

**FOCUS ON DISABILITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:
ADDRESSING ISSUES ON HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH,
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL
ADVANCEMENTS**

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Abstract

Disability is a universal feature and is found in all societies irrespective of sex, race, religion, colour, creed, region and culture. Currently around 10 per cent of the total world's population, or roughly 650 million people, live with a disability. Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Disability rate worldwide has increased and the main causes of it have been mainly found as armed conflict, violence, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, birth defects, incorrect treatment or non-treatment, accidents due to inadequate protection at the workplace and in traffic situations stress and alcohol and drug abuse, child labour, malnutrition, and Increase in life span. Persons with disabilities suffer from discrimination throughout the world and are frequently excluded from social, economic and political processes in their societies. In both developed and developing countries, evidence suggests that persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the world's poor and tend to be poorer than their counterparts without disabilities. The disabled people face many issues and challenges viz. health, employment, educational, technological, marital, political, psychological and social issues etc. Since disabled people face many types of issues, this study seriously intended to explore the nature, magnitude and implications of disability at the individual, family and societal level.

Keywords: Focus, Disability, Social Development, Disability Issues.

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1. Introduction

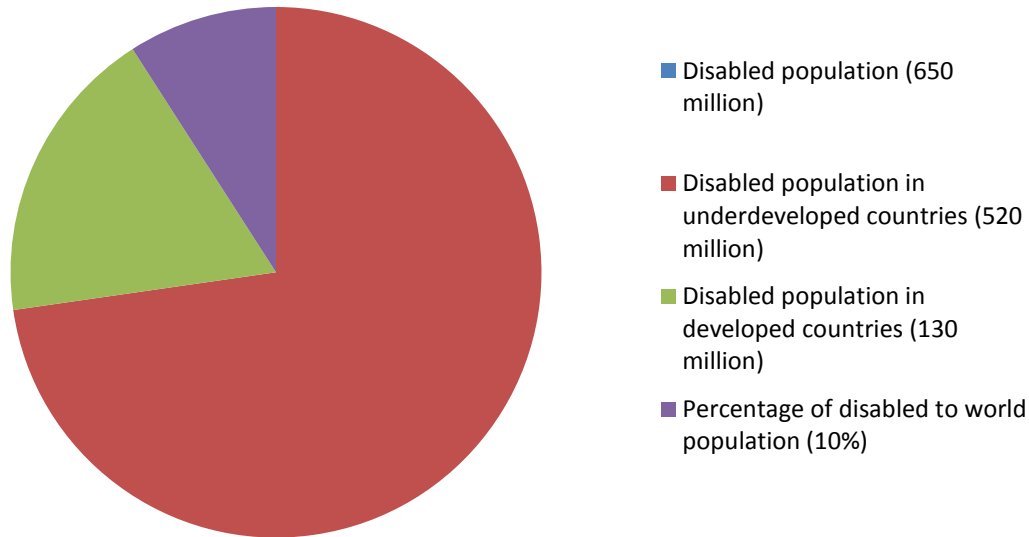
Disability is an umbrella term and it may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, and developmental or some combination of these. Disabled people are large minority groups, starved of services and mostly ignored by society, live in isolation, segregation, poverty, charity and even pity. A disability may be present from birth, or occur during a person's lifetime. Three things are very vital in explaining disability: a) impairments, b) activity limitations, c) and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives (WHO, 2012). Society has certain set standards or norms which qualify a person as disabled and that is why certain conditions (notably deafness and autism) cannot be considered as disability. In this context, it is more appropriate to consider these conditions as developmental differences that have been unfairly stigmatized by society (Solomon, 2011). Here I would like to clarify between Impairment, Disability and Handicap. Impairment is used to define a deviation from normal, such as not being able to make a muscle move or not being able to control an unwanted movement. Disability is defined a restriction in the ability to perform a normal activity of daily living which someone of the same age is able to perform. Handicap is used when a person is unable to achieve the normal role in society commensurate with his age and socio-cultural milieu. The golden rule is that all disabled people are impaired, and all handicapped people are disabled, but a person can be impaired and not necessarily be disabled, and a person can be disabled without being handicapped. Let me quote here Daniel J. Wilson, who argues that "characteristics of masculinity include strength, activeness, speed, endurance, and courage. These characteristics are often challenged when faced with a disability and the boy or man must reshape what it means to be masculine. For example, rather than define "being a man" through what one can physically do, one must re-define it by how one faces the world with a disability and all the obstacles and stereotypes that come with the disability (Smith and Hutchison, 2005). Similarly, women who are disabled face "double disability", meaning they must not only deal with the stereotypes and challenges posed by feminists, but they must also deal with those posed by being disabled. Culture also tends to view women as fragile as and weaker than men,

stereotypes which are only heightened when a woman has a disability (Smith and Hutchison, Ibid.).

