



दिव्यांगजनों का सामाजिक पुनर्वासन एक समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन

**Social Rehabilitation of Disabled People
A Sociological Study**

सम्पादक

प्रो. जयशंकर प्रसाद पाण्डेय

प्रो. अनिल कुमार मिश्र

डॉ. राजीव कुमार



सह-सम्पादक
डॉ. हेमलता सांगुडी
दीपिका वर्मा

2 Role Of Social Media in Social Inclusion and Self-Reliance of Disabled People

Deepika Verma, Prof. Rajiv Kumar

Abstract- For centuries, disability has been misunderstood in many cultures. People with disabilities have often faced stigma, exclusion, and stereotypes that prevent them from fully participating in society. In traditional communities, where physical ability is closely tied to social status, these challenges have been even greater. However, the rise of social media has started to change this narrative.

Digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube etc., have given people with disabilities a space to tell their own stories, break down stereotypes, and build supportive communities. Instead of being defined by outdated cultural beliefs, individuals with disabilities can now control how they are seen by the world. Social media is not just a tool of entertainment; it is a powerful force that is shifting attitudes, raising awareness, and advocating for change.

Keywords- social inclusion, disability, stereotypes, achievements, Introduction

According to World Health Organisation, an estimated 1.3 billion people, about 20% of the global population – currently experience significant disability. This number is increasing due in part to population ageing and an increase in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and

depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support.

A person's environment has a huge effect on the experience and extent of disability. Inaccessible environments create barriers that often hinder the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others.

Disability is not just about physical or sensory limitations; it is also shaped by how society treats those who experience it. In many cultures, disability is surrounded by social taboos that create barriers beyond the physical challenges themselves. These taboos can take many forms—stigma, isolation, discrimination, or even silent pity—and they deeply affect the mental health of disabled individuals.

When a person with a disability is constantly made to feel different, excluded from social spaces, or treated as someone who needs fixing, it takes a toll on their confidence and emotional well-being. Many disabled individuals struggle with anxiety, depression, and self-doubt—not because of their condition itself, but because of the way society reacts to it. Instead of focusing on what they can do, they are often reminded of what they cannot.

Disability has been a part of human history for centuries, but the way it is perceived varies from culture to culture. In India, attitudes toward disability have been shaped by a mix of ancient beliefs, religious traditions, and social structures. For many years, disability was often misunderstood, sometimes even feared, and associated with karma, fate, or divine punishment. However, as India has progressed, so too have its perspectives on disability.

Modern India is witnessing a shift toward inclusion, accessibility, and empowerment for individuals with disabilities. Laws, technology, and social awareness campaigns are changing how people with disabilities are treated in society. While traditional beliefs still influence some aspects of daily life, there is a growing recognition that

individuals with disabilities deserve equal opportunities, respect, and independence.

Role of Social Media

Social media is an undeniable force in modern society. With over half the global population using social platforms, and the average person spending at least two hours scrolling through them every day, it can't be overstated that our digital spaces have altered our lives as we knew them. From giving us new ways to come together and stay connected with the world around us, to providing outlets for self-expression, social media has fundamentally changed the way we initiate, build and maintain our relationships.

The advent of social media has transformed the way people communicate and access information. Over the years, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have experienced exponential growth, becoming an integral part of everyday life for billions of people worldwide. As these platforms continue to expand, they have not only connected individuals across borders but also play a significant role in shaping public opinion and facilitating communication on a global scale.

social media can become a powerful tool for people with disabilities also. It can provide a much-needed sense of connection and community, and it can be a space for advocacy and education. When used thoughtfully and with consideration for the unique needs of people with disabilities, social media can be an inclusive and empowering experience. In this way this research paper is all about seeking the influence of social media on lives of people with disability.

Literature Review

Teng, Minghao (2023) in his research paper titled as "Research on the use and satisfaction of Social Media for the Disabled: An Analysis based on qualitative interviews" interviewed special groups with cerebral palsy and leg and foot disabilities in the community and on social media platforms. Based on the analysis of interviews, people with disabilities use the communication function of social media to

chat with familiar people and other functions for entertainment. Social media has no barriers and restrictions, which can be better integrated into social life for people with disabilities.

2. Lucie Sedláková, Bla Mikulášková, Veronika Spá ilová (2023) of Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic in their research paper titled as "The Impact of Social Media on People with Disabilities, as Well as a Tool for Effective Communication for the Corporate Implementation Policy of New and Existing Employees", worked on the questions like What is the place of a person with disabilities in this huge global group? Is it possible to use social media to connect people with disabilities to the world and bring them closer to other groups of people in society? Can a company reach and effectively integrate people with disabilities through social networks? The results show a strong influence on social media on all team members with health impairments and are an effective implementation tool for communication.

Research Methodology

Secondary data collection method has been adopted in this research paper and various studies conducted so far, newspaper articles, blogs, books and other online and offline sources have been analysed to study the impact of social media on the life of disabled people.

Impact of social media on people with Disability

Positive impacts

1.Social Media as a Platform for Disability Advocacy

Before social media, disability representation was controlled by mainstream media, where narratives were often shaped by those without disabilities.

People with disabilities were either ignored, portrayed as objects of pity, or shown as "inspirational" figures in ways that did not reflect their real experiences. Social media has changed this by giving individuals with disabilities direct control over their own narratives.

