



A STUDY ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN NORTH COASTAL DISTRICTS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Women with disabilities have been consistently denied the traditional roles assigned to women. It is assumed that they are incapable of undertaking family responsibilities or obtaining gainful employment. In India, where female foeticide is rampant and the girl child is unwelcome, a disabled girl-child is at the receiving end of even more contempt and neglect.

Concerns of women with disabilities continue to remain marginal in India. They have neither been espoused by the feminist movement nor the disability movement and have largely remained “hidden” and “silent”. Women with disabilities face discriminatory treatment vis-à-vis women and men without disabilities and men with disabilities. Lack of information is heightened by the fact that peer group learning is also very limited amongst disabled women as they are less likely to be sent to school. The social role (or the absence of a role) ascribed to women with disabilities, in conjunction with the stereotypes that exist, contributes to their vulnerability and leads to violation of rights.

Objectives of The Study

- (1) To identify the status and social inclusion of women with special needs in North Coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- (2) To analyse the impact of disability on their marital status, emotional disturbance, empowerment of women with special needs, social attitude, abuse and violence against women with special needs, family adjustment and quality of life of women with special needs.

Method

Survey method (descriptive) was adopted to study the present problem.

Sample

For the purpose of the study a sample of 320 women with disabilities have been selected by a stratified disproportionate random sampling technique from North Coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, India. This study is taken with a view to understand the social-demographic characteristics of the respondents and to examine their empowerment on decision making and social inclusion, and quality of life of women with disability in the study area.



In the first phase the researcher administered interview schedule, which focuses on demographic characteristics of the women with special needs through semi-structured and open ended individual questionnaire, it also includes questions on the empowerment of women with the special needs on decision making and social inclusions and to find out the level of awareness on their rights, policies and welfare programmes. The unique features of this research also constitute ethnography, which is a qualitative research method used to describe the impact of disability on marital status, emotional disturbance and changes in social attitude.

In the second phase the researcher employed the technique of structured focus groups and discussed on the issue of their rights, policies and welfare programmes available for them. The focus group approach was selected as an appropriate method to explore sensitive discussion areas with women with disabilities. The introduction given by the researcher was designed to make people comfortable in sharing their views.

In the third phase the researcher also used structured scales to find out the impact of disability on quality of life and psycho-social problems of women with disabilities.

Table-1
Distribution of the respondents according to their decision making in household

S.No.	Decision making in household	No. of Respondent (n=320)	Percentage
01	Decision making in household		
	Yes	125	39.1
	No	195	60.9
02	Consulted for decision regarding her life		
	Yes	151	47.2
	No	169	52.8
03	Consulted for decision regarding her medical needs		
	Yes	144	45.0
	No	176	55.0

Table 1 indicates that 39.1 percent of WWD are consulted by other members in the family while taking important decisions in the household. Percentage of WWDs who are consulted while taking decisions concerning their own life is 47.2 percent and 45 percent of WWDs are consulted for making vital decisions regarding their medical needs. It was concluded from the table-1 that as ours being a patriarchal society household decisions are usually taken by the (male) head of the family.



Table No-2
Distribution of the respondents according to their social mobility and inclusion

S.No.	Social Mobility and Inclusion	No. of Respondents (n=320)	Percentage
1	Participation in social gatherings		
	Yes	57	17.9
	No	263	82.1
2	Reasons for not joining social gatherings	(n=263)	
	Deprived due to impairments	190	72.2
	Guardians do not permit	30	11.4
	Social insecurity	16	6.0
	To avoid embarrassing moment	12	4.6
	Due to some bad experiences	15	5.8
3	Discrimination in enjoying social status compared to other women		
	Yes	242	75.7
	No	78	24.3
4	Types of discrimination	N=242	
	Due to impairment	190	78.5
	Get no benefit from Panchayat/ Local government body	52	21.5

Table-2 explains that majority 82.1 percent of the women with disabilities not participate in the social gatherings and 17.9 percent only attend social gatherings outside home. This indicates mobility of WWDs within and outside home is very low. Out of the 82.1 percent WWDs who do not participate in functions outside home, 72.2 percent said that disability is the main reasons behind it. Lack of guardian's permission is also an important reason (11.4percent). A majority (75.7 percent) of the WWDs said that they face discrimination within family among friends and in the community at large in terms of social behaviour. It was concluded from the table that the factor of 'independent' accessibility and mobility is very crucial for WWDs to be a part of mainstream society. Surprisingly a large percentage of WWDs in all the block of study areas said that their houses are accessible and have good mobility in term of attending social gatherings outside home. But most of their homes have not been modified according to their needs. This seems to be a little contradictory. May be the WWDs interpreted accessibility and mobility in a different way where they can move around within and outside home with the help of family members.



