

Perceived Discriminating Behaviour among Persons with Disability (Divyangjan) Towards Community

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Millions of people across the world suffer from some type of disability. Disabled individuals face a wide range of psychological, social, cultural, physical, economic, vocational, and other problems, as well as discrimination and mistreatment.

Objective: The aim of the study was to explore how persons with disability (PwD) perceive the community's discriminating behavior towards them.

Method: A purposive sampling approach was used, and the heads of various institutions were contacted for selecting the participants, mainly Physically Handicapped, Hearing Impaired, and Visually Impaired were included. A semi-structured personal information sheet and Perceived Discrimination Scale were administered.

Data analysis: The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis to determine the frequency of perceived discrimination with different types of disability, and One-way ANOVA was used to quantify the differences between types of different disabilities.

Results: A total 670 disabled people (male = 450; female = 220) from Bhiwani district of Haryana were enrolled in the present study. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 55 years (mean \pm SD; 36.23 \pm 6.41). The analysis of variance revealed a significant main effect of Type of Disability ($F_{2,667} = 10.32$, $p < .01$), indicating that visually impaired respondents had higher Perceived Discrimination scores ($M = 81.04$), followed by hearing impaired ($M = 80.48$), and physically handicapped ($M = 73.32$).

Conclusion: The present study indicates that respondents encounter discrimination on an individual and group level in their daily lives. The present findings point to the need for additional action research targeted at changing negative public attitudes and disabled people's self-perception.

Keywords: Disability, perceived discrimination, psychological impact, individual differences

INTRODUCTION

Disability is a broad term that encompasses impairments, activity limits, and daily life participation constraints.^[1] The Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities."^[2] According to the Dictionary of Developmental Disabilities Terminology, "Disability is any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered

normal for a human being".^[3] Disability can be temporary or permanent, reversible or irreversible, progressive or regressive. Disability occurs as a result of impairment or as a result of an individual's response to a physical, sensory, or other impairment." Disability, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is "the second level of a continuum that includes impairment (Physical), disability (Psychological), and handicap (Social)".^[4]

Disabled people are defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.^[5] The Persons with Disabilities Act (PwD Act) was implemented in India in 1995 to ensure that persons with disabilities have full participation and equality. Blindness, low vision, leprosy cure, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, and mental illness were all classified as impairments under this legislation. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016 (RPwD Act) increased the number of disability categories from seven to twenty-one, i.e., Cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders like multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders like hemophilia, thalassemia, and sickle cell anemia, and multiple disabilities were among the conditions.^[6]

According to Census 2011, there are about 26.8 million people with disabilities in India which comprises 2.21% of the population, and 56% of men and 44% of women (internet accessed). And according to WHO, over 1 billion people, or 15% of the global population, are disabled, with approximately 80% of them living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) including India.^[7]

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006, acknowledges that people with disabilities are a significant human resource for the country and aims to establish an environment that gives them equal opportunity, protects their rights, and allows them to fully participate in society.^[8] Physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairment, olfactory and gustatory impairment, somatosensory impairment, balance disorder, intellectual disability, emotional

disability, developmental disability, and non-visible disability are some of the categories of disability.^[1,9]

Hundreds of millions of people throughout the world are affected by disability. Disabled people are frequently subjected to discrimination and iniquitous treatment. Discriminatory behavior against persons with impairments can often be triggered simply by categorizing people into groups, such as "healthy" vs. "disabled."^[10] Disabled people confront a variety of psychological, social, cultural, health, economic, occupational, and other challenges. These prejudices and inequities may be seen in almost any culture or society. However, the impact of alleged discrimination based on disability in 'Divyangjan' has received little scholarly study. As a result, the objective of the study was to study and illustrate the rate of perceived discrimination and different types of disabilities in 'Divyangjan.'

Objective: The aim of the study is to explore how persons with disability (PwD) perceive the community's discriminating behavior towards them.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Sampling and participants: The study's overall sample included 670 handicapped people from Haryana's Bhiwani district. The heads of various institutions and organizations were contacted for the purpose of selecting the participants in this study, and a purposive sampling approach was used to choose the sample. The inclusion of Physically Handicapped (PH), Hearing Impaired (HI), and Visually Impaired (VI) individuals was based on additional criteria. The participants were categorized into two groups: 450 male participants and 220 female participants. The samples included physically handicapped (n=220), hearing impaired (n=250), and visually impaired (n=200).