Disability is a universal feature and is found in all societies irrespective of sex, race, religion, colour, creed, region and culture. Generally the following types of disability are mostly seen among the disabled person: physical disability, sensory disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, olfactory and gustatory impairment, somatosensory impairment, balance disorder, intellectual disability, mental health and emotional disabilities, developmental disability, nonvisible disabilities. A significant proportion of population is disabled worldwide. The World Health Organization in 2004 estimated a population of 100 million to be moderately or severely disabled out of total world population of 6.5 billion people (WHO, 2004). Disability affects hundreds of millions of families in developing countries. Currently around 10 per cent of the total world's population, or roughly 650 million people, live with a disability. Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the UN Development Program (UNDP). The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged. Below mentioned chart-1 shows the number, percentage of disabled people in developed and developed countries.

Chart-1: Shows the number, percentage of disabled people in developed and developed countries.

Total world population, 2012 (650 billion)



Source: World Facts and Statistics on Disabilities and Disability Issues. Available online at www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/

Disability rate worldwide has increased and the main causes of it have been mainly found as armed conflict, violence, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, birth defects, incorrect treatment or non-treatment, accidents due to inadequate protection at the workplace and in traffic situations stress and alcohol and drug abuse, child labour, malnutrition, and Increase in life span. Persons with disabilities suffer from discrimination throughout the world and are frequently excluded from social, economic and political processes in their societies. In both developed and developing countries, evidence suggests that persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the world's poor and tend to be poorer than their counterparts without disabilities. It is estimated that of the world's poorest people, meaning those who live on less than one dollar a day and who lack access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, clothing and shelter, 1 in 5 is a person with disabilities(UNO, Economic and Social Council, 2008). Given that persons with disabilities represent such a significant portion of the population, and are more likely to live in poverty than their peers without disabilities, ensuring that they are integrated into all development activities is essential in order to achieve international development goals. There is a strong correlation between poverty and disability. Poverty may cause disability through

malnutrition, poor health care and dangerous living conditions. Case studies in developing countries show that higher disability rates are associated with higher rates of illiteracy, poor nutritional status, lower immunization coverage, and lower birth weight, higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, and lower occupational mobility (Ann Elwan, World Bank, 1999). Disability can cause poverty by preventing the full participation of persons with disabilities in the economic and social life of their communities, especially if the appropriate supports and accommodations are not available (World Bank website, Year N.A.). Persons with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence or rape, according to a 2004 British study, and less likely to obtain police intervention, legal protection or preventive care. Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

There are two main elements to disability. One belongs to the individual and is usually unavoidable; it results from impairment, which may be physical, mental or sensory. The other is socially constructed and often avoidable; it results from difficulties presented by the physical and social environment, which prevent the individual playing a full part in the life of the community (Ian Bynoe, Mike Oliver and Colin Barnes, Year N. A). There are three main forms of unfair discrimination. Direct discrimination: treating some individuals less favourably than others, purely because of their disability. Indirect discrimination: making something (such as a job, service or facility) available subject to a condition which makes it harder for disabled people to qualify than for those who are not disabled. Unequal burdens: failure to take reasonable steps to remove a handicap imposed by an individual's social or physical environment. The first two are common to discrimination on grounds of race and sex, and can be dealt with by similar legal means. The third is particular to disability and requires a further dimension to the legislation, to secure the removal of socially constructed handicaps, where it is reasonable and practicable to do so.

