

A Study to Assess the Knowledge and Attitude Regarding Physical Disability Among Students

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Abstract

Studies suggest that college students often have a very vague knowledge regarding physical disabilities, and they tend to alter their attitude from the limited awareness without understanding the aspect in detail. It is sometimes noticed that people or even their own peers are highly neglected or are sometimes a topic of mockery. This quantitative study will consist of a structured questionnaire which will revolve around the knowledge and attitude of a student and will be used to elicit the information from the sample for further investigating the overall perception towards disabilities through method of observation and ground theory. Few students from all the years of a particular college will be closely examined with an age range from 17 to 23 years. A free contact and a clarity in survey will be associated with positive attitude while a hesitant contact and an aversive survey will be categorized as negative. By the end of this study students/people will be more welcoming towards this community will make them sensitive about the way one talks about disabilities and will further compel them to introspect themselves and think about the following questions: "Are all the people disabled in one way or the other?", "Am I ready to change my mindset and accept the disabled?" and "How do people think about themselves with respect to the disabled?"

Keywords: Introspect, perception, clarity, mockery and structured questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

According to the office of chief commissioner from persons with disability the number of disabled people in India is 2.68Cr which is approximately 2.21% of the total population of the country. Social perception of people with physical disabilities is negative as compared to a person with emotional or psychological problems. Acquired disabilities, which account for 9 out of 10 people also tend to face these life cycle problems. Any human being can be disabled in any walk of life. The problem is not only that of the disabled person and their family but also with the idea of the people that surround this family.

Prejudice against people with disabilities and marginalized groups is a very prevalent factor in our society. Due to direct and indirect discrimination and very little to no awareness about the topic, people involuntarily hurt the sentiments thereby making the disabled feel worse than the condition they are in. Even though it is said that the awareness has improved a lot however it is seen that it is not easily accepted in reality. In order to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities it is necessary to improve their approach to this sensitive topic.

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Understanding and cooperation between nondisabled people and disabled people is essential. What kind of attitude do nondisabled people show towards disabled people? This perception is the strongest with adolescence who are highly opinionated and easily influenced. It can be said that today's youth make up majority of future disabled and abled people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study by Sarah Miller, Sarah Ross, Jennifer Cleland in 2009; investigated how medical students with disabilities navigate medical school. They found that more students identified as disabled after reading the legal definition, suggesting a gap in awareness and many disabilities were present (learning difficulties, mental health, etc.). Almost half faced challenges due to their disability, but most didn't seek support. Some students reported experiencing discrimination. There was a belief among some students that certain disabilities make studying medicine impossible. The study concludes that low disclosure rates might be due to a combination of factors: students not recognizing their disability and negative attitudes towards disabilities within the medical school environment [1].

A 2021 article looks at how university students in Spain view disability [2]. It's part of a larger study across several universities in Spain, Brazil, and Portugal. The researchers surveyed over 600 students at the University of Barcelona. Most students were undergrads and women, with only a small percentage reporting a disability themselves. The survey measured student attitudes towards disability using three models: biological, social, and metaphysical. Interestingly, students tended to agree with statements from both the social model (disability as created by society) and the biological model (disability as a medical condition). There were also some differences in attitudes based on factors like age, year of study, and whether the student had a disability. The study concludes that more needs to be done to understand the experiences of disabled students and promote their inclusion in higher education [3, 4].

A Study mentioned in Journal Research in Developmental Disabilities examined how contact with classmates with Special Educational Needs (SEN) affects students' attitudes towards them. 463 no. of 8th graders (average age 14.42) from regular and inclusive classes in Austria. Students reported on their contact with SEN classmates (who they'd choose for activities) and their attitudes towards those with disabilities. The results were that, Students with SEN were less likely to be chosen for activities, being in a regular or inclusive class didn't affect attitudes towards SEN classmates and choosing to interact with a classmate with SEN was linked to more positive attitudes towards them. This concludes that, simply being in the same class might not improve attitudes. Actively choosing to interact with classmates with SEN leads to more positive views of them [5].

A Study in 2019 showed that interpersonal contact with individuals with disabilities has a distinct impact on the affective variables of anxiety and empathy. Previous research suggests that this contributes towards improved attitudes to disability. Overall, we provide strong evidence for the inclusion of contact-based educational interventions in medical school to enhance students' attitudes to disability [6, 7].

A Research by Kifayat Ali Khan, Sahar Ali Khan, Umar Wahaj, Syed Alamdar Hussain, Usman Farooq; concluded that mostly half of the students showed negative attitude towards disabled people and female students showed more negative attitude when compared to male students. So, the competent authorities should plan and implement certain strategies to cope with the negative attitude of the students towards the disabled persons [8].

