

Workplace Challenges Faced by Disabled People

A Mini Research Report

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DECLARATION

We declare that the work we have done for ourselves forms the basis of our mini-research project, “Workplace Challenges Faced by Disabled People” We followed the University Grants Commission's rules for writing this report. We have properly acknowledged the source in the references in the report's body whenever we have used information—text, theoretical analysis, or literature—from outside sources. This research study has not been submitted for any degree.

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the challenges of the disabled in Nepal to be socially and economically employed as a part of the Nepalese society. Even with the current policies and legal frameworks, individuals with disabilities still feel marginalized because of negative social attitude, ineffective employment and physical inaccessibility. The research gathers the information from educated, employed, and recently unemployed people with disabilities to get a glimpse of the experiences they have of being included and excluded in their lives.

To collect in-depth information regarding these experiences, a qualitative research design was chosen. The Kathmandu Metropolitan City in Kathmandu District was used as the data collection area in terms of in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Participants who were able to give relevant and rich information were sampled purposely to meet the required objectives. In the findings, it is found that employment is crucial in improving self-esteem and social recognition, but discrimination, job insecurity, and the absence of reasonable accommodation remain barriers to meaningful inclusion.

The paper concludes that implementing the inclusion of people with disabilities in Nepal is needed not only to provide opportunities to people but also to promote a good social attitude, for the presence of accessible environments, and the effective implementation of policies related to disability. Government institutions, employers, communities, and social workers need to work together to ensure an inclusive society.

Keywords: Disability, Social Inclusion, Employment, Social Exclusion and workplace.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
CBR:	Community-Based Rehabilitation
CRPD:	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DPO:	Disabled People's Organization
DHRC:	Nepal Disabled Human Rights Centre
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GoN:	Government of Nepal
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organization
MoWCSC:	Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens
NAB:	Nepal Association of the Blind
NADH:	National Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing
NAPD:	National Association of Physical Disability
NDFN:	National Deaf Federation Nepal
NFDN:	National Federation of Disabled Nepal
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
NRCD:	National Rehabilitation Centre for Disability
PWD:	Person with Disability / People with Disability
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
WHO:	World Health Organization

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Disability cuts across the lifespan and all cultures, communities, and income levels. Disability exists in all types of societies. Disability reflects the interaction between people with physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairments and attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers, which obstructs their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In the World Report on Disability, the WHO states that over one billion people, or 15% of the world population, live with some form of a disability, making disability one of the major global development challenges of the 21st century (WHO, 2011).

Despite it being a higher percentage of the world's overall population, the growing population of persons with disabilities in the world, for reasons such as increased longevity, increased chronic disease, and improved data collection, are widely excluded from participating in mainstream social, economic, and political life. Thinking about disability has shifted away from a medical or charitable perspective, to a view of disability as a matter of rights. Disability comes to be understood as neither solely individual nor merely socially determined. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) is premised on a notion of equality, dignity and independence. While it recognizes the social cause of exclusion rather than impairment, there is an active challenge to its successful implementation; developed and developing countries both struggle to develop truly inclusive systems. In many places, people with disabilities still face limited access to education, employment, transportation, healthcare, and participation in decision-making (Shakespeare, 2014). These ongoing challenges reveal a persistent gap between global aspirations and everyday reality.

Nepal is also facing problems that were examined above and having its legitimate unique problems associated with the issue of disability. The national census of Nepal published in 2021 shows that 2.2 percent of the whole population is disabled (CBS, 2021). However,

disability advocates insist that these numbers are smaller than in reality due to social stigma, absence of a common definition of disability, lack of proper reporting, and the method of conducting census survey (NFDN, 2020). Due to cultural traditions, Nepal has the cultural belief that people who are disabled are the ones who suffered from karma or sins from the past or are being punished by God (Kayastha, 2012). Thus, discriminatory practices towards such people have been widespread.

While considering the issue of disability inclusion in Nepal, it is important to consider the following aspects: socio-economic inequalities, geographical differences, poverty, poor provision of state services and culture. People with disabilities have had many difficulties in getting access to education, employment opportunities, health care and political sphere (Dhungana, 2010). The state facilities are not accessible and people who have disability ID cards face many challenges and inconsistencies in the process of verification. It should be acknowledged that disability inclusion cannot be provided only through policy but also requires changes in social attitudes and behaviors.

1.1.1 Global Context of Disability Inclusion

The focus on disability inclusion has intensified in the global development agenda. International organizations, including the Sustainable Development Goals, stressed the significance of inclusive and equitable development based on the idea of "leaving no one behind." Multiple SDGs contain specific references to disability issues such as access to quality education (SDG 4), decent work opportunity (SDG 8), and reduction of inequality (SDG 10). Nevertheless, according to the reports of World Bank and United Nations, people with disabilities remain one of the poorest categories of population, suffering from both high unemployment and low income, as well as limited access to necessary resources and services (World Bank, 2018).

There has been an effort by the global disability rights movement to challenge discrimination and exclusion norms. According to scholars like Oliver (1996) and Shakespeare (2014), society has a role to play in the production of disablement via infrastructure, design of institutions, and attitudes. There is gaps in implementation can be seen in cases where there are strong legal guarantees of rights but under-funding, lack of effective monitoring systems,

and stereotyping. In most African, Asian, and Latin American countries, those with disabilities experience multiple discriminations that relate to poverty, gender, being rural, and the inadequacy of the state (Grech, 2015). Therefore, experiences around the globe show that disability inclusion not only needs the legal recognition it needs structural change, cultural transformation, and even long-term political will.

Another important gap on a global scale consists of assistive technology and accessible environments. Most of the developing countries are unable to provide affordable mobility aids, transportation, schools inclusive of disabled children, and non-discriminatory companies. Also, international organizations emphasize how the digital gap affects disabled people, who are not able to access online learning, telemedicine, or online job opportunities (UNDP, 2019). This information could be used globally to find out the problems disabled people face in Nepal.

1.1.2 Nepalese Context of Disability Inclusion

In Nepal, disability inclusion is viewed differently based on the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of the country as compared to other countries. Historically, disability has been viewed from a religious and cultural point of view, meaning disability is the product of karma or fate. This view makes it hard for people with such an issue to get involved in the society making them prone to stigmatization (Kayastha, 2012). Rural families in Nepal are said to keep their disabled children in the house due to stigmatization. The practices will lead to isolation and the denial of basic rights in the long term.

The legal framework in Nepal is in a continuous phase of modernization to be in line with global best practices. The constitutional provisions adopted in 2015 promotes equality, social justice, and non-discrimination of people with disabilities and the ‘Act on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2017) is a significant step towards a system of rights-based legislation. Despite these developments, a huge gap still exists between policy and practice with most educational institutions lacking inclusive classes, specialized teachers for people with disabilities, and necessary study materials. There is a common lack of accessibility requirements in the public buildings, transportation system, and communication services (Tamang, 2021). As a result, individuals with disabilities face challenges with the realization of their rights to education, mobility, and participation in society.

The economic situation of Nepal is also a major factor influencing disability inclusion in the country. People living with disabilities are affected by the phenomenon of poverty and unemployment to a much larger extent than others. In most cases, they depend on social assistance payments and their families, which are not enough to cover basic needs. Geographic location also makes matters worse because it limits access to rehabilitation services and disability assessment services (Thapa and Koirala, 2019). Furthermore, poor data collection and inconsistent disability identification practices complicate planning and resource allocation.

Social attitudes continue to be one of the toughest barriers. Misconceptions and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors continue to be widespread despite increasing awareness. The discrimination against women with disabilities is even greater because of their marginalization on account of both gender and disability. The children with disabilities, on the other hand, are exposed to increased chances of dropping out of school and being bullied and neglected. This shows that disability inclusion in Nepal is not just an issue of policy but one of social change.

