

Livelihood and Socio-economic Condition of Women with Disability

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ABSTRACT

The social and economical status of disabled women varies according to individual circumstances and to the country in which they live. Disabled women in poor countries usually experience a particular disadvantage. Here, it is not just difficult but often impossible for a disabled woman to get an education or find a job. Livelihood and self reliance are the biggest problem of disabled women. She easily becomes marginalized and has no place in the society. The objective of the present study is to identify the livelihood and socio-economic condition of women with disabilities. The study was conducted in three districts of Uttar Pradesh. The sample consisted of 300 disabled women. Personal interview technique was used for data collection

Key Words : Livelihood, Disability, Women

INTRODUCTION

India is a vast country with a population of more than one billion, and nearly 70 million persons (based on the projections made by various international agencies such as the United Nations, WHO and World Bank) with disabilities. About 48 per cent of them are women. Women in India have been struggling to get their rights. The women's rights movement itself is in its initial stages. They are fighting all the stereotypes that have been ingrained in the national psyche. To be a disabled woman is to be considered unable to fulfill the role of home maker, wife and mother, and unable to conform the stereotype of beauty and femininity in terms of physical appearance. They are the most marginalized and the most abused physically, mentally, and socially and for centuries, have been subjected to deliberate neglect, and verbal abuse, physical assault and sexual harassment.

Many women with disabilities are unable to make an effective contribution to their local community and economy yet with the right support; Women with disabilities are disadvantaged because women's work is seen as secondary to that of men's. A woman's main role, in most communities, is still to be a wife, mother,

and homemaker; while the man is the main decision-maker and bread-earner. Since education and vocational training are seen as investments for higher-value employment, a woman is less likely to have the opportunity to receive them. While public attitudes are changing, illiteracy rates among women worldwide are falling, and more and more women are entering the labour market, the situation, however, has changed little for women with disabilities. The general attitude is still that a disabled woman has little hope of becoming a wife or a mother, or of getting a productive and rewarding job.

Objective of the study:

The main objective of the study is to identify the livelihood and socio-economic condition of women with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in purposively selected districts of Uttar Pradesh which are Bahraich, Lucknow and Kanpur. The demographic profiles of these districts are same. From each district 100 samples of working disabled women were taken. A total of 300 working

disabled women were used for study who were engaged in income generating activities. Personal interview technique and observation methods were used to collect data from the respondent. Frequency and percentage mean per cent scores and chi square test for statistical analysis were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assessment of various variables of socio economic status indicates that more than fifty per cent of working disabled women belong to the middle age group (31-45 years), followed by young (18-30 years) and few of them in the category of 46-60 years also. Fifty per cent of the working disabled women are married, most of them entering into marital life as a second wife at a later age and some are married with disabled men. Disabled girls are usually married to older men or unemployed persons, and become a source of income for them. One third of working disabled women remain unmarried because they are owed by the negative attitude of the society, regarding the marriage of people with disabilities. People think that they are asexual and ineligible to marry. So, they do not plan about their marriage. Majority of the working disabled women belong to other backward caste (OBC), as the percentage of incidence of disability is significantly higher in them as compared to the other social groups. Majority of the people in India belong to the OBC who live in joint family having comparatively large family members.

Regarding the educational status of disabled women, more than one third of working disabled women are illiterate and major reason behind it is mobility and not easy access of schools and colleges, and negative attitude towards their families and society. Only 24.3 per cent disabled women can read and write and often return as dropouts before the primary level because schools are beyond their reach. Only 3.3 per cent of working disabled women are able to get higher education due to their supportive parents and family. This kind of encouragement and support is necessary only then the disabled women can contribute substantially to the well being of their family. Most of them can just read and write, and only 14 per cent working disabled women have vocational qualification like ITI, polytechnic, diploma courses in computer, bakery, stitching, embroidery etc.

The occupational status of disabled women clearly indicates that only 18 per cent disabled women are engaged in government jobs. It is a hard reality that

government jobs are limited and only very few may hope to get this. Government provides 3 % reservation for the disabled people but there is no reservation exclusively for the disabled women. It reduces their opportunity to get government jobs. In addition to this 21 per cent disabled women work in private sector such as Private schools, colleges, offices, hospitals, multiplex, showrooms, private factories etc. whereas 33.3 per cent disabled women have their own small business like, groceries shops, tea stall, vegan shop, small food restaurant, beauty parlors, tailoring shops, etc. Remaining 27.7 per cent disabled women do not belong to any type of job category as may be found vegan selling, pan masala and gutkha selling on foot paths, railway station, local trains, bus stop etc. Thus disabled women find very difficult to find a job because their disability comes in the way of their normal functioning. Social and practical barriers also prevent them to join a work force.

