

## Gender Discrimination among Disabled Women

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### Abstract:

*Women with disabilities face many obstacles in their struggle for equality. Women with disabilities face double discrimination, due to disability and being a woman. Women with disabilities are typically seen as helpless, childlike, dependent, needy, victimized and passive. They therefore reinforce traditional stereotypes of women. Women with disability are not seen as fit to fill the traditional roles of mother, wife, house maker, nurturer, or lover and economically, productive role are not seen as appropriate for them either. The situation of women with disabilities has not been given the visibility and political importance it deserves and requires. Discrimination between women with disability and men with disability is of the same type as discrimination between women and men in general. The discrimination is based on the difference in roles traditionally assigned to women and men, woman's role to look after the home and the family the man's role was to find employment, earn the financial resources to support the family and organize society. In the case of women with disabilities, this continuing discrimination is exacerbated by all the disadvantages, resulting from their disability which in turn, will vary in accordance with its nature and seriousness. Women with disabilities did not participate in society at par with non-disabled woman. Disabled women were found to be both isolated and had a lessen chance of marrying than non-disabled women. Women with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable and*

*marginalized groups in today's society. A better understanding of their lives is required to be developed in order to remove the obstacles that still remain in their way to equality.*

**Key words:** Discrimination, Disability, Family, Society, Women.

### **Introduction:-**

Disabled women comprise of the people of all ages, all racial, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds and sexual orientation. They live in rural, urban, communities. They may have impairment and experience barriers to their independence and opportunity at home, school, work place and in the community. Traditionally women and men have been seen as necessarily fulfilling different roles in society, whether within the home and family. It was woman's job to take care of their family and home, in contrast to the man's place was in paid employment, earning the financial resource necessary to keep his family. The two worlds interfaced within the family, supplied by the man with money and by the woman with labour.

The concept of discrimination is complex. It includes both prejudicial treatment and disadvantages. The situation of women with disabilities varies considerably, depending on the nature and severity of the individual disability. Women with disabilities face gender difficulties than men because of the differences assigned to female and male roles in society. The problems of disability are significantly magnified when the disabled person is a woman, and women's disabilities are also used as justification for continued discrimination against them.

The fact is that there is dual discrimination where women with disabilities are concerned means that these objectives are both more necessary and more difficult to achieve in their case. Disabled women fill many roles, they are mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, they are students, doctors, teachers, policy makers etc.

Women live longer, there are more disabled women than men (Berkeley Planning Associates, 1996). Women are passive and dependent. Women are assumed to adjust to disability more easily than men.

Low-income women with disability needs work requirement. Disabled women cannot adjust with society without self confidence, job and money,(Krarmer,1999).

## **Literature Review**

The field of disability has not recognized the combined discrimination of gender and disability experienced by disabled women and policies and practices in the field have not been designed to meet the specific needs of women with disabilities (Asch & Fine, 1988; Kutza, 1985, Mudrick, 1988).

Hunt (2003) indicated that women with disabilities may be particularly at risk due to stigmas associated with both disabilities and gender and are more likely to suffer from discrimination than able bodied women or men with disabilities.

Women with disabilities have been ignored by the feminist movement. Women with disabilities have criticized feminist scholarship for excluding the experience of woman with disabilities from feminist analysis (Fine & Asch. (1988), Hannaford 1985)

Masuda, 1996 indicated that disabled women will be particularly endangered by legalization of assisted suicide. Disabled women's multiple stress, their high incidence of abuse and victimization and their internalizing of society's message that they are useless and inferior as women.

## **Women with disability and mental health:**

Disabled women and girls are at very high risk for depression. The increase in women's labour force participation has led to some speculation about the possible negative effect on women's

mental health. The relationship between women's work and women's mental health is also highlighted by a study by Sales and Frieze (1984) who found that impact of women's increased employment participation is positive and few negative effects have been found. Work is a source of self-esteem, satisfaction for most women, participation in the labor force may be health enhancing for women.

### **Special Education for disabled women:-**

Men with disabilities are supposed to be independent and require education with a view to finding employment in spite of their disabilities. In the case of women, the combination of disability and gender prejudice result in diminished awareness of the need for education and training. The possibility for women to live an independent life is closely linked to access to training which will put them in a position where they are not dependent on other people. For woman with disabilities, specific education in the area of self-esteem, self-defence and independent living may be imparted. This type of education makes a significant contribution to empowering women with disabilities.

Women are not treated equal to men. They faced many problems to reach her familial needs. Lack of education is one of the biggest problem for women. (Mishra, G. And Kiran, U.V., 2014)

Lack of knowledge of appropriate childcare and support for care of the elderly, or the high cost of such care can make it more difficult for women with disabilities. Family responsibilities represent a serious obstacle for women. Women very often suffer from low self-esteem.