2. Breaking Stereotypes Through Personal Stories

One of the most powerful aspects of social media is that it allows

people with disabilities to share their personal experiences without the filter of traditional media.

On platforms like Instagram and YouTube, individuals post videos, photos, and stories that show their daily lives—both the challenges they face and the victories they celebrate.

This transparency helps break down stereotypes by showing that disability is not a tragedy, but simply another way of living.

For example, many prosthetic users now share their journeys of adapting to artificial limbs, helping others understand that prosthetics are not a limitation but a tool for independence. These stories help shift cultural perceptions from seeing prosthetics as a sign of loss to recognizing them as symbols of empowerment.

3. Normalizing Disability in Everyday Life

In many traditional societies, disability is treated as something to be hidden. Families often feel pressure to shield relatives with disabilities from public view, either out of shame or fear of discrimination. Social media has challenged this by normalizing disability in everyday spaces.

When people with disabilities share their routines—going to work, exercising, socializing, or traveling—it forces society to rethink outdated beliefs.

Seeing a person with a prosthetic limb cooking a meal, dancing, or pursuing a career helps dismantle the misconception that disability means dependence. This normalization is essential in changing cultural attitudes, especially in regions where disability is still misunderstood.

4. Challenging Harmful Beauty Standards

Social media has also played a role in redefining beauty and self-acceptance. Traditional media has long promoted narrow beauty standards that exclude people with disabilities.

However, platforms like Instagram and youtube have allowed individuals with disabilities to present themselves in ways that celebrate their appearance rather than hiding it.

Many prosthetic users now embrace their artificial limbs as part of their identity rather than something to conceal. Custom-designed prosthetics with vibrant colours, patterns, or even artistic designs are becoming more popular, and users proudly showcase them online.

This shift is particularly important for younger generations, who now see role models with disabilities confidently expressing themselves in ways that were rarely seen before.

5. The Rise of Disability Influencers and Online Communities

Social media has given rise to a new group of voices—disability influencers. These individuals use their platforms to educate, advocate, and inspire, challenging cultural stigma in ways that were not possible before.

By sharing their journeys, they provide representation that many people with disabilities never had growing up. Their content helps to reshape how society views disability, shifting the focus from limitations to possibilities.

6. Disability Influencers as Role Models

In the past, public figures with disabilities were rare, and when they did exist, they were often portrayed in ways that emphasized their struggles rather than their achievements. Social media has changed this by allowing individuals with disabilities to control their own image and message.

Disability influencers on Instagram, and YouTube create content that ranges from educational videos and motivational talks to comedy skits and fitness routines.

Their presence alone challenges traditional cultural narratives that depict disability as something that must be hidden or overcome.

Instead, they present disability as just one part of a person's identity—one that does not define their entire life.

Some influencers focus on raising awareness about accessibility issues, advocating for better infrastructure and inclusive policies. Others demonstrate how assistive technology, such as prosthetic limbs

or adaptive devices, can enhance independence.

7. Online Communities Offering Support and Connection

Beyond influencers, social media has also fostered the growth of strong disability communities. People with disabilities often face isolation, especially in cultures where they are marginalized or excluded from public life.

Online communities provide a space where they can connect with others who share similar experiences, offering emotional support and practical advice.

Facebook groups, Reddit forums, and specialized Instagram pages allow individuals to discuss challenges, share tips, and celebrate achievements. For prosthetic users, these platforms can be incredibly valuable.

They can exchange insights about different prosthetic models, learn about maintenance tips, and even find recommendations for physical therapy exercises.

This sense of belonging is crucial in challenging cultural stigma. When people with disabilities see that they are not alone, it empowers them to be more visible and vocal in their own communities.

Social media does not just spread awareness—it builds networks of support that extend beyond digital spaces and into real-world action.

8. Shifting Cultural Narratives Through Viral Movements

Hashtag movements and viral campaigns have played a major role in changing perceptions of disability. Social media challenges like #DisabledAndProud, #InclusiveBeauty, and #Nothing About Us Without Us have drawn attention to the need for disability representation, sparking conversations that reach millions.

These movements encourage people with disabilities to share their stories, while also pressuring brands, employers, and policymakers to create more inclusive environments. When thousands of voices unite online, it becomes impossible to ignore the demand for change.

Conclusion

Digital platforms have given people with disabilities a space to

tell their own stories, break down stereotypes, and build supportive communities. Instead of being defined by outdated cultural beliefs, individuals with disabilities can now control how they are seen by the world. In this way, Social media is not just a tool for entertainment—it is a powerful force that is shifting attitudes, raising awareness, and advocating for change.

References

1. Anderson Sian, Araten- Bergman Tal, Steel Gillian (2023). Adults with intellectual disabilities as users of social media: A scoping review; *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*; 51(4), 544-564.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12534>
2. Lucie Sedláková, Bla Mikulášková, Veronika Spá ilová (2023). The Impact of Social Media on People with Disabilities, as Well as a Tool for Effective Communication for the Corporate Implementation Policy of New and Existing Employees; *Studia Sportiva*; 17(1), 54-63. DOI:10.5817/SIS2023-1-6
3. Teng, Minghao (2023). Research on the use and satisfaction of Social Media for the Disabled: An Analysis based on qualitative interviews; *SHS Web of Conferences*;
<https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202315702027>
4. www.robobionics.in
5. Onlinelibrary.wiley.com

*