2. Theoretical Orientation

Sociological research suggest that societal responses to people with impairments or long term health conditions varies considerably across time, culture and location (Hanks and Hanks, 1948; Lemert, 1951; Whyte, 1995). Across cultures, there is substantial evidence that oppression and prejudice for disability has been widespread (Ryan and Thomas, 1980; Garland, 1995). Research

also suggests that there have been discrimination of disabled people from the mainstream of economic and social life (Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1990). Herbert Spencer concept of evolution is coincidental with survival of fittest and only those will be progress and evolve who are fit in society. Similarly Emile Durkheim's concept of division of labour share core notions of human perfectibility and labour as definitional of humanity which are incompatible with the interests of impaired people. Likewise the limits of enlightenment radicalism, as seen in the work of Marx, are defined by the logic and values of production. The meaning of humanity becomes co-terminus with such values, and the category of 'disabled' is created negatively in relation to them. Social thinking has experienced a break with such models of humanity and the development of philosophies which are not centred on the development of whole society. However, recently, Feminism has pointed out that Marxism is deeply marked by the maleness of its originators-and never more so than in the key role assumed by work in the constitution of human social identity. Similarly, postmodernism has negated the metanarratives and grand theories like functionalism, evolutionism, and Marxism and society is based instead upon the decline of absolute truths. The thinking on disability is being reviewed and the disabled body is seen as a nightmare for the fashionable discourse of theory because that discourse has been limited by the very predilection of the dominant, ablest culture. The nightmare of that body is one that is deformed, maimed, mutilated, broken, and diseased (Davis L, 1995). Disabled people have inhabited a social, cultural, political and intellectual world from whose making they have been excluded and in which they have been looked as relevant, and faced systematic exclusion. New sociology of disablement has seen a challenge to this 'objectivity' and 'truth' and replaces it with knowledge based for the uplift of disabled people. There is a growing consensus that people with disabilities should be included in development programmes, as the exclusion to date of this marginalised group will probably result in the non-achievement of the UN Millennium Commission's broadly inclusive global development agenda. However, if a person with a disability is dehumanised by cultural belief or stigma, as they are in India (Alur, 2002), then they can be 'invisible' and not considered worthy of rights. Disability is clearly a development issue that we ignore at a price, including that of human rights.

3. Disability Issues

One out of every ten people is disabled, but according to the World Bank, one in five of the world's poorest are disabled or live in a family with a disabled member. The disabled people face a number of issues viz., health, employment, educational, social, political, cultural, psychological and technological etc. Living in poverty makes people more vulnerable to preventable disabilities, and scarce resources and negative attitudes then combine to limit education and livelihood opportunities for disabled people, so they stay poor. People with different types of disability experience different challenges, discrimination and degrees of marginalisation. The biggest problems are usually not caused by impairments, but by obstacles in the environment and by society's perception of disability. There are also certain characteristics of disabled people themselves, which will directly link to their outcomes. For example, lack of education, qualifications, or the effects of long term impairments such as mental health or Multiple Sclerosis can have a direct impact on people's ability to work. This in turn can correlate to deprivation and inequality. From this perspective, fairness is determined by the extent to which disabled people and their families are able to achieve outcomes they want to achieve, despite their particular circumstances.

3.1. Health Issues

Disabled people experience much more physical health and mental health problems in comparison to normal people. Health disability includes blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation and mental illness. Higher rates of poverty and unemployed are found amongst disabled people and these are themselves associated with poor mental health; there is also increasing acknowledgement that long-term mental health problems are correlated with conditions such as heart disease and diabetes (Morris, J. , 2004). They face difficulty accessing mental health services because of their physical impairments and inadequate recognition of their mental health needs. Chronic medical conditions and physical and sensory disability can increase vulnerability to poor mental or emotional health. Sensory loss and the greater likelihood of illness and disability make older people especially vulnerable to mental health problems (DHSSPS, 2003). The commonest impairments are the arms or hands, legs or feet, or back or neck; chest or breathing problems, asthma, bronchitis etc.; and heart, blood pressure or blood circulation problems.

Since disabled people have many physical and mental health issues. Studies have shown that individuals with disabilities are more likely than people without disabilities to report: Poorer overall health, less access to adequate health care, smoking and physical inactivity. There are problems (also called secondary conditions) associated with disability which can include pain, depression, and a greater risk for certain illnesses. Many related health conditions and chronic diseases can be prevented. Chronic diseases are among the most common and costly of all health problems, even though many chronic diseases can be prevented. Some chronic diseases can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle, visiting a health care provider for preventive care and routine screenings, and learning how to manage health issues. For more information and tools on other health conditions that are important to living healthy with a disability, click on the links that follow the text in each of the next sections. Similarly, Arthritis—or joint inflammation—is the most common cause of disability among adults residing in the United States. People with disabilities can be at greater risk of having arthritis.