Ownership of house is another significant factor which gives a clear picture of the economic status of the women, as owning a house reduces the financial burden of the woman. Ownership of the house also makes the woman feel safe and secure, and provides a psychological stability to move on with the rest of the life. More than 60 per cent disabled women live in rented house and so feels themselves insecure and much more dependent on others, and are unable to add any amenity in their rented homes. No one agrees to give a disabled woman even minimum of basic facility for their comfortable and healthy living. Majority of working disabled women have electricity facilities, access of print /electronic media and maximum utility appliances available in their home because study is conducted in urban scenario. But more than 50 per cent women have no transport facility at all which is the biggest hurdle in their mobility. On the basis of such independent variables, it is clear that maximum working disabled women suffer from locomotors disability and belong to low socio economic status followed by medium and high status, respectively. Thus, Majority of working disabled women accepted these hard truths of life that lack of awareness and knowledge is the biggest hurdles in their empowerment and few opined that male domination in the family and society, physical barrier, are also big hurdles in their development.

Livelihood and self reliance are the biggest problem of disabled women. Those disabled women who are totally dependent on their families lead a very miserable life but those who were working for their survival also do not

lead a wholesome life as they have to struggle on every step. It is closely associated with their low income, savings and decision making power of spending money. Regarding monthly income of working disabled women merely 41 per cent working disabled women earned less than 5 thousand rupees per month, which is insufficient for their livelihood. One third of the disabled women earned between 5 thousand to 10 thousands Rupees. Whereas Only 28 per cent disabled women earned more than 10 thousand Rupees per month. They live a normal life and their economic condition was somewhat better than other

working disabled women. The study clearly indicates that more than 50 per cent disabled women have no saving for their future. Their earning is insufficient to fulfill their daily needs, and they are depends on family members, relatives and others. One fourth of the working disabled women are able to save approximately one thousand per month and they belong to middle income group. Only 3 per cent working disabled women could save more than 5 thousand per month and belong to a higher socio-economic status.

Regarding decision making power of spending money clearly indicates that only 18 per cent working disabled women have right to spend their money in their own ways, whereas Majority of 80 per cent working disabled women had their income spent by their parents, husbands, and other member of the family It shows their poor decision making capacity in the family.

Conclusion:

The study gives a clear picture of livelihood condition of working disabled women. It is completely related to their education, employment, and decision making

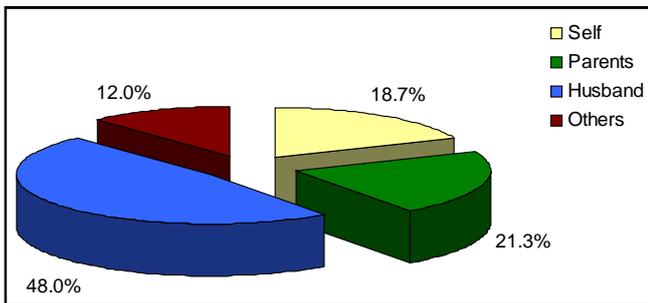


Fig. 1 : Distribution of spend of money of disabled women

Family monthly income (Rs)	Visual		hearing		locomotor		Total		² value	p value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%		
Livelihood condition of disabled women (Monthly income)										
<5000	14	11.4	14	11.4	95	77.2	123	41.0	1.41	0.842
5000-10000	11	13.1	10	11.9	63	75.0	84	28.0		
>10000	13	14.0	7	7.5	73	78.5	93	31.0		

Spend of money	Visual		Hearing		Locomotor		Total		² value	p value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%		
Decision of Spending money in the house										
Self	6	10.7	5	8.9	45	80.4	56	18.7	9.80	0.133
Parents	10	15.6	9	14.1	45	70.3	64	21.3		
Husband	14	9.7	11	7.6	119	82.6	144	48.0		
Others	8	22.2	6	16.7	22	61.1	36	12.0		

Saving/month (Rs.)	Visual		Hearing		Locomotor		Total		² value	p value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%		
Saving per month										
None	17	9.8	21	12.1	135	78.0	173	57.7	5.09	0.532
<1000	13	17.3	6	8.0	56	74.7	75	25.0		
1000-5000	6	14.0	4	9.3	33	76.7	43	14.3		
>5000	2	22.2	0	0.0	7	77.8	9	3.0		

capacity. Low level of education and skill significantly restricts livelihood option for them. Well educated, skilled and well employed disabled women are better than unemployed and less earning employed disabled women. When we compare their livelihood having various types of disability, it is clear that locomotor working disabled women are far better than other types of disabled women. In matters of employment spheres, visual, hearing, and locomotor disabled women engaged in income generating activities have to struggle a lot for their livelihood. Mentally retarded, speech, and multiple disabled women are in very pathetic condition and are unable to meet both ends. They are totally dependent on family and others for their survival. In absence of any support, they can be seen begging on streets, roads, platforms, local trains and continuously abused and exploited. Mentally retarded

women are found roaming here and there in an indecent condition. They are unable to lead an honorable life as they feel neglected and humiliated. Society and family think that they are burden on earth.

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