

## DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMATIZATION OF PHYSICALLY DISABLED STUDENT IN A GENERAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY

**Balal Idrees**

Trust College of Commerce, Arts  
and Science, Mandi baha ud din,  
PAKISTAN.  
bilalalvi2002@yahoo.com

**Rehan Ilyas**

Department of Sociology,  
University of the Gujrat,  
PAKISTAN.  
Rehaanilyas@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the educational environment of students with physical disability. It addresses the experiences of discrimination and stigmatization with physically disabled students and the impact of discrimination and stigmatization on their self perception. Purposive sampling was applied as a sampling technique in this research for collecting information from physical disabled students. In-depth interviews were administered to collect the relevant information from the respondents. The result indicates most of students with mobility impairments seemed positive towards life and admitted that general education had promoted their self confidence.*

**Keywords:** Students, Disability, Discrimination, Stigmatization, Self confidence

### INTRODUCTION

Recently many social scientists have paid their attention towards disabled students not only in developed but also in developing countries. Although, technological advancement, globalization, internationalization of media and effort made by international institutions, including international non-governmental organizations have create some space for disabled students who are living to compete equal footing but situation is unfortunately still much unsatisfactory. The subordinate position of mobility impairment students in society, even though this position is somewhat attenuated in higher social classes, has well-known manifestations: limited representation in the formal political system, a large share of the economy's informal sector and other types of labor with reduced financial rewards, almost exclusive responsibility for family and children, and the more subtle signs of narrow career aspirations and low self-esteem

Stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities has always been a problem. Physically Disabled people are familiar to every class, culture and society. The number of moderately and severely disabled persons was 250 to 300 million in 1990. Helander, 1993<sup>[1]</sup>. Disabled people have always been discriminated and stigmatized across cultures for thousands of years. Livenah, 1999.<sup>[2]</sup> Persons with physical disabilities do not face only physical problems but infact they have to face social and psychological problems in life. Bodgan & Biklew, 1993. Neglar, 1993<sup>[3]</sup>.

The attitude of non disabled students is stigmatizing and discriminating towards disabled students. Negative attitudes of peers have a tremendous impact on the life of an individual with a handicap. The person's self-concept, cognitive and social development, academic performance, and general psychological health may be largely affected. When an individual is

not accepted by his or her peers, their educational environment and social opportunities in the school, community, work, and home may greatly suffer. Woodard, 1995<sup>[4]</sup>.

A report on violence against physically challenged persons by UNICEF at UN Headquarters in New York shows that Children who live with a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health disability are among the most stigmatized and marginalized of all the world's children. While all children are at risk of being victims of violence, disabled children find themselves at significantly increased risk because of stigma, negative traditional beliefs and ignorance.

There are many negative attitude, cultural myths and superstitious beliefs towards Person with Disabilities in Pakistan. In Pakistan the disabled persons are generally insulted and rarely function as useful members of society. Most of the public places like shopping malls, railway stations, Hotels, and cinemas, educational institutions, in the country do not cater to the mobility and access needs of the physically disabled persons, ramps for wheel chairs are absent are the gradient is too steep for PWDs to use independently; public buses are not accessible to disabled persons.

Historically, persons with disabilities have been confronted with not only the physical and mental impediments of their disability, but also with the accompanying social stigma and negative social attitudes. A persistent negative attitude and social rejection of people with disabilities is evident throughout history and across cultures. Ancient Roman and Greek cultures viewed persons with physical disabilities as burdens on society and as less than human. Research has shown, however, that the degree of social rejection and social stigma varies with specific disabilities. Rubin & Roessler, 1995<sup>[5]</sup>. But of the contrary Muslim scholars and leaders believed it is the duty of society to provide appropriate education to children with disabilities in inclusive environments. The society has an obligation to meet the educational and life needs of disabled people by providing equal opportunities to education and employment. Naz and Aurangzeb, 2002<sup>[6]</sup>. In Pakistan disability has different meaning. Some believe disability to be a curse from God and compensation is required by resorting to sacrifice, charity, or visits to shrines, for others it is a punishment for their sins, sometimes disability causes great shame and feelings of guilt for the affected family, as result people hide their disabled family members from the public eye. Family structure in Pakistan can also be a major hindrance to the reintegration of Persons with Disabilities to become useful members of society. People with disabilities in Pakistan according to 1961 census are estimately about 19 out of every 1,000 households. By contrast, according to 1973 Housing, Economic, and Demographic survey there were 115 persons with disabilities out of 1,000 households. There exists inconsistency regarding exact figure of disabled. But the problem is that this statistics do not focus on negative attitude of society. Inclusion of students with physical disabilities in general education has much positive effect on attitudes and relations of both disabled and non disabled students. Students developed positive attitudes towards students with disabilities based on the experience of having disabled students in their classrooms. Helmstetter, peck and Giangreco (2001) and Stainback, Moraveck and Jackson 2002<sup>[7]</sup>.

Policies and institution exclude or do not respond positively to the needs of children with disabilities, which would lead to solutions based on changing attitudes, policies and institutions. A disability is stigma in Pakistan and cultural norms are a hindrance to the integration of disabled persons in community.