Blindness” refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions, namely: a) Total absence of sight; b) Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 in the better eye even with correction lenses; c) Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse: d) For deciding the blindness, the ‘visual acuity as well as ‘field of vision’ has to be considered. Locomotors Disability means disability of bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of movement or any form of cerebral palsy. Only those having 40 per cent or more disability have been considered as person with locomotors disability. Mental Retardation means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of persons which is specially characterized by sub-normality of intelligence

People with disabilities have health, nutritional, educational and gender needs too, yet the goals related to these issues currently ignore the often unique needs of people with disabilities within these goals (Lindsay, Katharine G., 2007). The WHO estimates that up to 50% of disabilities are preventable, with 70% of blindness and 50% of hearing impairment in children in developing countries being preventable or treatable (DFID, 2000). DFID (2000) highlights how disability can exacerbate poverty because it can lead to isolation and economic strain for the whole family. Disabled children are more likely to die young, or be neglected, malnourished and poor, while

the denial of education can lead to a lack of employment opportunities and so poverty (ibid). Similarly, poverty can lead to malnutrition, dangerous working and living conditions (including road accidents) bad health and maternity care, poor sanitation, and vulnerability to natural disasters – all of which can result in disability.

3.2. Employment Issue

The main employment issues of disabled are: a) difficulties in obtaining start-up capital, due to lack of own financial resources (savings, home ownership); poor credit rating after long-term benefit receipt; disinterest / discrimination on the part of banks; lack of accessible information on sources of grants and loans; fear of losing the security of regular benefit income; entrepreneurs usually did not know about Disabled Persons Tax Credit, Access to Work, or the Permitted Work Rules; b) Lack of access to appropriate training and support. Access problems included: lack of advertising of services available; information not produced in alternative formats (Braille, etc.); lack of transport/funding for transport to and from advice centre; training not tailored to individual needs. Unemployed disabled people generally have a positive outlook on getting work and getting a job is important to them Disabled people in employment mostly work in manual and lower skilled occupations.

Disability affects day-to-day activities, mobility; lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; manual dexterity. All types of effect are more common among the economically inactive and the incidence increases with age. Disability prevents them from doing any paid work. Disabilities most likely to have a work-related impact are mental illness, learning difficulties, mobility disorders and visual impairments (the latter affecting the kind of work that can be done, rather than the amount). Disabled people from ethnic minorities are more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to work in manual and low-skilled occupations, and less likely to work in managerial, professional and high-skilled occupations More severely disabled people* are particularly concentrated in lower level occupations. Fewer people with disabilities participate in the workforce than those without disabilities. More people with disabilities are unemployed than those without disabilities. Women with disabilities are less likely to be in the workforce than men with disabilities. In addition, the

unemployment rate of women with disabilities has increased recently while that for women without disabilities has decreased significantly.

Workers employed abroad often find themselves in a difficult situation associated with a series of handicaps resulting from differences in environment, lack or inadequate knowledge of the language of the country of immigration, prejudice and discrimination, lack or deficiency of vocational training, and inadequate living conditions. The special position of migrant workers in the country of employment exposes them and their families to health hazards and increased risk of occupational accidents which frequently lead to impairment or disability. The situation of disabled migrant workers may be further aggravated by the necessity for them to return to the country of origin, where, in most cases, special services and facilities for the disabled are very limited. Employment statistics for people with disabilities in high income countries are not only unreliable due to bad data, incompatible disability definitions and statistical biases; they are also plagued by huge differences in employment definitions. Employment statistics for people with disabilities are virtually non-existent in developing countries. Nevertheless, the existing evidence suggests that unemployment rates for people with disabilities in high income countries are extremely high, and that unemployment rates for people with disabilities in developing countries are at least as high or higher. In the United States, only 14.3 million of an estimated 48.9 million people with disabilities were reported to be employed in 1991-92 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1990). Due to discrimination they don't go to public places and not free to get those rights which a normal person gets. They are deprived of education and employment.