Questionnaire and measurements: Initially, the subjects and their guardians were approached in person, and their written consents to participate in the study were

obtained. In addition, subjects/guardians were given a semi-structured personal information format with a checklist to gather data on demographic factors such as age, gender, education, occupation, residential background, socio-economic position, and marital status. The respondents were then given perceived discrimination scale to determine the degrees of discrimination they had experienced throughout their lives.

Perceived Discrimination Scale (Yadav et al., 2018)^[11]: This scale consists of 30 items and four subscales. First subscale i.e., Exclusion/Rejection has 9 items, second subscale i.e., Risk/Aggression has 6 items, third subscale i.e., Stigma/Wrong assessment has 7 items and in the fourth subscale i.e., Discrimination at work place has 8 items. The test-retest method of reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the measure which was .73. According to the median criteria (84 median), individuals with scores below the median were classified as having little perceived discrimination against them (scores ranging from 30-84), while those with scores above the median were classified as having severe discrimination (scores ranging from 85-145).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The questionnaires were manually scored in accordance with the standard procedure. The collected data on all metrics was input into an Excel spreadsheet on a computer.

The data was examined using descriptive statistics to determine the frequency of perceived discrimination according on disability type. The data were analysed by using one way ANOVA by SPSS Version 20.0 to quantify the differences between types of disabilities.

RESULT

The total sample of the study consisted of 670 disabled individuals, and further categorized into two groups i.e., 450 male and 220 female participants. The samples included 220 physically disabled, 250 hearing impaired and 200 visually impaired people. The age range of the sample was 18-55 years with a mean of 36.23 years with SD 6.41, majority of the respondents were from middle aged group. They ranged in education from illiterate to highly educated (Graduation and Post-Graduation). Most of them were from senior secondary and higher secondary schools. They belong to lower, lower middle and middle class backgrounds. The participants come from a variety of backgrounds, including labourers, farmers, students, teachers, shopkeepers, retired defense personnel, housewives, and clerks, among others. The participants in the three disability groups resided in rural areas (PH=66%, HI=59%, VI=47%). The majority was married, regardless of disability, with the exception of VI, where 98% were unmarried, and the majority (99%) was Hindus, while 1% was Muslim (Table 1).

Table -1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Variables	Characteristics	Types of disability		
		Physical handicapped (%)	Hearing impaired (%)	Visually impaired (%)
Gender	Male	68.18	66.00	67.50
	Female	31.82	34.00	32.50
Age (in years)	18 – 30	40.00	49.60	22.50
	31 – 40	29.55	19.20	25.50
	41 – 55	30.45	31.20	52.00
Education	0 – 8 th	54.54	66.66	82.84
	10 – 12 th	37.28	30.32	16.06
	UG/PG	08.18	03.02	00.09
Marital status	Single	38.50	11.00	98.02
	Married	52.20	88.00	01.00
	Widow/Widower	08.30	01.00	00.98
Locality	Rural	66.36	59.20	47.00
	Urban	33.64	40.80	53.00
Socio-economic status	Lower	21.82	24.40	26.00

	Lower middle	26.82	30.00	38.00
	Middle/Upper	51.36	45.60	36.00
Occupation	Service	06.42	02.00	10.08
	Business	16.42	00.00	00.00
	Farmer/Labour	35.68	28.28	34.04
	Student	07.80	20.72	16.08
	Unemployed	1.88	15.00	07.30
	Housewife	31.80	34.00	32.50
Religion	Hindu	99.20	99.10	99.40
	Muslim	00.80	00.90	00.60
Duration of disability (in years)	0 – 5	45.45	47.20	17.50
	6 – 10	26.82	22.00	15.00
	11 and above	27.73	30.80	67.50

Furthermore, perceived discrimination is viewed differently depending on social, cultural, psychological and biological factors. The analysis of variance was also shown to have a significant main effect of

Type of Disability ($F_{2,667} = 10.32, p < .01$) (Table 2). Nearly half of the participants with their duration of disability were seen below the 5 years in PH (45%), HI (47%), however VI had more disabled years (67%).