1.1.3 Policy and Legal Provisions Related to Disability in Nepal

Nepal has introduced a number of policies and laws aimed at safeguarding the rights of people with disabilities. Article 43 of the country's Constitution guarantees equality and justice as well as protection from discrimination, including specifically persons with disabilities (CBS, 2021). In fulfillment of the international obligations, Nepal ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and pledged to make all efforts to fulfill the stated goals (UN, 2006). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act further provides details about classification of persons with disabilities, duties and responsibilities of the government as well as rights in the area of education, healthcare, communication and transportation (NFDN, 2020).

With respect to education, there is national policy in Nepal for inclusive learning, whereby children with disabilities are included within the education system through inclusion in mainstream education institutions. However, this does not happen since most schools do not have necessary assistive devices, trained teachers, or facilities, resulting in the creation of a gap between policies and practices (Thapa and Koirala, 2019). There is social protection such

as provision of allowance but this is insufficient for those requiring more assistance. The difficult administrative procedures, including the acquisition of a disability identity card, are frequently compromised due to the individual's inability to assess the same way as other people and due to bureaucratic issues as well (Tamang, 2021).

Even in the presence of relatively progressive laws, there are many difficulties. Physical inaccessibility is still very prevalent in many buildings and transportations in Nepal as well as the countryside areas. Local administrations sometimes do not have the skills and tools to keep an accurate account of disabled individuals or run an inclusive program (NFDN, 2020). Due to these reasons, the gap in policy implementation is preventing disabled people from participating fully in Nepali society.

1.1.4 Socio-Cultural Barriers to Disability Inclusion in Nepal

In Nepal, socio-cultural norms play an important role in contributing to the inclusion of people with disability. Many communities believe that disability is caused by divine punishment or some superstitious power. Such notions continue to be a source of stigma, discrimination and exclusion both in family and community life (Kayastha, 2012). Certain families may keep their disabled relatives either in isolation or away from others due to their sense of shame or fear of being rejected. These activities hamper growth of the individual, lessen inclusivity and hinder their fundamental rights to education, movement and self-expression.

Disabled women are subjected to a kind of discrimination that is made up of two elements: gender and disability discrimination. Such women are perceived as not suitable for marriage, excluded from decision making, denied education and employment (Dhungana, 2010). In the case of children with disabilities, bullying and absence of support at school are common occurrences, due to the discriminatory attitude of teachers and/or peers resulting in higher dropout rate (Thapa and Koirala, 2019).

Cultural beliefs are an additional barrier to employment since employers tend to hesitate from hiring people with disabilities due to wrong assumptions regarding their productivity or efficiency, although research suggests that people with disabilities are capable of delivering the same level of performance when provided with appropriate assistance (Shakespeare, 2014). Thus, socio-cultural barriers indicate the systemic nature of discrimination which requires raising of awareness and sensitization of the community over time to bring change.

1.1.5 Structural and Environmental Barriers

Obstacles concerning the structure remain one of the significant issues encountered by people with disabilities in Nepal. There are many places which are inaccessible for those with disabilities; thus, it is not easy for people with disabilities to access some public facilities, such as education, transportation, health care services, etc. Most of the buses do not use ramps, and there are no effective use of designated seats for people with disabilities. Moreover, the drivers also do not have the necessary skills to serve these passengers properly. Harsh geographical landscape, underdeveloped roads and distance to rural areas complicate mobility.

The same problem could be seen in terms of schools that lack special facilities for school children with special needs, such as proper toilets and ramps, and tactile walkways, as well as sign language interpreters, which results in a lot of children dropping out of school.

Availability of medical facilities is another issue on its own. It is hard to find rehabilitation centers, which are mostly found in cities. Also, the cost of assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, and white canes is expensive and beyond reach of most people. Families in lower classes along with rural residents face challenges in accessing services and special devices because of their high cost (Dhungana, 2010). Nevertheless, the geography of the nation, lack of preparedness against disasters among disabled population, and inadequate facilities add to the issues faced by them.

1.1.6 Institutional and Administrative Barriers

Institutional barriers exist due to inadequate public institutions, lack of coordination between organizations, and inefficiency in service delivery. Procedures in the process of identifying disabilities vary across districts, hence causing discrepancies in the distribution of disability identity cards and social services provision (Tamang, 2021). Local administrations lack qualified personnel and assessment techniques, causing frustration among those applying for assistance.

The weak coordination between various government departments, NGOs, and disability bodies leads to program ineffectiveness. Some programs are donor funded or too insignificant in size to impact many people (NFDN, 2020). The budget allocation for disability service programs is limited, indicating a lack of priority for such issues by these institutions.

The administrative process itself is quite complicated and demotivating. For example, families encounter many difficulties in understanding the process, filling in complicated forms, and waiting for a long time due to lack of documentation in order to receive the allowance or medical assistance or an assistance device (CBS, 2021). Inefficient functioning of institutions, thus, deprives individuals of their rights and entitlements.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While there have been international efforts towards equality and inclusiveness, the discrimination of persons with disabilities is still a prevalent issue across the world. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), which promotes inclusiveness and equal rights, the lack of implementation is an ongoing problem in almost all developing nations (Shakespeare, 2014). In Nepal, too, inclusive policies have been enacted, but they fail to materialize on the ground due to the gap between policy and implementation. Persons with disabilities are subjected to discrimination and are excluded from participating in social activities due to various reasons (Lamichhane, 2015).

Disability in Nepal is considered from the perspective of medical charity, rather than from that of rights and socio-cultural considerations. The strong belief that disability is linked to bad karma and misfortune in the culture makes it difficult for individuals with disability to be accepted as equal members of society (Dhungana, 2006). The Constitution of Nepal (2015) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2017) present an ideal society that includes people with disabilities. However, there are challenges related to lack of resources, poor institutions, and awareness about such legislation.

The question of accessibility is yet not solved. There are very rare cases when any buildings and means of public transportation are constructed in accordance with requirements like ramp, tactile path, accessible toilet (Bista and Rai 2019). Such facilities are lacking, which affects negatively mobility, independence, and social interaction of the disabled people. Problems related to this issue become even more serious in the case of rural areas owing to high geographical inaccessibility, lack of proper infrastructure, and lack of governmental support (NFDN 2020). Therefore, the disabled people have difficulties meeting their basic needs like healthcare, education, and employment.

The educational and economic possibilities are also limited. There is a lack of teachers, proper study materials, and inclusive classes, which causes a high dropout rate for children with disabilities (Kaphle, 2018). Discrimination in the workplace and inaccessible working spaces also restricts employment possibilities for many people with disabilities, thus causing unemployment or precarious employment (Thapa, 2021). Not only is there an individual cost of it, but it also means that a great deal of potentially useful contribution for the country is being lost.

Lack of coordination and cooperation between governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, local institutions, fragmentation of policy-making, lack of data on people with disabilities, and lack of coordination in disability policy-making complicate the process even further (Pokharel and Acharya, 2020). Moreover, most of the programs are rather small-scale, rely on donors, or have only temporary effects. People with disabilities are also often not included in the decision-making process.

In as much as these barriers are social, structural, cultural, and institutional in nature, it is evident that there is a need to study the barriers that are standing in the way of full inclusion of people with disabilities into Nepalese society. This is important to ensure that there is a stronger implementation of policies to build an inclusive society.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows

- What are the challenges faced by disabled people in Nepali society?
- What are the factors that contribute to the exclusion of disabled people in the workplace?

1.4 Research Objectives

The study tries to fulfill the following research objectives.

- To identify the challenges faced by disabled people in Nepali society.
- To investigate the factors contributing to workplace exclusiveness of disabled people.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Disability inclusion in the labor force is emerging as an important problem of global importance. However, participation and equality are far from being achieved, particularly in developing countries like Nepal. Despite Nepal's progressive laws that should ensure the protection of persons with disabilities, the reality is that many of them remain marginalized in social, economic, educational, and political terms. This big discrepancy between theory and practice complicates the issue of discrimination against people with disabilities in Nepal. Therefore, it is vital to find out the reasons why disability inclusion in Nepal still remains an acute problem despite the existing frameworks and the increasing awareness.

