

The Physically Handicapped - A Sociological Study

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Abstract:

Physically handicapped are those things that prevent people with impairment from functioning properly in the society. Many studies argue that disabilities can occur at birth but in some cases, disability is acquired later in life. Common disabilities include physical deformities that affect the upper and lower limbs, manual dexterity problems, inability to coordinate body organs and others.

Introduction:

India is the largest democratic country in the world and is on its way to become a key player in the global scenario. It is our responsibility to ensure that this developmental cycle touches all the citizens of this country that is able and, especially, the physically handicapped, who are often referred to as the invisible minority. But before we stamp them as minority, let us consider the recent census reports. According to the 2011 census the government figure for the physically handicapped was 2.7% of the entire population. A reserved guess would place that figure between seven to ten crores. The National Policy identifies the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) as necessary and valuable assets of this country and the basic goal is to create an atmosphere for them in conjunction with the basic constitutional rights i.e. equality, freedom, justice and dignity. This will also guarantee equal opportunities for the PWD thereby ensuring the protection of their rights and enabling their full participation in the society. However, disability is believed to be the consequence of an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these. Disabilities are an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An individual may also qualify as disabled if he/she has had impairment in the past or is seen as disabled based on a personal or group standard or norm. Such impairments may include physical, sensory, and cognitive or developmental disabilities. Mental disorders (also known as psychiatric or psychosocial disability) and various types of chronic disease may also qualify as

disabilities. Ekaete Judith Umoh argue that the cause of disability is as a result of the negative interaction with the people with physical impairment. Physically handicapped are those things that prevent people with impairment from functioning properly in the society. Many studies argue that disabilities can occur at birth but in some cases, disability is acquired later in life. Common disabilities include physical deformities that affect the upper and lower limbs, manual dexterity problems, inability to coordinate body organs and others. The cause of the disability may be due to old age, a viral infection such as polio, a hereditary condition and paralysis or amputation. Other disabilities include speech and hearing impairment. This category includes individuals suffering hearing impairment; some partially while others totally, a condition also known as deafness. There are a number of individuals who have problems with speech, where others cannot speak and are said to be mute. Sufferers of speech impairment may stutter and stammer while speaking while others may have voice disorders. However, People suffering from disabilities face a lot of challenges every day. Simple tasks that ordinary people perform on a daily basis as routine are extremely delicate and difficult to those suffering from disabilities. Thus, accomplishing simple tasks such as taking a shower, dressing up, brushing teeth or even having a meal are tasks that may take much longer than normal and, in many cases, may require the assistance of others. Individuals with disabilities are faced with stigma and discrimination from the society where they live. Most people look down on them and treat them as special. Disabled people may find it hard to socialize with members of the society. With above back drop the study assumed

great significance to study of physically handicapped.

1.2 Definitions of Physically Handicapped

A physical disability is a limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina. Other physical disabilities include impairments which limit other facets of daily living, such as respiratory disorders, blindness, epilepsy and sleep disorder. According to the medical model, disability lies in the individuals, as it is equated with those restrictions of activity. Faced with the line of thinking, individuals would feel pressured to work on 'their' restrictions, bearing the burden of adjusting to their environment through cures, treatment or rehabilitation.

According to World trade organization disabilities are an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, 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.

The United nation Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities defined that it reflects a shift from a medical to social model of disability. In the medical model, individuals with certain physical, intellectual, psychological and mental conditions are regarded as pathologic or abnormal; it is simply the abnormality conditions themselves that are the cause of all restrictions of activities.

1.3 Definition of Physically handicapped- Indian Perspective

The India has been introduced different definitions to define the concept of disability. The medical model and, as such, they have been based on various criteria of ascertaining abnormality or pathologic conditions of persons. In absence of a conceptual framework based on the social model in the Indian context, no standardization for evaluating disability across methods has been achieved.