## OBJECTIVES

- a. To analyze the stigmatization and discrimination with physically disabled students.
- b. To access the impact of stigmatization and discrimination with physically disabled students.
- c. To explore the general education setting and experiences as perceived by disabled students.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study 11 respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Because sampling frame of the present study was not available. The respondents were selected after the informed consent because this was a very sensitive issue to investigate. A semi-structured interview guide was administered by the researchers which contain different parts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Majority of the respondent in the study showed internal power of personality and a sort of determination for achievements in life. Very few of them were disappointed from life. Majority of them seemed concentrating on the plus points of living rather than on misfortunes of life, with a physical disability. Almost all of them believed in the positive role of education. The respondents of the study were of the view that education had played a significant and contributive role in their lives. All of them narrated incidents of stigmatization and discrimination.

### Discrimination and Stigmatization

Prejudice and discrimination are negative manifestations of integrative power. Instead of bringing or holding people together, prejudice and discrimination push them apart. Community Attitude had always been stigmatizing and discriminating towards disabled people. Stigmatization is the characterization or branding of an individual or group as deviant, inferior, disgraceful or having a defect. Scambler, 2009<sup>[8]</sup>. The term to 'discriminate' means to distinguish between or to differentiate, positively or negatively, between people or things. Discrimination is negative behaviors directed towards members of social groups who are the object of prejudice. Baron and Byrne, 2004<sup>[9]</sup>.

Discriminatory attitude was reported by majority of the respondents. It also resulted in social exclusion of these students. They reported that teacher and students often indirectly discriminate and stigmatize them due to lack of knowledge about needs of disabled students. Eight out of eleven students reported incidents of direct discrimination by their class mates and teachers. They told that their classmates and teachers underestimated them and do not prefer them for any activity in institution. Two respondents told about discriminatory attitude of society from another point of view.

### Perception of the Self

An awareness of the characteristics that constitute one's self; self-knowledge. Self perception refers to the way in which one sees oneself. People develop their attitudes by observing their behavior and concluding what attitudes must have caused them. Daryl Bem<sup>[10]</sup>.

Majority of respondents have positive attitude towards life. They have no negative feelings of inferiority complex. Ten out of eleven respondents reported they were positive towards life.

They seemed to be concentrating on the remaining abilities of their self. They did not seem to be complaining against anybody for nothing.

### **Peer & Teachers Attitude**

Attitudes of peers and teachers have a tremendous impact on the life of an individual with a handicap. The person's self-concept, cognitive and social development, academic performance, and general psychological health based on attitude of society. Disabled students self perception largely based on the attitude of society.

Mostly respondents reported negative attitude of peers at basic education level, where usually children look towards them surprisingly. But at higher education level students do not show any discriminatory attitude. Friends were more helping and cooperative at this level. Nine out of eleven respondents reported that they were faced discrimination from their peer group.

Although every respondent have complaints toward their teacher but all of the respondents were praising their teachers for their help and guidance. Majority of the respondents (ten out of eleven) agreed that their teachers' attitude is very positive and helpful for them.

### **Academic Services**

Support services for disabled students refer to those physical and human resources which contribute to the integration and inclusion of those students in institution. Activity or function required for successful completion of a process, program, or project. support services that are individually determined based on disability specific need, and assistive devices like ramps, lifts, wheelchairs.

All the respondents reported that there are no special academic services available according to their disability. No extra curriculum activity is designed for them. Respondents also reported that there is no physiotherapy services were there for them.

### **CONCLUSION**

The finding of the study revealed that stigmatization and discrimination attitude was existed in general education system. Different type of discriminatory attitude was reported by majority of the respondents. No special services like special games, physiotherapy, and specially designed toilets were there for disable students. Majority of the respondents reported they had not being taking part in co-curriculum activities. Mostly respondents revealed that they were positive towards life. They had no negative feelings or an inferiority complex. There were mix responses on peer and teacher's attitude some argue that classmates and teachers were always loving and caring, and their timely guidance and encouragement is the main source of their success but at the same time overprotecting attitude by peer group and teachers caused of inferior feelings among them.

### **REFERENCES**

Helander, E (1993). *Prejudics and Dignity*, New York: UNDP

Livneh. H(1980). *Disability and Montrosity: further comments rehabilitation*, 41,280.283.

A Morgan, S. B., & Wisely, D. W. (1996). Children's attitudes and behavioral intentions toward a peer presented as physically handicapped: A more positive view. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 8, 29-42.

Bodgan, R & biklen, D (1993).in M neglar Ed. *Perspective on Disability, text and readings on Disability*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed) Palo Alto, CA: Health Market Research.

Woodard, R. (1995). The effects of gender and type of disability on the attitudes of children toward their peers with physical disabilities. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 29, 218-227.

Rubin & Roessler, (1995). *A report on violence against disabled children* New York: UNICEF

Naz, S., and Aurangzaib, S. (2002). *A Study of Islamic Concept about Disables*. Master's thesis University of the Punjab. Unpublished.

Helmstetter, E, Peck, C A, & Ginargo, MF 1994. Outcomes of interactions with peers with moderate or severe disabilities. A Statewide survey of high school students. *The journal of the Association for persons with severe handicaps*, 19,(4), 263\_276.

Scambler, G. (2009). Health-related Stigma: *Social Health Illn*. 2009 Apr,31(3):441-55.

Baron & Byrne, (2004). *Essay on Discrimination Physical Disability and Mental Health*. Nov 4, 2009. Dr. Amy Avery. Essay on Academic Support Services.