The majority of research works about disability employ a medical model, and very few studies provide a comprehensive overview of the issues faced by disabled individuals.

The results will be useful for policymakers, disability advocates, local governments, and other development actors engaged in the process of social inclusion. Upon being able to

determine the existing gaps in implementation, examine the influence of cultural beliefs, social stigma, and structural barriers on the process of provision of education, employment, and participation in public life, stakeholders will have the chance to provide specific solutions relevant to the situation.

Finally, this study is important because it keeps the voice of a marginalized community that would otherwise remain unheard by focusing on its representatives and their life experience. Therefore, the study serves the purpose of promoting equality and justice.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Despite the intentions to offer a significant contribution to the understanding of disability inclusiveness in Nepal, the following limitations will affect the range and depth of the research. Firstly, due to time and resource constraints, only a small sample size was used for the research, and this means that it does not properly reflect the situation in terms of people with disabilities as a whole, especially in remote and rural regions.

Secondly, the research is based on subjective reports from the interviewees, who may be influenced in their statements by their own perception, emotions or unwillingness to provide personal information. Furthermore, there is cultural stigmatization of people with disabilities, and, therefore, some people or even their families were afraid to report any discriminatory experience.

Thirdly, since this study has been carried out largely with the help of qualitative information, the results cannot be generalized for use by a wider audience. Qualitative studies give deeper insights, but do not provide the full range of experiences of individuals with disabilities. At the same time, the absence of a complete set of national disability statistics hinders comparison with other data.

Fourthly, the low availability of respondents made it difficult to conduct an extended field work, which could have helped to reveal more of the barriers to inclusion at the structural and institutional levels. Transportation problems, inaccessibility of locations, and the lack of

accommodation facilities for researchers might have influenced the process of conducting this research.

In spite of all the limitations mentioned above, this report has tried to give a realistic view of the problems related to exclusion from the job market of people with disabilities in Nepal.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The paper is divided into five chapters, followed by the list of references and appendices.

Chapter 1 gives a general background of the study, problem statement, objective and the importance of the study.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review that gives an idea about the research that already exists regarding the issue and serves as a theoretical base of the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology that includes the description of study area, data and its sources and methods of data collection. It gives the overall plan of the research that was conducted in this study, as well as the methods and tools of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 includes the data, analysis and discussion of results.

Chapter 5 gives the summary of the study and conclusions with findings and recommendations for future improvement.

CHAPTER - II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The idea of disability has gone through many changes in recent decades, and the shift has been from medical to social, cultural, and legal. Such theories serve an important purpose in understanding how disability is created, experienced and dealt with in society. Since a lot of factors such as traditional belief system, socio-economic environment, and changing policy landscape determine the experience of persons with disability in countries like Nepal, a clear understanding of these theories is necessary.

In this chapter, we will be discussing some of the key theories in the study of disability: the Medical Model of Disability, Social Model of Disability, Human Rights Theory, Cultural Theory of Disability, Biopsychosocial Theory of Disability and theories of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Development.

2.1.1 The Medical Model of Disability

As far as the history of the approach is concerned, the Medical Model has been regarded as the dominant one when it comes to the interpretation of disability. According to this model, disability appears to be an individual problem which arises from the individual's physical, sensory, and psychological problems (Oliver, 1996). This means that doctors are treated as people responsible for making diagnosis, treating, and correcting the disadvantage. As a result, disability occurs to be regarded as a medical problem which needs to be treated or rehabilitated rather than as a problem of the society.

The fact that Medical Model has a significant impact on Nepal for a number of years can be explained through traditional points of view and the lack of knowledge of the alternative models which have focused on the rights of people. People with disabilities appear as those who need help from a charitable organization or medical establishment (Lamichhane, 2015). In fact, the policies that base themselves on this approach come to be quite oriented towards

giving financial support and providing treatment rather than overcoming social constraints to participation.

Though it has been heavily criticized, the Medical Model is an interesting perspective about the significance of health care, rehabilitation, and adaptive technology. Nevertheless, critics say that the Medical Model does not cover the barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities (Barnes & Mercer, 2010). In Nepal, it has been a practice to follow the Medical Model; therefore, there has been little attention paid to accessibility, education, and job prospects.

2.1.2 The Social Model of Disability

The Social Model, formulated mostly by disability rights activists such as Mike Oliver (1983), was a big difference from the Medical Model. It makes a clear distinction between impairment, which is an aspect of one's physiology, and disability, which is viewed as the social barriers preventing people from participating in certain activities. The Social Model claims that it isn't the impairment that causes disability; it is all about social structures and attitudes, which create a barrier for someone with an impairment.

The Social Model claims that disability results from inaccessibility of infrastructure, discriminative attitudes, and a damaging culture discourse (Shakespeare, 2006). This perspective is extremely relevant in Nepal, where various social barriers including the absence of ramps, lack of accessibility in public transport and educational institutions, and discrimination caused by cultural myths and beliefs actually cause disability (Bista and Rai, 2019).

However, the Social Model has been criticized for underestimating the true effects of the impairment on its own. In fact, impairment may indeed hinder people's participation regardless of social constraints (Thomas, 1999). Yet, the Social Model is still an influential factor in research on disability inclusion and rights-based policies in Nepal.

2.1.3 The Human Rights Model of Disability

The Human Rights Approach is built around equality, dignity, non-discrimination, and participation. It is well captured in international documents like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), where people with disabilities are considered as rights holders and should have an equal participation in the social life of the community (Degener, 2014).

The adoption of the UNCRPD by Nepal followed by the ratification of the new Constitution in 2015, where equal rights, social justice, and inclusion of people with disabilities were guaranteed, have led to gaining popularity of this approach in the country. These promises of the government were confirmed by the introduction of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2017).

The importance of this approach is that disability can be treated not only as an individual issue but as one of social justice. Not only the lack of discrimination but active inclusion should be guaranteed by governments. This approach can become especially useful in Nepal where human rights language is becoming wider while practice is lagging behind.

2.1.4 The Cultural Model of Disability

Cultural Model shows the influence of culture on how disability is perceived. The model suggested that disability was not only a biological or social problem but a cultural one which depended on cultural interpretations made by society (Ingstad and Whyte, 1995).

The cultural concept of disability in Nepal is linked to religious or traditional ideas. Nepalese people believe that disability occurs because of karma, sin and destiny which makes people discriminate against people, pity them and exclude from the community (Dhungana, 2006). These ideas shape the decisions about educating the disabled person, his marriage and communication with them. It is necessary to use Cultural Model in order to understand the views which prevent the disabled people from being included into Nepalese society.

There are some cultural stories which motivate people and contribute to the activist storytelling.

2.1.5 The Biopsychosocial Model of Disability

The Biopsychosocial Model, as proposed by the World Health Organization via the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF, 2001), integrates various aspects of disability in terms of biological, psychological, and social factors. In contrast to the Medical Model, it considers disability as arising out of the interplay between impairment and its environment.

Instead of focusing on the medical and/or social aspects of disability, the model explains disability in terms of its emergence out of the interplay between the health conditions, emotional conditions, environmental limitations, and social context (WHO, 2001). Various research findings in Nepal suggest that even those people who have the same kinds of impairments may face varying degrees of participation due to socio-economic status, use of assistive technology, and family support (Thapa, 2021).

Since it takes into account a wide range of factors that interact with each other, this model is helpful in developing an inclusive perspective that requires concerted action from health services, psychological support services, community-based care, and policy changes.

2.1.6 Theory of Social Exclusion

Social Exclusion Theory discusses the process by which people or groups are marginalized from participation in the normal aspects of social, economic, and political life (Silver, 1994). Developed as a concept for use in European social policy, the concept has been used in disability studies quite extensively.

Disabled people suffer exclusion from multiple overlapping areas of education, employment, health, mobility, and decision-making (Harriss, 2010). In Nepal, this phenomenon is due to poverty, lack of transportation infrastructure, stigmatization of disabled people, and geographic isolation. The concept of social exclusion provides an excellent way to illustrate how various deprivations reinforce each other and limit people's participation.

