



SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF VISUALLY CHALLENGED WOMEN IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI CITY, TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT This study aimed to identify the social exclusion experienced in various level by visually challenged women in Tiruchirappalli city, Tamil Nadu. Globally women with visually challenged is one of the greatest a significant social issue. Visually challenged women are undoubtedly among the most vulnerable at risk of social exclusion. Poverty and social exclusion are inextricably linked, and a major cause of poverty is the lack of employment. The descriptive nature of this study was undertaken with the objective to study social exclusion of visually challenged women in Tiruchirappalli city, Tamil Nadu. The sample of 42 visually impaired women aged 24 and 44 year of age were selected through purposive sampling technique. An interview schedule and observation was used for collection of data. The results of this study clearly support previous evidence that disability is one of the factors leading to social exclusion. The study highlights the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion affecting visually challenged women in the areas of income, employment, education, goods and services, and in the social environment.

KEYWORDS : visually challenged, women, social exclusion, poverty

INTRODUCTION

Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is linked not only to income and expenditure but also to activity status, educational attainment, housing, health, subjective assessment in making ends meet, and citizens' satisfaction with health and welfare services. Social exclusion is defined as the restriction of access to opportunities and limitation of the opportunities" (Hayes,2008,). Social exclusion is not the equivalent of poverty (i.e., inadequate economic resources) or deprivation (i.e., an enforced lack of social perceived necessities). Rather, social exclusion is fundamentally about a lack of connectedness and participation.

Visually challenged women are undoubtedly among the most vulnerable at risk of social exclusion. Poverty and social exclusion are inextricably linked, and a major cause of poverty is the lack of employment. For visually challenged women, the situation with regard to employment is far from ideal. On an average, the participation rate of severely visually challenged women in the workforce is less than half that of able-bodied workers. Main reason for social exclusion of visually challenged women is such as lack of access to education and to vocational training, limited availability of housing; assistive technology and accessible to transport are still significant. Visually challenged women face a lot of problems in their everyday life and they have to depend on others for accomplishing their needs (Nishanthi and Kumar, 2018).

Review of Relevant Literature

Leutar (2017) conducted a study on Inclusion of blind person in the community among 5,350 persons with low vision and blindness live in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The results show that blind persons can independently perform most tasks. They are active in various associations and religious organizations and participants have positive experiences with social workers and social workers play big and immeasurable role in the life of the blind. Blind persons mention the aversion to labeling and prejudices which are unfortunately still present in the society. But the greatest support and motivation they find in the family.

Manna A. Alma et.al (2011) conducted a cross-sectional study on Loneliness and self-management abilities with 173 visually impaired elderly persons. Result explore that prevalence of loneliness among the visually impaired elderly was higher compared to the reference group. A self-efficacy, partner status, and self-esteem were determinants of loneliness. Severity and duration of visual impairment had no effect on loneliness. The relationship between self-management abilities, self-efficacy and loneliness is promising, as self-management abilities can be learned through training. Consequently, self-management training may reduce feelings of loneliness.

Rohit Khanna et.al (2007) conducted a study on Blindness and Poverty in India: the way forward shown that poverty is an exacerbating and often determining factor in the incidence of disabling conditions, including visual impairment. The estimates from the World Health Organization indicate that 90 percent of all those affected by visual impairment lives in the poorest countries of the world. India is home to one-fifth of the world's visually impaired people and therefore, any strategies to combat avoidable blindness must take into account the socio-economic conditions within which people live. Result revealed that poverty and blindness have interconnected in India.

Koberlein, et al (2013) conducted the study on the economic burden of visual impairment blindness. The study reveals that hospitalization and use of medical services around diagnosis and treatment at the onset of visual impairment was the largest contributor to direct medical costs. Finding of the study shows that visual impairment cause a considerable economic burden for affected persons, their caregivers and society at large, which increases with the degree of visual impairment.

