

The Challenges faced by Women with Disabilities in Education

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Abstract

The concept of the challenges of providing education to women with disabilities is very suitable theme and need of the hour in today's context. About 650 million people in the world—or 10 per cent of the world's population— live with disabilities {Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter IV, Strategic objectives and actions}. Women and girls with disabilities are amongst the most downgraded and underprivileged people in the world. The women and girls with disabilities are the victims of two-fold discrimination as a result of being disabled and female. Disabled girls often experience a kind of separation and misery when they are exposed to the field of education systems. It is noted that there are many opportunities are given to the disabled girl children into the “Mainstream” of the public education system, there is also certain drawbacks have been stated. Women face often challenges to equality and progress due to the race, age, language, society, culture, religion and disability. Person with disabilities are commonly underestimated simply because they have a challenge to overcome. It has been proved that the person with disabilities can achieve the same triumph as those who are normal. It is noticed that the women with disabilities are three times more likely to be victims of sexual, emotional and physical abuse. The rights of persons with disabilities Act, 2016, states that, “The appropriate Government and the local authorities shall take measures to ensure that the women and children with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others”. In conclusion, the challenges can be overcome through barrier free and accessibility to education without any discrimination on the basis of gender and disability issues. In this view, this study will convey the right information, importance and relevance and need of education for disable women and girls in the society.

Key words: Challenges, Barrier-free, Empowerment of women, Importance of education.

Introduction

According to the World Report on Disability approximately one billion people in the world are living with a disability, with at least 1 in 10 being children and 80% living in developing countries. Disability may be defined as the result of an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, loco motor, or some combination of these that result in borders on an individual's capability to partake in what is reflected "normal" in their everyday society. Women share almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown irregular sex ratio whereby females' population has been reasonably lower than males. Generally women are exposed to public, cultural and economic environments, making it harder for them to take part in social life. Women of all ages with any form of disability are measured to be most helpless and oppressed of society. In fact, women with disabilities are invisible both among those supporting the rights of persons with disabilities, and those helping gender equality and the development of women. In the disability field, however, there are also many clear situations that have one-sided the living conditions of persons with disabilities. Illiteracy, negligence, misconception and distress are social factors that throughout the history of disability have ignored persons with disabilities and delayed their development. They are in critical risk of imposed to marriage, enforced to sterilizations and forced abortions and are more likely to victim of emotional, physical and sexual violence with increased risk to HIV both indoor and outdoor of the family. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, recall the Provisions in the Convention on the Eradication of all Forms of Discrimination against Women to safeguard the rights of women with disabilities, and includes provision to women with disabilities.

1. Challenges of providing education to women with disabilities

In spite of all the hard work taken at numerous ways to include women with disabilities in the education process, there are several factors that still obstacle their perfection and leave them to secure for themselves. Many times women with disabilities are not very easily recognized by society as equal and have to make great struggle to realize even their most basic rights in life too.

“Less than 5 percent of children and young persons with disabilities have access to education and training; and girls and young women face significant barriers to participating in social life and development” {secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled, A\56\169, Paragraph 79}. “The global literacy rate for adults with disabilities is as low as 3 percent and 1 percent for women with disability, according to a 1998 UNDP study” {UNDPI Fact sheet}

1.1. Poverty associated with disability

India is the world's second highest populated country. It is estimated that India have more 260 million people are living in below poverty level. A number of studies have been brought out that there is a substantial rate of disability among individuals living in poverty. According to Mondal & Mete {2012}, while disability causes poverty, it is also possible that in a country like India, poverty causes disability. The balance between poverty and disability results in a condition of "Sudden deprivation". Poverty and disability are inseparably linked. Poverty is a key dominant factor leading to disability while disability heralds people into poverty. Women who are born in below poverty level are more likely to become disabled through lack good healthcare, malnutrition, lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation, risky living and poor working circumstances. Women with disabilities are considered to be poorer all through their life time, due to lack of education, separation from trainings or job training programmes, and rejection from employment and independent lifestyle.

Former World Bank President James Wolfensohn has stated that this connection reveals a link that should be broken. He stated, "People with disabilities in developing countries are over-represented among the poorest people. They have been largely overlooked in the development agenda so far, but the recent focus on poverty reduction strategies is a unique change to rethink and rewrite that agenda." So, encouraging poor families, with all the associated difficulties to send the girl child to school, is causing to be a big challenge.

Women with disabilities are not always look upon as right to fill the traditional responsibilities of sister, mother, wife, homemaker, and nurturer and to be economically fruitful members of society. The social role is fit to define through motherhood and homemaking. But certain occasions these roles are not seen as applicable for women with disabilities. Initially disabled women and girls are considered as sick, helpless, childlike, dependent, in need of care, hopeless, 'asexual' and 'genderless' and their decisions and opportunities are therefore prominently restricted because they are seen as 'role less'.