Social exclusion can be understood not just in terms of physical limitations but in terms of denying people's rights and access to resources. The concept of social exclusion provides very useful insights into inequality suffered by disabled people in Nepal.

2.1.7 Theory of Inclusive Development

The main idea of Inclusive Development theory is that disadvantaged individuals should be able to participate equally in the process of development. This idea is based on the assumption that for sustainable development to happen, everybody must have access to opportunities, including the people with disabilities (Gupta and Cornish, 2015).

Disability inclusion in development policies has been increasingly gaining importance in Nepal due to changes in the governance of the country and the international recognition of UNCRPD. In practice, however, empirical research shows that the majority of programs do not work as they should because of the lack of resources and proper realization and low awareness on the part of the local people (Pokharel and Acharya, 2020). Inclusive Development theory consists of such components as participatory planning, accessibility to resources, capacity-building, and social protection measures.

The significance of Inclusive Development theory lies in the fact that disability inclusion is regarded as an important part of development process in the country.

2.1.8 Capability Approach

Another important theoretical paradigm is that of Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and further elaborated upon by Martha Nussbaum (2006). Instead of considering the resources available to a person, this theoretical paradigm is concerned with the ability of an individual to realize his/her potential through the pursuit of desirable outcomes. In terms of the Capability Approach, disability could be defined as capability limitation due to personal or societal reasons.

For example, Sen (1999) points out that two individuals, who have equal resources at hand, would experience different levels of success in their transformation into capabilities, especially in the case of disability. Thus, a person with restricted movement would require

additional help in the form of transportation and technology to be able to function the way others do.

The inability of disabled people in Nepal to reach their potential is caused by such factors as poor accessibility, lack of education in sign languages, and poor employment prospects.

2.1.9 Feminist Disability Theory

The Feminist Disability Theory focuses on the links between gender and disability and how this relationship results in many differences in discrimination. According to some researchers, including Garland-Thomson (2002), disability is not only a medical issue but is also connected with particular normative requirements tied to gender.

In Nepal, the problem of double discrimination is quite serious as women with disabilities are discriminated against as both women and people with disabilities. Therefore, these people are more likely to miss educational opportunities, be victims of violence and have fewer job opportunities (Dhungana, 2006).

2.1.10 Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives

These theoretical perspectives presented in the chapter clearly show that disability is a multifaceted issue. Where the Medical Perspective focuses on diagnosing and treating the issue, the Social and Cultural Perspectives bring into consideration environmental and attitudinal barriers as well. The Human Rights Perspective brings about an international perspective to the issue which resonates with the policies in Nepal; similarly, the Biopsychosocial Perspective adds another dimension to the study by considering health, social, and psychological aspects of the issue together. At the same time, the concepts of Social Exclusion Theory, Inclusive Development Theory, the Capability Approach, and Feminist Disability Theory add value to the analysis as well.

Overall, all of these theoretical perspectives can be used as a solid base for conducting analysis related to disability in Nepalese society.

2.2 Empirical Review

Researchers from all over the world, with specific emphasis on the case of Nepal, have conducted various studies, which have shown that people with disabilities continue to face multiple overlapping barriers in their way of becoming fully integrated into society. These studies rely not only on some demographic data but on case studies, interviews, and discussions of relevant policies in order to gather the necessary information about the experiences of disabled people in such areas as education, work, socializing, stigma, and access to public services. The findings of these studies reveal that despite the increasing awareness of the rights of disabled people, there is still a pattern of exclusion due to a high level of structural inequalities, cultural attitudes, and low effectiveness of policy implementation.

2.2.1 Empirical Studies on Social Exclusion and Stigma

An important feature that is discussed in the literature is the permanence of stigma and negativity towards disabled individuals. For instance, according to Dhungana (2006), in his qualitative research in Nepal, the perceptions that disability was the result of a person's previous wrongdoing prevented the participation of those people in the social sphere of life. Moreover, the interviewees provided many instances of discrimination that occurred both in households and the local environment, and prevented them from getting education and finding a spouse.

Additionally, Lamichhane (2012) provides a comparative analysis that proves that people with disabilities experience stigma internally and this fact causes low self-esteem and inactivity in the social sphere of life. Thus, it may be seen that structural discrimination leads to the psychological barriers.

In his field study in Kanchanpur District of Nepal, Ghimire (2018) proves that many families discriminate against children with disabilities due to embarrassment or fear of mockery. According to the researcher, this kind of discrimination makes the interventions, rehabilitation, and education inaccessible.

Community attitudes also affect the opportunities that exist for individuals with disabilities according to Khanal and Thapa (2020). The researchers conducted a survey with 200 participants from four different districts in Nepal, and found that 63% regarded disability as a burden, an attitude that is considered to be one of the major barriers to inclusion by the researchers.

2.2.2 Empirical Studies on Accessibility and Physical Barriers

According to the empirical research, there is also an issue of physical accessibility. The evaluation of public buildings conducted in Kathmandu by Bista and Rai (2019) suggests that only one of ten buildings have some kind of accessible features such as ramps, accessible toilets, braille marking, and tactile pathway. They claim that there are laws pertaining to accessibility, but the infrastructure seems to be inaccessible for people with disabilities even with these laws in consideration.

In the same vein, Sharma (2017) conducted a research with regard to transportation in Nepal and established that public transport such as buses and microbuses were not accessible for disabled passengers and in order to enter vehicles disabled passengers had to get other people's help to get into it. Besides, company staff did not have any training allowing them to help disabled passengers.

The problems associated with access were discussed by Parajuli (2021) in the context of rural areas. Parajuli (2021) emphasised the role of geographic features that impact mobility, for example, rugged terrain where it is hard to navigate for individuals with a disability. The findings of the study confirm that in mountainous and hilly areas, which have hard to pass roads, and a low pull of transport offer a lot of difficulties for individuals with physical and visual limitations.

Such problems were not seen only in Nepal but in other countries. To be more specific, Borg et al. (2011) researched accessibility in developing countries and stated that bad infrastructure was among the obstacles to experiencing social exclusion.

2.2.3 Empirical Studies on Educational Challenges

Educational opportunities are very important for enabling disabled persons; however, empirical studies show that Nepal's educational system is still facing problems in achieving inclusion of persons with disabilities in their curriculum. A mixed method study on practices of inclusive classroom conducted by Kaphle (2018) revealed lack of trained teachers, materials for assisting in learning and facility in classrooms among many other barriers. It was found out that teachers had inadequate skills in sign language and braille to help pupils with hearing and visual disabilities.

In a case study carried out in Province 3 by Poudel (2020), despite the existence of policies on inclusive education in Nepal, it was found that there were challenges in implementation in classrooms. Despite disabled pupils being placed in classrooms together with others, very little is done and hence the inclusion was described to be nominal. Insufficient government funding was noted to be one of the major barriers.

These patterns are consistent with results of research conducted at an international level. In a study comparing Asian and African countries, Eleweke and Rodda (2002) observed that the attitudes and unpreparedness of teachers were critical in determining whether inclusive education was effective and proposed enhancing the teacher training system to cater to varied needs.

In his recent study, Maharjan (2022) identified that students with intellectual disabilities continued to be among the most marginalized groups in Nepal's education system. Teachers experienced challenges in modifying the curriculum to meet the requirements of these learners, whereas parents faced difficulties in terms of transport and school facilities.

2.2.4 Empirical Studies on Employment and Economic Participation

However, empirical studies indicate that even in the modern world, individuals with disabilities experience great difficulties getting jobs because of several factors. During interviews with 25 employed and unemployed individuals with disabilities, Thapa (2021) revealed that such problems as discrimination at work, misperceptions about productivity, and

the lack of reasonable accommodations prevent them from having access to employment. Most employers tend to believe that the hiring of people with disabilities decreases productivity of the workplace in general. However, many empirical studies refute this assumption.

