

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY IN INDIA: PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Sarmistha Chowdhury Biswas

State Aided College Teacher

Department of Education

Serampore Girls' College Serampore, Hoogly (W.B.) India

Email: sarmistha.edu@gmail.com

Abstract

This research article aims to examine the problems and challenges faced by people with disabilities in India, with a particular focus on the educational perspective. India is home to a significant population of individuals with disabilities, yet they continue to encounter numerous barriers that hinder their full participation in society. The study investigates the prevailing issues, including social stigma, lack of accessibility, inadequate educational opportunities, and limited inclusion policies. Additionally, the article explores potential strategies and interventions to promote inclusive education and empower people with disabilities. The findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policies, societal awareness, and educational reforms to create an inclusive environment for people with disabilities in India. India is home to a large population of individuals with disabilities, who face numerous challenges in various aspects of life, including education. Despite the significant progress made in recent years, there remains a considerable gap in providing inclusive and quality education for persons with disabilities. This article aims to shed light on the specific problems faced by individuals with disabilities in India, focusing on their educational perspectives. By identifying these challenges, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts toward building a more inclusive and accessible education system in the country.

Keywords

Disabilities, India, Challenges, Educational Perspective, Inclusion, Policy, Inclusive Education.

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Sarmistha Chowdhury Biswas,

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Introduction

People with disabilities in India confront numerous challenges in various aspects of life, particularly in accessing quality education. This research article aims to shed light on the problems, and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in India, focusing on their educational perspective. The introduction provides an overview of the prevalence of disabilities in India, the social and cultural factors influencing the experiences of people with disabilities, and the significance of inclusive education for their holistic development.

Prevalence of Disabilities in India

This section presents statistical data on the prevalence of disabilities in India, highlighting the diverse nature of disabilities and their impact on the overall population. India enacted the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity, protection of Rights and full participation) Act in 1995 to provide recognition to the rights and special needs of disabled people in the country. It also provided for reservations for persons with disabilities in government jobs and higher educational institutions. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, of 2016 replaced the earlier legislation and increased the number of recognized disabilities from seven to 21. While the 1995 legislation had reserved 3% of the government must reserve 5% of their spaces for enrollment for people with disabilities.

There are 26.8 million people with disabilities in India according to the 2011 census of India, while other sources have offered higher estimates. India is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Legislation that affects people with disabilities in India includes the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, of 2016, the Mental Health Care Act, of 2017, the National Trust Act, of 1999, and the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, of 1992. People with disabilities in India are faced with negative social attitudes in the wider population.

The number of people with disabilities in India was stated as 21 million in the 2001 census of India. In the 2011 census, the figure rose by 22.4% to 26.8 million. According to the 2011 census, 20.3% of people with disabilities in India have movement disabilities, 18.9% have hearing impairments and 18.8% have visual impairments. The 2011 census additionally collected data on mental disability for the first time, and found that 5.6% of Indians with disabilities fall into that category.

The World Health Organization's World Health survey data from 2002 to 2004 gave a far higher estimate that 25% of people in India have some form of disability, much higher than the world average, but WHO has acknowledged that this survey had serious limitations. A 2009 World Bank report estimated that 5-8% of India's population had a disability. Two analyses of data from a 2004 study in a

rural area of Karnataka have estimated the rate of disability to be 6.3% and the rate of mental disability specifically to be around 2.3%.

Data collected in a village in Chandigarh from 2004 to 2005 found the prevalence of disability to be 4.79%.

A major study published in 2018 of five sites in India found that 9.2% of children aged 2-5 and 13.6% of children aged 6-9 had at least one of seven neurodevelopment disorders, vision impairment, epilepsy, neuromotor impairments including cerebral palsy, hearing impairment, speech and language disorders, autism spectrum disorders and intellectual disability.

In India, People with Disabilities Face Numerous Challenges and Barriers in Various aspects of Their Lives. Some of the Common Problems and Challenges Include

Limited Access to Education: Many individuals with disabilities in India do not have adequate access to quality education. Physical infrastructure, lack of inclusive teaching methodologies, and a shortage of trained teachers often hinder their educational opportunities.

Social Stigma and Discrimination: Persons with disabilities often face social stigma and discrimination, leading to exclusion from mainstream society. Negative attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities can limit their opportunities for employment, social participation, and overall well-being.

Lack of Accessibility: Physical infrastructure and public spaces in India often lack accessibility features, such as ramps, elevators, and accessible transportation. This lack of accessibility can make it difficult for people with disabilities to navigate their surroundings independently.

Limited Employment Opportunities: Persons with disabilities often face barriers when seeking employment. Negative attitudes, lack of reasonable accommodations, and limited accessibility in workplaces contribute to their underrepresentation in the workforce.

Inadequate Healthcare and Support Services: Access to healthcare services and specialized support for people with disabilities can be limited, particularly in rural areas. This lack of availability and affordability can impact their overall health and well-being.

Inclusive Education Initiatives: To overcome these barriers, the article highlights the importance of inclusive education, which involves creating inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Inclusive education promotes equal access, participation, and achievement for all

learners, irrespective of their abilities. The article explores various strategies for fostering inclusive education, such as curriculum adaptations, teacher training, provision of assistive devices, and promoting a culture of inclusivity within schools and communities.

This section examines the current inclusive education initiatives and policies in India, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. It explores the role of government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions in promoting inclusive practices and creating an enabling environment for individuals with disabilities.

Government Initiatives and Policies Promoting Inclusive Education in India

- a. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and its provisions for Inclusive Education.
- b. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program and its efforts to promote Inclusive Education at the Primary Level.
- c. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and its role in providing flexible educational options for disabled students.
- d. Reservation policies and affirmative action's for promoting educational opportunities for disabled individuals.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and their Contributions to Inclusive Education

- a. Collaboration between NGOs and educational institutions to create Inclusive Environments.
- b. Providing assistive devices, learning materials, and scholarships to disabled students.
- c. Advocacy and awareness campaigns to promote disability rights and Inclusive Education.

Higher Education plays a vital role in the employability of people with disability. It promises an independent existence for the person in the society. Understanding this, stakeholders are moving towards an inclusive environment in educational institutions but the reality is quite alarming in that only a very small number of people with disabilities have access to higher education in developing countries like India.

The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, of 1992 created the Rehabilitation Council of India, which is tasked with training rehabilitation professionals and promoting research in rehabilitation and special education.

From an educational perspective, there have been efforts to promote inclusive education in India. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program aim to provide equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities. Inclusive education involves accommodating diverse learning needs, providing reasonable accommodations, and fostering an inclusive learning environment. However, there are still challenges in implementing inclusive education practices consistently across the country.

Various organizations, NGOs, and government initiatives are working towards improving the situation for people with disabilities in India. They focus on awareness campaigns, advocating for policy changes, providing support services, and promoting inclusive practices.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by people with disabilities in India's educational system are complex and multifaceted. To ensure equal educational opportunities and promote inclusive practices, it is crucial to address these challenges comprehensively. This article emphasizes the need for inclusive policies, adequate infrastructure, and teacher training programs that focus on catering to the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Moreover, fostering a supportive and inclusive culture within educational institutions and society at large is essential to combat stigma and discrimination. By adopting inclusive approaches, India can strive towards building an education system that embraces diversity and provides equitable opportunities for all. Recognizing the rights of people with disabilities and ensuring their access to quality education not only empowers individuals but also contributes to the overall development and inclusivity of the nation. It is imperative for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to work collaboratively toward removing barriers, promoting inclusive education, and creating a more inclusive and accessible society for people with disabilities in India.

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