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA for Perceived Discrimination and Type of Disability

SOURCES OF VARIANCE	SUM OF SQUARES	df	Mean square variance	F-Ratio
Types of disability	8139.73	2	4069.86	10.32**
Within error	262398.17	667	394.30	
Total	271137.89	669		

**p<.01

Table 3 also shows that visually impaired respondents had higher Perceived Discrimination scores (M=81.04), followed by hearing impaired (M=80.48), and physically handicapped (M=73.32),

implying that people with visual impairment perceive themselves to be discriminated against more than physically handicapped and hearing-impaired people.

Table 3: Perceived Discrimination and Types of Disability (Mean and Standard Deviation).

Variable	Types of disability					
	Physical Handicapped		Hearing Impairment		Visual Impairment	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perceived Discrimination	73.3	21.5	80.5	19.5	81.0	18.4

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to look at how differently abled people perceive the community's discrimination against them, and it was the demand of the hour to be explored in relation to the current research. The existence of discrimination against disabled people in the public or the sample was an essential topic to be explored in relation to the current research. The findings of this study show that respondents face discrimination in their daily lives, both individually and as a group. Visually impaired individuals reported the highest amount of perceived discrimination, followed by hearing impaired and physically disabled participants, according to the current findings. The prevalent

discriminating occurrences against individuals with disabilities in the society were recorded in both Western and Indian narrative, anecdotal, and experimental study literature. Discriminatory behavior appears to be culturally laden.^[12] As a result, a skeptic's explanation may be offered in light of current cultural attitudes, preconceptions, and prejudices. A person with a disability is perceived by society as having extra attributes and has a poor image of them, and if the disabled person is a woman, she is subjected to double discrimination as well as a more unfavorable perception. The current findings in this aspect back with previous findings found in the literature.^[13] It is critical for disabled people to be seen positively by society and to have a positive

self-perception. They are often seen unfavorably by society. A person with a disability is so preoccupied with his or her impairment that building a positive picture of him or her is arduous.^[14] The disabled person who has a negative view of himself or herself acts as though he or she does not belong to any place. In a similar vein, society views disabled people as unsuitable for any task. This kind of social view breeds negative preconceptions about disabled people and discrimination towards disabled people. As a result, discriminating behavior has harmful consequences for the disabled.^[15]

More action research aimed at the upliftment, betterment, and self-perception of disabled people, as well as the change of unfavorable public perceptions of disabled people, is needed based on the current findings. The findings also definitely indicate the necessity to launch a social movement/program aimed at eradicating stereotypical unfavorable perceptions of the disabled and discriminatory attitudes to them. The disabled can be nurtured to be self-actualized in areas relevant to their skills and capacities on an individual level, based on psychometric assessments of strengths and aptitudes, because deficient people prefer to compensate for their impairments by improving in other areas of life.

The findings of present study also point to the need for government/social agencies to establish well-structured policies aimed at rehabilitating and realizing the potentials of disabled people, as well as instilling awareness and developing a favourable attitude toward these people in society.

CONCLUSION

Disability is a rising public health issue, and people who have functional limits or bodily disabilities have fewer possibilities to participate in social activities. These limitations are not only in violation of basic human rights, but they also have the potential to harm people's health and well-being. People with disabilities are more

vulnerable and pitiful as a result of social discrimination, marginalization, and economic reliance. The purpose of the present study was to assess how differently abled people perceived the community's discriminating behaviour towards them. It is clear from the results of the present investigation that respondents meet with discrimination in their day-to-day life course at individual level as well as group entity as present findings indicate that visually impaired participants reported higher level of perceived discrimination followed by hearing impaired and physically handicapped. These findings point the way for additional disability study and for the benefit of disabled people based on their social perception, interaction, and growth, so that unfavourable public stereotypes may be avoided. In these conditions, we must take decisive action to create societal change and empower handicapped people.

Declaration by Authors

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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