Acharya (2019) studied the issue of employment among physically disabled individuals in urban Nepal and discovered that almost 70 percent of them were unemployed or performed low-paid jobs. Lack of vocational training programs aimed specifically at individuals with disabilities was one of the major reasons for that situation.

In the same way, it was observed through the labor force survey carried out by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2020) that the employment ratios of people with disabilities were significantly low compared to people without disabilities, with a significant difference being noted in the case of women. It was also observed that the disabled had significantly less access to programs related to skills development.

On a wider regional basis, it was observed by Mitra and Sambamoorthi (2006) that poverty was significantly high among people with disabilities in South Asia, which is mostly because of the lack of access to education and employment. This is also observed in the case of Nepal.

2.2.5 Empirical Studies on Policy Implementation and Institutional Challenges

Several empirical research works have demonstrated the difference between disability policies and their implementation in Nepal. According to Pokharel and Acharya (2020), who studied disability inclusion programs in five municipalities in Nepal, local governments often lacked the necessary capacity to implement disability inclusion provisions due to the lack of financial and technical capacity. The delivery of services was poor and there were many cases when the identity cards were issued without assessing people's conditions.

Using national level data, NFDN (2020) came to similar conclusions since there were disability rights programs, but still, there were some bureaucratic barriers to their implementation and the budgetary allocation for these programs was very limited. The local offices did not have specialists with the rights-based approach to disabilities.

The coordination of NGOs, government departments, and DPOs by Rai (2021) revealed inefficiency caused by overlapping of efforts and communication problems that affected the general efficiency of inclusion projects.

These results are consistent with the findings of international researchers. Lord & Stein (2008), while conducting a research on the implementation of UNCRPD, revealed that many developing nations face challenges in implementing rights-based approaches because of resource and governance issues.

2.2.6 Empirical Studies on Health, Rehabilitation, and Support Services

Health and rehabilitation services are vital for people living with disabilities, but from empirical evidence, there is no proper provision of such services. For instance, Adhikari's case study in 2018 about people living with disabilities in Pokhara shows a lack of rehabilitation services in most places since the services were found mostly in urban locations. Participants noted that they could not afford physical therapy, devices, or transport to the facility providing these services.

In the same way, Singh (2017) studied the delivery of services for people with psychosocial disabilities and noted that the major challenge was stigma, few specialist doctors, and community-based services which made the delivery of services difficult.

According to Trani et al. (2011), the cross-cultural study conducted in Afghanistan, India, and Nepal indicated that people with disabilities suffer increased vulnerabilities owing to poor healthcare availability and lack of government aid. The situation in Nepal has been considered especially problematic as a result of tough terrain and lack of health care institutions.

In summary, it can be seen that all the research studies mentioned above indicate similar tendencies, namely, poor health care and rehabilitation services.

2.2.7 Empirical Studies on Participation in Decision-Making and Governance

Involvement in the process of local governance is one of the major measures of inclusion, but research proves that individuals with disabilities are still left out of decision-making processes. According to Gurung (2019), in qualitative interviews with DPO representatives, local governments did not consult such organizations while developing community projects. Additionally, many individuals with disabilities did not even know about their right to participate in local decision-making.

Another study conducted by Pandey (2021), involved interviewing elected local representatives with disabilities, who reported that, although Nepal had already moved towards federalism, they still had to face numerous barriers such as inaccessible meeting places, lack of institutional support, and discrimination of their colleagues.

Therefore, all these results demonstrate that political reforms have not improved the situation with inclusion in the process of governance.

2.3 Research Gap

Even though the issues of disability started attracting more attention from researchers and policymakers in Nepal, the existing body of knowledge related to the specific challenges that people with disabilities face is insufficient. Modern research has made significant progress in documenting various issues such as stigma, lack of accessibility, obstacles in education, discrimination in the workplace, and difficulties with the implementation of policies (Dhungana, 2006; Bista and Rai, 2019; Thapa, 2021). However, most of the studies tend to focus on one aspect rather than studying different faces of the problem such as education, employment, and healthcare.

Furthermore, although contemporary studies of disability depend on the social model in terms of studying disability and its impact, studies concerned with the situation in Nepal still rely on medical welfare models. As a result, research on the influence of socio-cultural, institutional and structural issues on the process of exclusion is limited (Lamichhane, 2015, Pokharel and Acharya, 2020). Additionally, the problem of intersectionality is almost ignored.

In addition to the lack of literature focusing on disability inclusion within the context of policy implementation, another important limitation includes the insufficient focus on qualitative research based on direct experiences of persons with disabilities. Many existing studies utilize secondary data, standardized surveys, or data from government reports that provide little information on individual, social, and environmental conditions on the community level (Gurung, 2019; Kaphle, 2018). The role of the interplay between cultural beliefs, attitudes, and policy-practice gaps contributing to the maintenance of exclusion in Nepalese society has not been explored sufficiently either.

Finally, while Nepal has ratified international conventions such as the UNCRPD and adopted a set of inclusive policies on the national level, there has been an insufficient number of studies that analyze the effectiveness of such initiatives, obstacles to their realization, and adaptation on the local level.

In conclusion, although previous literature provides useful information on various dimensions of inclusion of disability, there is certainly a need for further comprehensive and contextual analysis of these issues. This research tries to fill this gap by analyzing social, cultural, structural, workplace, and policy barriers for the inclusion of disabled individuals.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is grounded on literature review that is presented above. In this context, the social, cultural, structural, and institutional factors may be considered as obstacles for socially and economically disadvantaged people.

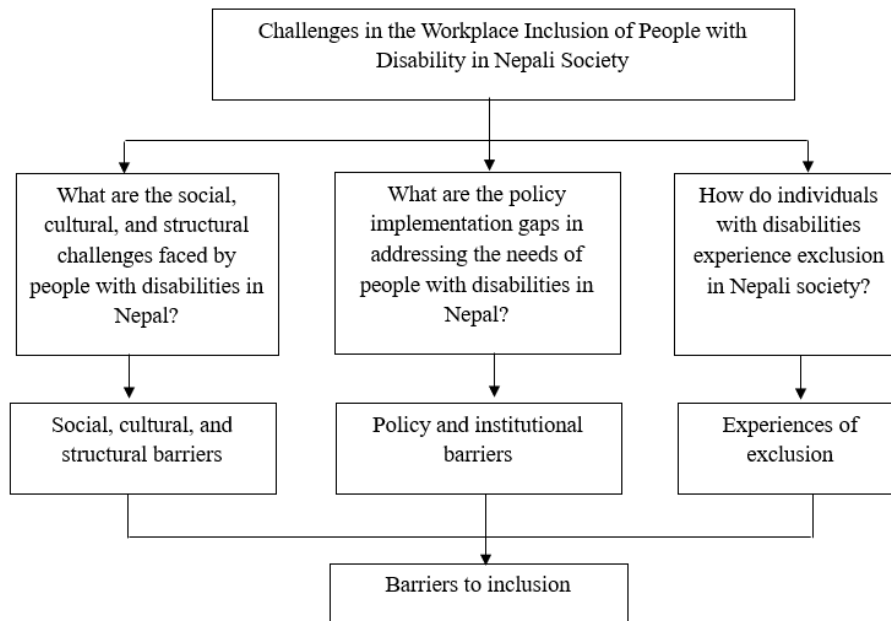


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

As it has been mentioned in the conceptual framework of the present study, the barriers identified are supposed to influence the inclusion of disabled people. Meanwhile, through mediators it is possible to reduce the impact of all these barriers. Thus, inclusion improves socio-economic status of disabled people in Nepal as it allows them to participate in social life and do not face difficulties.

CHAPTER – III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this study is both explanatory and descriptive. The researcher used this research design to investigate the workplace challenges faced by disable people in Nepalese society. Researchers are able to comprehend the situations and the problems faced by disable people in Nepali society by descriptive research design.

3.2 Universe and Sampling

Identifying the universe and selecting an appropriate sample play very important roles in the process of research because without proper identification of the universe and selection of the sample, there will be no reliability and consistency in research findings and thus, research results cannot be generalized, which is true not only for qualitative but also for quantitative research.