Kumar and Nishanthi (2017) conducted a study on marginalization of women with visual impairment in Tamil Nadu with 30 women aged 18 and 42 years selected through purposive sampling technique and an interview schedule and observation were used for collection of data. The study result revealed that most of the women come under the age group of 18 to 29 years and 50% of them learned up to primary level education. Half of the respondents having family income of Rs.2, 000 to 4,000/- per month and 40% belonged to joint families. The study further found that participants' exclusion from access to opportunities and development left them psychologically, socially, financially and emotionally blemished.

Methods

Descriptive study was conducted among 42 visually challenged women aged 24 to 44 years selected through purposive sampling technique. An interview schedule and observation was used for collection of data.

Results and Discussion

The majority of the female visually challenged fall into the age group from 35-39 years and more than 70% of them were house wife. Respondents recorded a monthly family income, ranging from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 5,500. The all of them were come under the lower incomes group because they do not have equal opportunity to participate in ever work. Majority of them reported disability condition of spouses as blind (69%) and rest of the spouse with other kind of disability.

Several studies have revealed that education affects significantly the social and working life of people. The access of visually challenged

women to school and the continuation of their studies are often difficult, jeopardizing their integration into the labour market. The study result shows that maximum number of visually challenged women completed up to primary level of education. Lack of education is one of the main factors leading to social exclusion and poverty.

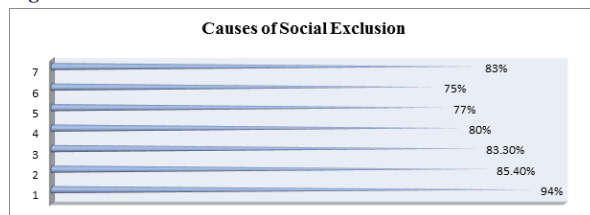
Cause of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is basically denial of status and opportunities and is multidimensional. It works at various levels like social, cultural, economic or political. Exclusion implies not being allowed to participate in key activities of society. Amartya Sen opines that social exclusion is a process whereby people are first categorized into groups on certain criteria and groups are excluded because they belong to a particular category. In India including in Tamil Nadu, women with visually challenged have been facing social exclusion due to their sex. They are discriminated in many ways and equality of status and opportunity is denied to them.

The women with visual impairment faces prejudice and stigma in their daily lives and are often seen as being victims to "double discrimination", first from their status as women and second resulting from their disability. This widely held discrimination is common in both the home and in the community and leads to women and young girls with visual impairment being denied their basic human rights, including freedom of movement and association, health (in extreme cases, the stigmatization can lead to withholding or delaying of critical care and in turn, lead to death), education, pursuit of livelihood, and more.

Visually challenged women are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and cause of social exclusion is uncountable. This study finds out causes for social exclusion of visually challenged women such as (Figure : 01) lack of employment (94%) because they have low level of educational qualification and they do not have equal opportunities in job market, lack or limited access to services (85.4%) like transportation and health services, stigmatization of visually challenged women (83.3%) even still now society has stigmatize visually challenged people with the perception that they do not have adequate capacity and skill, total dependency on others for their every needs etc., lack of specialized services (80%), non-supportive education systems (77%), structure of the benefit system (75%) and gender inequality (83%) because gender inequality is exiting in every level in society among women, visually challenged women faced double social exclusion in society.

Figure - 01



*Note: 1. lack of employment, 2. lack or limited access to services, 3. stigmatization, 4. lack of specialized services, 5. Non-supportive education systems, 6. Benefit system, 7. Gender inequality

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study clearly support previous evidence that visually challenged is one of the factors leading to social exclusion. The study highlights the social exclusion is affecting visually challenged women in many ways such as educational opportunity, employment status, social participation and overall quality of life of visually challenged women. The study emphasized that the main factors of exclusion for disabled people are linked to unemployment and barriers to the social environment, stigmatization, inadequate education and training, gender inequality. There is a clear link between social exclusion and discrimination. Discrimination and violation of human rights lead to social exclusion and poverty.

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