In common parlance, different terms such as disabled, handicapped, crippled, physically

challenged, are used inter-changeably, indicating noticeably the emphasis on pathologic conditions. According to Persons with Disability Act, 1995 Through the Act is built upon the premise of equal opportunity, protection of rights and full participation; it provides definitions of disabled person following the medical model.

According to the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, "Person with disability" means a person suffering from not less than forty per cent of any disability as certified by a medical authority (any hospital or institution, specified for the purposes of this Act by notification by the appropriate Government). As per the act "Disability" means Blindness , Low vision, Leprosy-cured; ,Hearing impairment; Loco motor disability, Mental retardation; and Mental illness.

1.4 Nature of Physically Handicapped

Blindness means to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions,

- (i) Total absence of sight.
- (ii) Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 in the better eye with correcting lenses;
- (iii) Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse.
- Person with low vision" means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device.
- Leprosy cured person" means any person who has been cured of leprosy but is suffering from-
 - (i) Loss of sensation in hands or feet as well as loss of sensation and paresis in the eye and eye-lid butwith no manifest deformity;
 - (ii) Manifest deformity and paresis; but having sufficient mobility in their hands and feet to enable them to engage in normal economic activity; (iii) Extreme physical deformity as well as advanced age which prevents him from undertaking any gainful occupation, and the expression "leprosy cured" shall be construed accordingly.
- Hearing impairment" means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies;
- Loco motor disability" means disability of the bones, joints muscles leading to

substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any form of cerebral palsy.

- Mental retardation" means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person which is specially characterized by sub normality of intelligence.
- Mental illness" means any mental disorder other than mental retardation.

Features of Physically Handicapped:

Here an attempt is made to present the salient features of physically handicapped:

- The nature of physically handicapped are paralysis, altered muscle tone, sensory disturbance, unsteady gait, non-ambulation requiring alternate means of mobility, loss of, or inability to use one or more limbs, poor and gross/fine and/or oral-motor control.
- An underdevelopment in physical growth, average weight and height usually less than normal peers of the same chronological age, physical deformation and Retarded movement and balance.
- Less-than-average I.Q., underdeveloped speech and language skills, poor: memory, attention, perception, imagination, thinking, computing and concentration.
- Underdeveloped ability of social adjustment, lack of interests and orientations, irresponsibility aloofness, aggression and low self-esteem.
- Emotional imbalance, Excessive movement, Evidence of premature or late reactions and Primitive reactions.
- Physically handicapped children are all challenged with physical limitations to some degree. It is important for parents to monitor a baby or child's development in order to recognize a physical handicap as soon as possible and find treatment options.
- Many physically handicapped children suffer from a lack of coordination, weak muscles, stiff muscles, or no muscle strength at all.
- Rehabilitation and physical therapy can greatly assist physically handicap children in

lessening and even resolving the handicap over time.

- All of the necessary equipment and safety measures should be taken in order to allow the child to be as mobile and independent as possible.
- It is important for parents, family members, friends, and teachers to monitor a physically disabled child's emotional state.
- Physical limitations can lead to frustration, anger and sadness. The emotional outlook of the child is often directly impacted by the level of support and encouragement that is received from the people around him.
- It is important for physically disabled children to have people that they can talk to openly in order to discuss, understand, and resolve emotional issues.
- In some cases, it is beneficial for the child to see a therapist or enroll in a therapy program with animals or physical activities that increase his confidence
- Although some children with physical disabilities also have mental disabilities many children are mentally strong and just as capable as any other child.
- It is important that parents and teachers encourage physically handicapped children to excel in school and discover their individual talents and strengths.
- The correct support and encouragement physically handicapped children can succeed in school and even surpass other classmates.
- Parents and teachers must recognize the gifts of the child and not limit them mentally because of physical disabilities.

Conclusion:

India is the largest democratic country in the world and is on its way to become a key player in the global scenario. It is our responsibility to ensure that this developmental cycle touches all the citizens of this country that is able and, especially, the physically handicapped, who are often referred to as the invisible minority.

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