First of all, the universe of the study was defined according to the characteristics associated with the research question. Specifically, the universe consisted of those organizations working with the disabled people.

For collecting data, purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability technique, was used as it allowed collecting information about those selected subpopulation within Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Kathmandu District. Apart from purposive sampling, the study used simple random sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Thus, simple random sampling involved visiting respondents randomly at their homes, and snowball sampling was used to identify new appropriate respondents referred to the researcher by previous respondents.

Altogether, 10 individuals with disabilities who either had education and employment or were newly unemployed were chosen to be interviewed individually. There were 3 individuals with disabilities who were chosen to take part in the focus group discussion.

Moreover, there were 5 relatives or community members of individuals with disabilities interviewed.

3.3. Sources of Data

This study made use of both primary and secondary data. As the study was intended to investigate the workplace problems of individuals with disabilities, direct participation of respondents was deemed necessary in order to get an accurate insight into the experiences of these individuals. Therefore, primary data were gathered via interviews while secondary data were obtained via documentation.

There were two methods of interviews – structured interviews and focus group interviews. A set of questions was drawn up in order to collect data from the respondents in an organized manner. These questions were constructed in such a way as to be easily understood by the respondents.

3.4. Tools and Techniques of Data Collection Interviews

In-depth interviews were used in this study due to the fact that the main purpose of this study was to understand deeply the difficulties which disabled people face when trying to find and keep their job.

This technique was perfectly suited for such research, since the researcher was able to control the whole process of questioning.

- **Structured interviews**

As the research was based on the investigation of difficulties encountered by individuals with disabilities in their workplaces in Kathmandu Metropolitan City, the researcher gathered primary data through structured questions with both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

In doing so, the researcher could obtain true information and experiences shared by the respondents without any interference.

- **Focused Group Discussion**

Discussion among the focus group members is an unstructured interaction where a number of participants deliberate on certain issues with their opinions sought by the researcher.

The informants who participated in this discussion were three and there was no constraint with regard to age and gender of the participants. The questions asked in the discussion among the focus group were almost similar to those asked during the individual interviews.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Upon completion of the data collection process, the data collected was analyzed to ensure that the objectives of the study are achieved. This was done by two types of editing namely field editing and critical editing. Field editing involved the editing process carried out immediately after the collection of data whereas critical editing entailed the process conducted at the central level after enumeration of data.

Data analysis was done using Microsoft office. The use of descriptive statistics like frequencies and rates was done to analyze the results of the study.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

It is important to note that researchers are keen on upholding people's cultures without judging them. Confidentiality and privacy are equally respected in the process of doing research, and researchers take care not to get involved in politically sensitive issues that might interfere with the subjects' daily lives in their research.

The issue of ethics becomes particularly significant, for example, in investigating parents' attitudes towards the use of technology by their children for educational purposes. Ethical considerations in such a research include informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, voluntariness, culture sensitivity, security of the data collected, and transparency.

The above-mentioned ethical considerations help in ensuring the integrity of the research process.

3.7 Reliability and Validation of Data

The researcher ensured the reliability of this study by recording the interviews and keeping a record of all research procedures undertaken. Additionally, secondary sources were used to improve the credibility of this research by providing a variety of opinions regarding social inclusion.

3.8 Limitation of the Study

The aim of this research was to analyze the problems of people with disabilities at the workplace. Nevertheless, given the fact that people with disabilities work not only in Kathmandu Metropolitan City, but throughout Nepal and that working conditions might vary considerably depending on the region, it is quite difficult to generalize the results of this research nationally. There is a possibility that experiences in other regions will be substantially different.

Moreover, this research had a rather small sample size due to the fact that the researcher could only use those participants, which fit the requirements of the study.

CHAPTER - IV

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the process of conducting structured interviews and focus group discussions among the participants of people with various disabilities in Kathmandu Metropolitan City are provided in this chapter. The main goal of this process is to identify the practical experience, problems, perceptions, and expectations of the disabled people in the workplace environment.

The data used in this analysis are taken from the primary sources and include information about 10 persons with disabilities, either employed or recently unemployed, 3 persons involved in the process of focus group discussion, and 5 members of the community interviewed in order to find out their attitude towards people with disabilities.

The analysis will be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing mainly on thematic interpretation of the data.

4.1.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Age of the respondents

The following table illustrates the age structure of respondents from Kathmandu Metropolitan City, which was collected directly by the researcher in order to measure the age of respondents.

Table 1

Age of Respondents

Age of Respondents	Number	Percentage
20 – 30	7	23.33
30 – 40	8	26.66
40 – 50	11	36.66
50 – 58	4	13.33

Total	30	100
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Source: Field Survey, 2026

From the findings obtained it is clear that there were seven respondents from the age group 20-30 years, eight respondents from 30-40 years, and eleven respondents from 40-50 years old. The remaining four respondents belonged to the age group 50-58 years old. The age group 40-50 years accounted for the highest percentage of the disabled respondents being 36.66% and age group 50-58 years was the lowest having 13.33%.

Gender of the Respondents

Sex Ratio refers to a metric which is used to show how many male and female disabled individuals are there in a particular population; for instance, when the number is above 100, it signifies the larger number of men compared to women. When the number is below 100 it means that the number of female individuals is greater than the number of male individuals while 100 means that both categories are represented equally.

Table 2

Gender of the Respondent

Gender of the Respondents	Number	Percentage
Male	19	63.33
Female	11	36.66
Total	30	100

Source Field Survey, 2026

However, note that there is a contradiction in your figures, since according to your statement, there were 11 males and 19 females while you say that masculinization has occurred which leads to higher number of males (63.33%) in comparison with females (36.66%).

Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Education is an important aspect of life, and with respect to this study, all respondents were educated individuals. In this regard, the respondents were categorized based on their educational background, as given in the table below.

Table 3

Educational Attainment of Respondents

Level of Education	Number	Percentage
Formal (Less than Grade 8)	5	16.66
SLC	9	30.00
+2	6	20.00
Bachelor and above	10	33.33
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The number of respondents who have less than grade 8 was five, those who had reached grade 10 (SLC) level were nine, +2 level was six, and bachelor's degree and above was ten. Those respondents who had a bachelor's degree or above constituted the majority with a percentage of 33.33 percent, while those with less than grade 8 constituted the minority with 16.66 percent.

Marital status of the respondents

Marriage can be considered a very important stage in human life from the perspective of social development. The proportion of marriage based on the census conducted in Nepal in 2021 was as follows: 33.1% of the elderly are not married, 61.8% of the elderly are married, 4.5% are widows/widowers, 0.2% are divorced, and 0.4% are separated.

Table 4

Marital Status of the Disabled People

Marital Status	Number	%
Married and having spouse	17	56.66
Unmarried	13	43.33

Total	30	100
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Source Field Survey, 2026

Among the respondents participating in this study, 56.66% of them are married and 43.33% are not married. It shows that 43.33% of the respondents do not have life partners, which undoubtedly has an impact on their lives today.

Religious Affiliations of the respondents

Religion is an essential factor in creating social identity. According to Nepal's census carried out in 2021, 81.19 percent of the country's population is Hindu, followed by 8.21 percent Buddhist, 4.39 percent Muslims, 3.17 percent Kiratist, 1.76 percent Christians, and less than 0.01 percent Sikhs and Jain respectively.

Table 5

Type of Religion Followed by the Disabled People

Religion	Number	%
Hindu	23	76.66
Buddhist	6	20.00
Christian	1	3.33
Total	30	100

Source Field Survey, 2026

For the selected respondents that have disabilities, the same trends were observed where 76.66 percent (23 out of 30) are Hindus. This constitutes a major percentage as seen in the country's population. Second on the list in terms of religion is Buddhism which constitutes 20 percent of the respondents or six people. Christians formed the smallest number of respondents, being only one person (3.33 percent).

