more among the rural residents than the people residing in urban settings. Moreover, the report of 2011 Census, indicates that the percentage of disabled in India has increased to 2.21 per cent showing a decadal increase of 0.08 percent. According to the 2011 Census data, out of total population of India, 20.3 per cent were declared disabled in movement. Among whom 22.5 per cent male are having disability in movement, 18 per cent each has disability in seeing, in hearing while 7.8 per cent of them suffered from multiple disability. In the case of the female disabled, 20 per cent each

has disability in seeing, in hearing, 17.5 per cent has disability in movement and 8 per cent of them are having multiple disabilities. Thus, the data clearly reveals that disability in seeing and in hearing was found much among females than in males. Women with disabilities (WDs) ought to get covered under the prohibited ground of sex in Article 15 of the Indian Constitution. This provision covers women and allows the Indian Government to make legal provisions for them. However, the above data shows that the disabled women are left out of the reach of this provision. Among the social groups, SCs were found to have less disability in mental illness (2.4 percent) followed by disability in speech (5.2 per cent). Similarly, STs have less disability in mental illness (2.6 percent) followed by disability in mental retardation. The data further reveals that disability in seeing, hearing and movement and multiple disabilities is more among STs than that of SCs and others. Similarly disability in speech and mental retardation is more among others than that of SCs and STs. Furthermore, going through the data in detail, it becomes evident that disability among males is higher up to the age group of 70-79 while disability among females is higher thereafter. Furthermore, the data shows that disability from the age of 60 onwards is higher in comparison to the lower age groups. The world is home to over 600 million people with disabilities and over two-thirds of them live in developing countries. A disabled person by given proper and equal opportunities is potentially capable of leading a life of honour and dignity on an equal basis with others as a useful, contributive, and productive citizen of society. Therefore, it is the duty of all concerned to ensure to such persons full and effective inclusion and participation in all walks of life.

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