### **Employment:-**

Employment is very important for everyone as a basis for independence and self-sufficiency. Employment fulfils a

different role for women with disabilities than for men. For women, work would appear to represent a means of filling time independence. Women with disabilities are more likely to be employed in poorer working conditions. Lack of self-esteem and education further complicates the matter. Employment must be encouraged to upgrade facilities and make them accessible to women with disabilities. Women with disabilities must receive training in decision-making processes.

When non disabled women are employed, she gets sufficient income but when disabled women work she gets low paying jobs. She remains poor and earns less than man for comparable work. (Stoddard et.al., 1998).

Women with disabilities often suffer the most when they are in economic decline, and training opportunities place the disabled women at greatest disadvantage, due to which disabled women, works in low wage jobs (Massell, 1998.)

Women can do paid work at home, or combine part with household work and care of children and family. Women can move in and out of paid labour force during different life stages. There are many responsibilities of women and they are also carried out by wages earners. (Dwivedi, P. and Kiran, U.V., 2013.)

### **Violence:-**

Disabled women are more likely to face violence than non-disabled women. Violence against women, whatever their specific situation is a serious breach of their fundamental rights. The issue of violence and abuse against women with disabilities comes up against the difficulties they experience in expressing their suffering to another person. Women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience domestic violence and other forms of gender-based and sexual violence. Many factors which intensity their vulnerability are common to the majority of disabled women, such as economic dependence, low self-esteem and confidence and social isolation. Disabled women

and girls may be extremely dependent on care giver and family, thereby creating opportunity for the perpetration of violence and abuse while simultaneously limiting options for escaping and abusive relationship.

Disabled women mostly face violence. (Sobsey, 1994) Indeed the reason of violence is not disability but is poverty and their physical, economic, social, psychological dependence on other. (Waxman, 1991). Ethnicity, regardless of age and race, women with disabilities are assaulted, all these are more than two times greater than the nondisabled women.(Sobsey, 1994,Cusitar,1994,Disabled Women's network.1998).

### **Disability Feminism:-**

Women with disability have been ignored by the feminist movement. Feminists with disabilities have criticized feminist scholarship for excluding the experiences of women with disabilities from feminist analysis (Fine & Asch, 1988; Hannaford 1985) Female body is socially constructed through negative expectations of women and socially created by barriers which restrict women. (Wendell, 1997) Feminist claims about transcendence and celebration of the body are embraced by most disabled feminists. Disabled feminists reject the majority culture's notion that disabled women and girls should "rise above" and ignore their bodies (Kafer, 1999) Disabled women are at the corner of disability and womanhood, so disability feminism reflects both a disability rights, and feminist agenda. Women with disabilities are seen as helpless, dependent, needy, and passive. (Asch and Fine, 1988)

Non disabled feminists have severed them from the sisterhood in an effort to advance more powerful, competent and appealing female icons.

## **Women with disabilities and decision-making:**

Society should benefit from the experience and knowledge of women with disabilities. The problem arises when women with disabilities are prevented from participating and are absent at decision-making level. Women with disabilities are considerably more disadvantaged in this respect than women generally in their case the problem starts at the most basic level very often they have no means of making their voice heard and it is other people who speak on their behalf.

There are many reasons due to which women with disabilities are unable to participate actively or gain access to decision-making. This may be due to low-self-esteem, fear or shame, because they live in isolation, never leaving their homes, woman with disabilities are confined and isolated not in their own homes but in institutions.

Many women with disabilities need assistance of another person even with essential everyday action and mobility, any form of participation, however modest, is contingent on assistance from another person. Disabled women very rarely not hold high-profile posts in business or politics and are scarcely represented in the public face.

## **Family Life:-**

Compared to both men with disabilities and non-disabled women, women with disabilities are more likely to never marry, marry later and be divorced if they do get married (Asch & Fine, 1988; Hannaford, 1989 & Simon, 1988).

Family life may pass certain problems for women with disabilities in view of the way that society is organized. Women with disability also find that men with whom they have relationships or to whom they get married are seen in a negative light by society generally. Many women may not see marriage as a preferred status, not may they regard the most traditional female roles as desirable.

## **Conclusion:-**

Women with disabilities have historically been neglected by those concerned with issues of disability as well as the feminist movement. In this paper attempts was made to mainly focus on understanding how being female and having a disability interacts and how women with disability view their experiences.

Women with disability are one of the most vulnerable and marginalized group intoday's society. We need to develop a better understanding of their lives in order to remove the obstacles that still remain in their way to equality.

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