4.1.1 Interview 1

Rajesh, addressing from Dillibazar, Kathmandu, is a 32-year-old sightless male who has had various difficulties in regards to his education and employment. He has shared the story of his experiences with us:

“I was born blind and since then, the condition became only worse over the years. Initially, going to school was not easy for me since I lacked access to various learning materials, while the teachers were also not aware of the concept of inclusive education. Thanks to a volunteer from disability rights, I managed to learn braille and some assistive devices so that I could continue my studies. Eventually, I graduated with a degree in sociology which allowed me to understand educational exclusion and engage into disability rights activism.

After my graduation, I voluntarily engaged myself in the activities of a local disability network under NFDN for two years by participating in the community awareness campaigns, policy dialogues, and advocacy efforts based on rights issues. Eventually, my engagement in such voluntary work resulted in me joining the organization as a Program Assistant, which marked a significant turning point in my life as it provided me with financial security and professional satisfaction. Nevertheless, after I started working, I came to understand that just because you are educated, your life is not going to be smooth despite having a disability.

Accessibility issues were a common occurrence for me at my workplace. A lot of the documents used in the office were incompatible with screen readers, and so I had to rely on other people to assist me. Although many colleagues helped me, there were those who, unintentionally, excluded me from certain processes—gesturing rather than talking to me or talking to me in a whisper so that I cannot hear them. Also, the office itself was not equipped with any tactile signs, nor were there sufficient spaces for me to move around.

Issues of mobility and social integration also exist. Kathmandu’s public transport is very poorly equipped, and I regularly have to rely on the kindness of the bus driver or strangers to move around, which leaves me feeling ignored at times since there are instances where people stare at me without even offering help. There are also attitudes that complicate my life as I find that while some people respect what I have achieved, others pity me. In banks, in government offices, and in other public institutions, I have been assumed to be incapable of doing simple things like filling out forms.”

(Interview 1, 2026)

Nonetheless, despite all these difficulties, for Rajesh his occupation is a great accomplishment, one which has helped him boost his self-confidence and sense of self-identity. To him, true inclusion is not just about being provided with access to education and work opportunities, but also includes having an environment that is accessible and technologies that cater for people with disabilities, together with supportive attitudes from society. From Rajesh's life story, it is evident that the difficulties encountered by educated individuals with disabilities are not due to lack of ability, but discrimination and prejudice.

4.1.2 Interview 2

Kishor Shrestha is an unmarried man from Koteswor at the age of 33, who was born with partial vision that gradually became blindness in his adolescent years due to a degenerative condition of his eyes. He described his case as follows:

"I have been able to successfully pass through school level despite being visually impaired with the help of audio learning material and screen reading software that has been provided by various organizations working for the benefit of persons with disability. With the strong backing of family and self-determination, I was able to continue my studies and finally complete my Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology from one of the best colleges in Kathmandu.

After graduating from college, I had applied to several private companies in the ICT industry; but unfortunately, I was discriminated against. Most of the companies were not sure of my performance in the job. But fortunately enough, I got a job at a medium-sized company dealing in the ICT industry that promotes diversity and inclusion in their core values. In my company, I test the website and applications for accessibility and give them better advice regarding digital design of the disabled.

The job has transformed my life economically and socially. With my salary, my life has been made easy, and now I can take care of myself, undergo medical tests, and even afford my assistive devices. Socially, I can move around freely and participate in many workshops as well as interact with my colleagues and friends. Most importantly, I have been respected and become part of the society with the job."

(Interview 2, 2026)

The life story of Kishor helps us understand how important education, work, and environment are in transforming the lives of disabled people. It reveals how much the blind people can contribute to the technological world if equal chances are provided to them. This is something which inspires many disabled people who want to succeed in their professional lives.

4.1.3 Interview 3

Balkhu-resident and 32-year-old Santosh Thapa is a deaf person by birth and he says,

“In my childhood, it was difficult for me to get good education as there were no schools with sign language teachers. But with the support of my parents, I joined a special school where I had the chance to learn NSL (Nepali Sign language). I also studied in a regular higher secondary school and I was able to perform well despite the limitations offered to persons like me. I was interested in computers and solving problems and hence chose to do my Bachelors in Information Technology from a university in Kathmandu.

After completing my studies, I became an IT technician in a digital services company based in Kathmandu. My duties include installation of software, troubleshooting, networking, and assisting staff in solving technical problems. As the company had never had a hearing impaired employee previously, communication became a problem initially. However, over time, with written communication, email instructions, and basic sign language lessons for some of my colleagues interested, I became an integral part of the company. It is due to my commitment to work and systematic approach to solving any technical problems that I am considered among the most reliable employees.

The fact that I have a stable job has increased not only my confidence but also financial independence. My salary helps me to support my family and also helps me save money for further studying. While I succeeded as an individual, I still realize how many barriers exist for hearing impaired people in society. For example, I have difficulties when accessing any services provided by the government because there are no interpreters available. Additionally,

I think the lack of communication support during the job interview in Nepal prevents many hearing impaired people from getting a job.”

(Interview 3, 2026)

Santosh Thapa serves as an illustration of how disability does not hinder one from becoming a valuable member of society. It should be emphasized that not only does communication play an important role, but companies should also be more accommodating towards people with disabilities. Overall, this suggests that disability in itself is not an impediment; it is something which needs to be comprehended and adapted to.

4.1.4 Interview 4

Sagun Maharjan, a 29-year-old woman from Kalanki, Kathmandu, is affected by the double hearing impairment. She recalls her experiences by saying that:

“At that time, my family and I didn’t know about the importance of early intervention for hearing-impaired children so I managed to enroll into a special school only at the age of 8. I worked extremely hard to learn how to communicate with others using both Nepali Sign Language and written language. Finally, I achieved academic success, obtaining a Diploma in Business Studies and Bachelor of Management. Moreover, I was particularly good in accounting and finance subjects.

Once my education was completed, I got employed as an assistant accountant with a private trading firm based in Kalimati, where I worked for almost four years to do work relating to billing, inventory keeping, and basic book-keeping. Although most of the work was done with the help of computerized tools rather than verbal instructions, there was not much problem in terms of language barriers. However, I used to face problems while participating in group discussions, training classes, and situations that required verbal instructions due to the absence of sign language interpreters in the working environment, as well as ignorance of my co-workers regarding how to deal with hearing impaired employees.

In early 2024, I found myself unemployed due to the downsizing of the firm and reduction in the number of workers, which resulted in some staff members, including me, losing

their jobs. Although management cited purely economic reasons for the layoffs, my feeling is that those who experienced communication challenges were among the first candidates selected for termination, considering the difficulty of managing such people. The loss of the job was a blow not only economically but also psychologically because it gave me an identity and sense of worth.”

(Interview 4, 2026)

Nevertheless, Sagun continues to hone her skills. She is attending training offered by a disability organization in order to develop her competency in using more sophisticated accounting software and communications technology, and is currently volunteering at a sign language literacy center for deaf young students. She thinks that if more attention and training were provided about disability inclusion, then more job openings would be available for her. This shows the necessity of inclusive hiring, communication systems and workplace facilities for hearing-impaired individuals in Nepal. It can also be observed how disproportionately unemployment affects disabled people even though they are professionally qualified.

4.4 Major Findings

From the in-depth interview-based qualitative research with persons with disabilities, key informant interviews, and a focus group discussion, the following interlinked sets of findings emerged regarding the issue of disability inclusion in the Nepalese society. The findings have been drawn from the life experiences of the educated persons with disabilities both employed and recently unemployed, along with the views of the employers, colleagues, community members, and family members.

1. Constant Negative Social Attitudes and Stigma.

Negative social attitudes towards people with disabilities continue to be deeply ingrained in Nepalese society. Although policy level awareness has been increasing, the persons with disabilities continue to be seen as objects of pity, dependency, and lack of competence. They were described as objects of pity and not respect. This contributed to the feelings of social isolation and emotional disturbance.