1.2 The Attitudinal barriers

Women with disabilities in the globe level come across several attitudinal and environmental barriers in their daily lives. Attitudinal barriers are behaviors, statement, negative socio-cultural customs and practices that upset them, negative prejudices that discriminate against person with disabilities. The women with disabilities frequently become the victim of attitudinal barriers in their day today life situation. These barriers often occur from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, to judge, or have misunderstanding about a person with a disability.

1.3 Religion, culture and Superstitions

Women with disabilities face many problems in their battle for equality. Both men and women who are physically or mentally challenged are subject to discrimination, but women with disabilities are further deprived, not only because they are disabled, but because they are 'disabled women'. The existing study of these practices in the framework of religion and culture is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it encourages for the activity of some original experimental research on the correlations between religion and culture and its practices. Secondly, it helps to pinpoint the beliefs and attitudes that people in India, about disability in the broader environment of religion and culture and calls attention not only to the certain beliefs and attitudes but also to the people in it. A number of religions seem to have a negative attitude towards disability. Disability is sometimes seen as something, which could be 'cured' by believing in God.

1.4 Lack of Trained Educators

Education is one of the most appropriate ways to break the series of discrimination and poverty that women with disabilities often face in day today lives. Accessibility to school for women with disabilities often restricted by a lack of understanding about their needs, and a lack of trained educators, classroom support learning resources and physical infrastructural facilities. The education should ensure teachers who impart knowledge to person with special needs and also create awareness in the society to accept with their special educational needs. On other hand, women with disabilities need further attention in related to curriculum adaptation teaching methods, and need of teaching and learning materials, assistive technology, assessment systems, as well as resources and funds for further equipment in adapting the school environment. Denying women with disabilities their right to education has a perpetual influence on learning, success and employment possibilities always delaying their potential economic, social and human growth.

The most of educators in India are not trained to present policy of educational programs for students with disabilities in regular schools. Many of the teacher training programs in India do not have a unit on disability studies. The majority of schools in India are having poor infrastructure designed and few are well equipped to meet the special needs of students with disabilities. The lack of disability friendly transference services and accessible infrastructural are dignified by some to be far greater problems than social presumption and negative attitudes.

1.5 Rejection from Family and Society

The family plays a vital role in the life of a disabled person. Apart from living with a disabled person can have direct effects on the whole family parents, sibling and extensive family members. It will give a unique experience for families and may upset all stages of family undertakings. Disabled women rejected openly or covertly by the family, most likely to grow up into an adult with strange attitudes towards herself and towards society. On the other hand, the time and financial costs, physical, emotional demands, logistical problems associated with raising a disabled person can have influential effects as we describe below. The effects will projected on the type of status and severity, as well as the physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing of the family and the assets that are accessible.

1.6 Lack of awareness about provisions of rights

People, including parents, educators, are mostly ignorant of the full set of the recent law passed by Indian parliament. To make sure that all women should know their basic human rights without discrimination, disability inclusion should be mainstreamed in all policies and plans. This relates to education systems which need to encourage inclusion by make sure the presence, involvement and awareness of all people, including person with disabilities. A large number of school administrators are also not aware of funding available to include person with disabilities in regular schools.

1.7 Lack of Infrastructural facilities in the schools

The infrastructural facilities in the schools may be insufficient in numerous ways, including being over – crowded or dangerous, missing in adequate sanitary facilities and shortage of water supply for hygiene. The health implications of insufficient toilets and sanitation are very serious. It also includes the absence of accessibilities to school premise, classrooms, library, labs, playground, and toilets in the school. Women with disabilities in particular are pushed out of school if facilities are inadequate. Appropriate space per child, generally guided by criteria set by a country's Ministry of Education. Construction procedures should make sure the safety of children in school, apposite to natural threats of the region. Suitable separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls and for staff progressively.

Conclusion

Women with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable and victimized groups in today's society. The education should improve teachers who teach person with disabilities and created awareness in the society to accept with special educational needs. Disabled people themselves and their families cannot and should not wait for Governments and agencies| institutions to take action to improve the situation. They must take steps themselves to initiate change. The family should provide equal opportunities of education, work, and socialization to person with disabilities. We should take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, progress and empowerment of women with disabilities, for the purpose of assuring theme the exercise and satisfaction of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present situation. Women have also presented a series of portrayals of overpowering barriers and conquering the odds to reach their goals. These include **Florence Ndagire** the first visually impaired lawyer in Uganda; **Safak Pavey**, the first Turkish woman Parliamentarian with disabilities, and **Abia Akram** who founded Pakistan's National Fourum of Women with Disabilities and chairs UNICEF's Youth Council. We need to develop a better understanding of their lives in order to eradicate the obstacles that still stop them in their way to better education and equality in the society.

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