Table – 3
Distribution of the respondents according to their abuse and harassment

S.No.	Abuse and Harassment	No. of Respondents (n=320)	Percentage
1	Awareness about abuse and Sexual Harassment		
	Yes	210	65.7
	No	110	34.3
2	Personal experience of Sexual Harassment		
	Yes	189	59.0
	No	131	41.0
3	Place of experience of harassment	N=189	
	Home	25	13.2
	Work Place	84	44.5
	Public Place	20	10.6
	Rehabilitation Centres	50	26.5
	Medical Institutions	10	5.2
4	Possible Action to overcome/protect such situation	N=189	
	Will protest	60	31.8
	Will shout	10	5.2
	Will inform the family member	60	31.8
	Can't protest due to my impairment	10	5.2
	Will try to escape	35	18.6
	The culprit should be punished	14	7.4
5	Possible action in future if she faces harassment	(n=131)	
	Will protest	37	28.2
	Will shout	12	9.1
	Will inform the family member	30	23.0
	Can't protest due to my impairment	12	9.1
	Will try to escape	20	15.3
	The culprit should be punished	20	15.3

The above table-3 experienced that it is quite surprising to find that 34.3 percent WWDs do not know what is sexual harassment. The awareness level is very low. The level of knowledge about abuse and sexual harassment is high among WWDs (almost 65.7 percent). Out of 59 percent WWDs are experienced sexual abuse and harassment, 44.5 percent faced it at work place and 26.5 percent in rehabilitation centres. The percentage of WWDs who said that they would protest if they face sexual harassment in future (28.2 percent) which is followed by 23 percent will



inform the family members regarding their abuse and harassment. A very few percent of the women with disabilities opined that they cannot protest due to their disability. The rate of crime and violence against women in general is increasing in India every year. National crime records Bureau and several research studies and surveys have records of such cases, but there are hardly any data on abuse/sexual harassment faced by girls and women with disabilities in India. However, the data in the above table reveals that majority of the WWDs have personal experience of sexual harassment or any form of abuse. It is a known fact that women usually do not disclose their experience of sexual abuse at home/public place/work place out of social stigma, a sense of fear and lack of support from within the family. In case of WWDs, the situation is understandably much worse as most of such cases go unreported / undisclosed by the victims.

Table – 4
Distribution of the respondents according to their awareness about Acts/Policies & Rights

S.No.	Awareness about Acts/ Policies & Rights	No. of Respondents (n=320)	Percentage
1	Awareness about Policy / act		
	Yes	120	37.5
	No	200	62.5
2	Awareness about acts/laws/policies related to women's rights		
	Yes	110	34.3
	No	210	65.7
3	Awareness about CEDAW		
	Yes	100	31.2
	No	220	68.8
4.	Awareness about special provisions for disables women through law		
	Treatment rehabilitation	50	15.6
	Education	250	78.1
	Training	40	12.5
	Employment	240	7.5
	Independent Living	30	9.3
	Safety and Social Security	100	31.2
	Access to Social Services & Information	80	25
Abuse: Physical, Social, Mental & Sexual	50	15.6	

Table 4 indicates a miserable situation of WWDs. A majority of the WWDs not aware about policy and law related to persons with disabilities (62.5 percent),



awareness about acts/laws/policies related to women's right (65.7 percent) and awareness about CEDAW (68.8 percent). However, majority of the women with disabilities not aware about various special provisions for disabled women through law such as treatment rehabilitation, education, training, employment, independent living, safety and social security, access to social services and information and abuse: physical, social, mental and sexual. A large majority of women with disabilities not having knowledge about act/laws for securing equal rights and opportunities for WWDs, along with state/national policies for WWDs. Around 68 percent feel that these policies are gender sensitive.

79 percent of the respondents feel that there is a need of provisions for WWDs in the acts/policies. Thirty (50 percent) WWDs did not have any knowledge and fifty (83.3 percent) of WWDs had some knowledge regarding laws that lay out special provisions for WWDs in terms of treatment and rehabilitation, education, training, employment, independent living safety and social security and all forms of abuse. Others had a mixed response. Some respondents has knowledge about laws regarding all the aspects, except education, training and independent living.

CONCLUSION

The multi dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion affecting disabled women in the areas of income, employment, education, goods and services, and in the social environment. In order to fight social exclusion, it is necessary to design measures tackling all the aspects involved.

Every citizen has a right to a decent income, education and training employment, housing, health care, a social and cultural life. Depriving a person from those rights leads to isolation and poverty. Furthermore, it is necessary to fight discrimination faced by disabled people and their families in their daily lives, in order to tackle social exclusion.

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