2. Employment as the major Inclusion Pathway, but vastly limiting.

Education and employment were found to be crucial means of achieving social inclusion, gaining self-respect, and financial independence. Educated and employed participants felt more confident, socially recognized, and influential among the family members. However, the access to employment was found to be extremely restricted: participants reported discriminatory attitudes during the job recruitment, lack of accommodation for disabled persons in the workplace, and constant fear of losing the job. Recently unemployed participants stressed that the first group of employees who usually become fired from the companies during their restructuring is the disabled people.

3. Poor Physical and Communication Infrastructure Accessibility.

Inaccessibility continued to be one of the biggest obstacles for the people with physical and sensory disabilities in public places, workplace, transportation system, educational institutions, and other important areas. Lack of ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and tactile paths made it difficult for people with different disabilities to move around independently. The same can be stated about hearing-impaired people who lacked interpreters, written or visual explanations.

4. Loopholes in Policy Commitment and its Effective Application.

There is a huge gap between policy commitments to disability inclusion and enforcement of these policies in practice. Even though there are many laws protecting disabled people from any discrimination in Nepal, NGOs and community leaders have indicated that such policies hardly lead to any real changes on the ground. There are no specific instructions or any incentives that would make employers implement inclusive practices; at the same time, some government bodies are not accessible, which prevents inclusion.

5. Emotional and Psychological Effect of Exclusion.

Exclusion, discrimination, and job insecurity affect respondents emotionally and psychologically very much. They feel lonely, frustrated, depressed, and anxious—especially those who were out of work recently. In focus group discussions, participants described how being repeatedly rejected made them less confident and motivated, and how they lacked social and psychological assistance.

6. The Support Systems and the Role of Support Systems in an Inclusion.

Family support systems, peer support groups, and disability-specific organizations, like NFDN, were important in building resilience and confidence among the respondents. Non-governmental organizations have been helpful especially through training, advocacy, awareness creation and linking individuals to jobs. However, the dependence on NGOs is an indication of a general problem which is the lack of organized state support services.

7. Poor Involvement in the decision-making process and community life.

Individuals with disabilities were not involved in community decision making process, leadership positions or any social planning activity. It was evident from the responses of community leaders that people with disabilities were marginalized in most development and social activities.

8. The yearning to belong and not to be charitable.

The most common issue expressed by almost all the interviewees was the need to be viewed as competent and included and not charity cases. The issue of equal opportunity, accessible environment and respect of capabilities is emphasized over and over again. It is evident that inclusion does not mean welfare but participation, rights and dignity.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

Based on a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with individuals with disabilities, key informant interviews, and a focus group discussion, a number of findings were made regarding disability inclusion in Nepalese society. The findings are based on the experiences of educated individuals with disabilities, whether employed or unemployed recently, along with the views of the employers, coworkers, community members, and family members.

1. Constant Negative Social Attitudes and Stigma.

There is a strong persistence of negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in Nepalese society. Although there has been increasing recognition of the issues at policy levels, individuals with disabilities are still being looked at from an attitude of pity, dependency, and incompetence. There is social stigma associated with their experiences. People tend to feel sorry for them instead of respecting them, leading to social isolation and emotional distress among many others.

2. Employment as the major Inclusion Pathway, but vastly limiting.

Work became a powerful factor in promoting inclusion, self-respect, and independence. Those who were educated and employed felt more confident, respected, and influential in making decisions inside their families. Nevertheless, the access to work remained highly restricted, since participants experienced discrimination in the process of hiring, lack of adjustments in the working environment, and the high level of insecurity on the part of employers. It was highlighted by recently unemployed people that those with disabilities become the first people to be fired when the organization downsizes.

3. Poor Physical and Communication Infrastructure Accessibility.

Inaccessibility continued to be a problem in public places, workplaces, transportation systems, and organizations. The absence of ramps, elevators, accessible toilets, and tactile

walking routes made it difficult for people with physical and visual disabilities to move around freely. Likewise, the deaf participants encountered numerous barriers while communicating because of the lack of sign language interpreters, writing materials, or other visual materials.

4. Loopholes in Policy Commitment and its Effective Application.

A huge discrepancy exists between disability inclusive policies and their implementation. Although there are laws to protect the interests of people with disabilities in Nepal, NGO and community leaders have pointed out that such policies hardly make an impact on the ground. There is no directive for employers regarding inclusive practices and many governmental institutions are inaccessible. Thus, inclusion remains only in words.

5. Emotional and Psychological Effect of Exclusion.

Discrimination, exclusion and joblessness involve serious emotional and psychological burden for respondents. The feeling of isolation, frustration, low self-esteem, anxiety was experienced mostly by respondents who had become recently jobless. The focus group discussions revealed how the experience of discrimination time after time decreased respondents' confidence and motivation due to the lack of access to counseling.

6. The Support Systems and the Role of Support Systems in Inclusion.

Support by the family, peers, and disabled organizations like NFDN was important in helping the interviewees be resilient and confident. The NGOs, on their part, helped by providing skill training, advocacy, campaigns for raising awareness, and employment links. Nonetheless, dependency on NGOs exposed a wider problem—lack of systematic support from government agencies.

7. Poor Involvement in the decision-making process and community life.

Persons living with disability were hardly consulted during community decision making and leadership positions. Leaders in the community were aware of the fact that people living with disability tend to be excluded in most local government matters and development projects.

8. The yearning to belong and not to be charitable.

The desire to be accepted as capable people, not objects of charity or pity, was among the most prominent and frequently emphasized themes during interviews and focus group discussions. The participants stressed the importance of equal opportunities, accessibility, and respect of their abilities, arguing that inclusion should be based on rights, dignity, and active participation, not welfare and compassion.

Among the most consistently emphasized themes during the interviews and the focus group discussions was participants' strong wish to be accepted as capable and deserving people, not as recipients of charity or pity. Participants stressed the importance of equal opportunities, accessibility and respect of their capabilities, arguing that real inclusion should be based on rights, dignity, and active participation, not welfare and compassion.

5.2 Conclusion

One of the main objectives of the current research was to explore some problems that people with disabilities have while integrating into the society of Nepal. In order to meet this objective, qualitative research methods were utilized in combination with in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of the research give clear proof of the fact that even though there is a number of policies and increased awareness about disability issues, people with disabilities in Nepal still face many interconnected barriers that prevent their integration.

Negative social attitudes and stigma are identified as one of the main barriers for inclusion. People with disabilities are often viewed not as active participants in the society but as incapable, pitiful and dependent individuals, which impacts their opportunities for education, employment and social life. Even among educated and capable people with disabilities, discrimination takes place during the hiring process and in the workplace environment.

In terms of employment, which is one of the major paths for inclusion and empowerment, employed participants showed high self-confidence, economic independence,

and recognition within society. However, opportunities for employment are scarce. Participants described such aspects as job insecurity, unreasonable accommodation at work, and being unable to make decisions about changes at work. The ones who have lost their job explained that people with disabilities are usually the first to be impacted in case of organizational restructuring or recession.

Moreover, according to the findings of this research, poor physical and communication accessibility poses significant restrictions on participation in society for people with disabilities. Transport, institutions, workplaces, and public places still do not provide access for disabled people, especially those with physical, visual, or hearing disabilities.

Another issue mentioned in the paper is the difference between policies regarding inclusion of people with disabilities and the implementation of those at the grass root level. While Nepal and its legal system as well as international agreements that the country signed guarantee certain rights for people with disabilities, there is no actual implementation of the policies due to weak monitoring, low awareness of the issues among employers and institutions, and insufficient resources.

In conclusion, these results prove that realizing inclusion for people with disabilities in Nepal cannot be dependent only on legislation and employment policies. A multifaceted strategy should be used, which would address the issues related to attitudes, accessibility, enforcement of policies, and participation. Inclusion is possible only when people with disabilities are viewed as equal citizens who have equal rights and capacity. This study demonstrates the need for joint efforts on the part of the government, communities, employers, and civil society organizations in building an inclusive Nepalese society.

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