3.3. Educational issue

There are often barriers to meeting the needs of disabled people who face higher levels of supervision from parents, teachers and carers which can impact on their ability to meet other people, form friendships and gain from positive social interaction. Issues such as special school transport, special schools and regular hospital appointments, often means disabled are defined by their disability rather than seen as individuals. There are as many as 1 in 10 children with special needs in education in the world (DFID, 2001; Watkins, 2000). However, it is worth noting that children with special educational needs (e.g. dyslexia) will outnumber those with visible impairments (Jonsson & Wiman, 2001); estimated enrolment rates of children with disabilities

vary between less than 1% to 3% (Jonsson&Wiman, 2001) is hard to ignore. Not only is lack of access to schooling a violation of Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states the right of all children to free primary education (UNICEF, no date), but this lack also potentially maintains the cycle of poverty, as without education an educationally excluded adult may not be able to work to earn a living, or participate in political processes (Tomasevski, 2003). Women with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than those without, demonstrating how being a woman and disabled can lead to double discrimination (DFID, 2000). In addition, more boys with disabilities go to school than girls with disabilities (Bandhopadhyay, Subrahmanian, 2006; DFID, 2000), and people with disabilities are usually the poorest of the poor (DFID, 2000). There are very less number of disabled educational institutions which could cater to the needs of disabled people.

3.4. Technological Issues

ICTs have become dominant in every aspect of society where technologies of information processing and communication became core of productivity. The storage, retrieval, handling and transmission of information are the key to human progress and development. In the knowledge society, information generation, processing and communication are the basic constituents of human progress. The free flow of information and ideas has sparked an explosive growth of knowledge and its myriad new applications in the information age. The vast minority of disabled people in the world remain untouched by the revolutionary developments in information and communication technologies and explosive growth of knowledge.

Disabled face a number of technological issues. First, the major technologies produced require able bodied persons to operate and disabled bodies are at a disadvantage. Many disabled persons require technical aids. People with vision disabilities still do not have access to all emergency information on video programming or audio access to text messages on the vast majority of cell phones. In some countries the technology needed to produce such items is well developed, and highly sophisticated devices are manufactured to assist the mobility, communication and daily living of disabled individuals. The costs of such items are high, however, and only a few countries are able to provide such equipment. Many persons with disabilities are denied employment or given only menial poorly remunerated jobs. This is true even though it can be demonstrated

that with proper assessment, training and placement, the great majority of disabled persons can perform a large range of tasks in accordance with prevailing work norms. In times of unemployment and economic distress, disabled persons are usually the first to be discharged and the last to be hired. What is needed is the development of technologies which will favour the disabled people.

4. Conclusion

Disability is an umbrella term and it may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, and developmental or some combination of these. Disability is a universal feature and is found in all societies irrespective of sex, race, religion, colour, creed, region and culture. A significant proportion of population is disabled worldwide. The World Health Organization in 2004 estimated a population of 100 million to be moderately or severely disabled out of total world population of 6.5 billion people (WHO, 2004). Disability affects hundreds of millions of families in developing countries. Currently around 10 per cent of the total world's population, or roughly 650 million people, live with a disability. Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the UN Development Program (UNDP). The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged. Disability rate worldwide has increased and the main causes of it have been mainly found as armed conflict, violence, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, birth defects, incorrect treatment or non-treatment, accidents due to inadequate protection at the workplace and in traffic situations stress and alcohol and drug abuse, child labour, malnutrition, and Increase in life span. Persons with disabilities suffer from discrimination throughout the world and are frequently excluded from social, economic and political processes in their societies. In both developed and developing countries, evidence suggests that persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the world's poor and tend to be poorer than their counterparts without disabilities. There is a strong correlation between poverty and disability. Poverty may cause disability through malnutrition, poor health care and dangerous living conditions. Persons with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence or rape, according to a 2004 British study, and less likely to obtain police intervention, legal protection or preventive care. Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. The disabled people face a number of issues viz., health, employment, educational,

social, political, cultural, psychological and technological etc. People with different types of disability experience different challenges, discrimination and degrees of marginalisation. The biggest problems are usually not caused by impairments, but by obstacles in the environment and by society's perception of disability. In terms of size, the disabled world constitutes a significant part of humanity and therefore warrants a sociologically informed understanding and analysis of its nature, magnitude, implications, issues and concerns.

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