A Study in 2018, investigated how social workers view disability. They developed a scale called the Perceptions Toward Disability Scale (PTDS) to measure if social workers see disability as an individual problem or a social issue. The researchers built the scale in three phases: creating questions, testing on a small group, and testing on a large group. The final version has two parts: one for individual perspective and one for social perspective on disability. The results showed the PTDS is a good tool to measure social workers' views. It suggests social workers might view disability as both individual and social issues to some degree. This scale can be useful for future research on how social workers interact with people with disabilities [9, 10].

The above articles and studies discuss disability and how people perceive it. It shows the mentality of different age groups towards disability. It also concluded the negative and positive attitude towards

disability. They studies showed the different mindset of people from different age group. The study highlights the need to understand experiences of disabled students for better inclusion. The research also distinguishes between individual and social factors affecting disability. Many students didn't recognize their own limitations as disabilities, and they should be made aware of their behaviour towards a disabled. Students who actively choose to interact with classmates with special needs have more positive attitudes towards them. Simply being in the same class does not teaches the person how to deal with a disabled person. These studies showed the views of people from different background on disability and the difference in attitude and behaviour toward them. These research how a person's perspective changes towards disabled depending on the community and surroundings where they are residing. At the end the conclusion comes up that, being a society, we should create a good and healthy environment where a disabled individual can live with others comfortably without feeling hesitant. One should keep their attitude and behaviour towards a disabled in such a way that he/she feels secure about himself being the way they are. The purpose of this study is to develop college students' perceptions and attitudes toward people with disabilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The subject of this study are college students studying architecture in DIT university. Taking this into account, a purposeful sampling was conducted at the same rate, resulting in a total of 50 people ranging from 1st to 5th year.

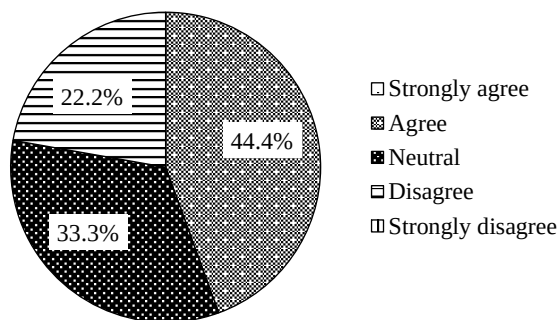


Figure 1. A graph showing what an individual thinks a asking about disability.

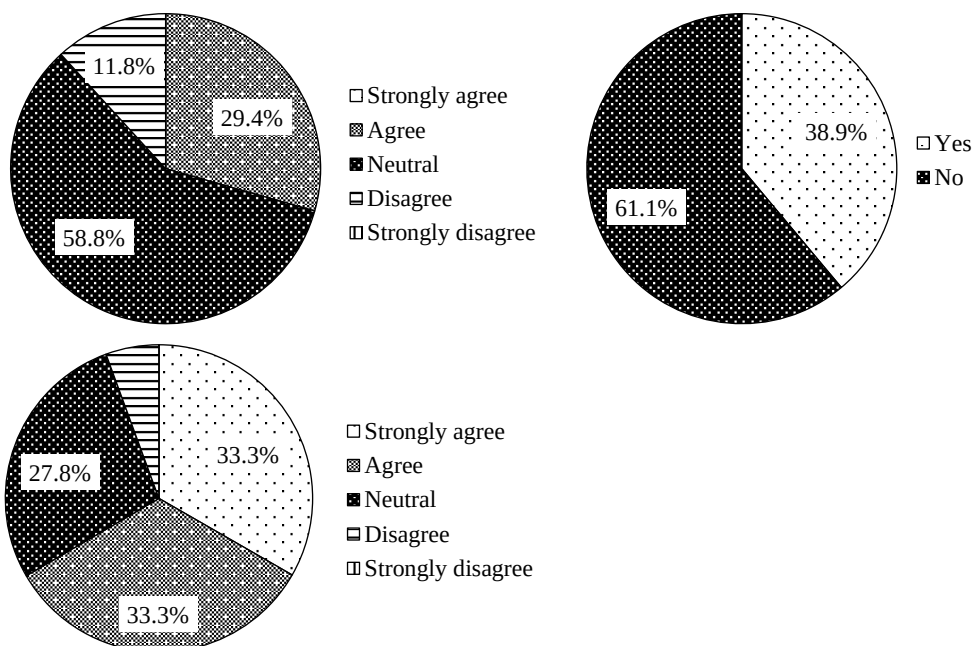


Figure 2. Pie chart on self-awareness.

Data collection for this study was conducted from 25th April to 1st May 2024. The researchers conduct research directly on subjects. After receiving consent to participate in the study, questionnaires were distributed and answered. It took 4–5 minutes to complete the survey. The collected data was then accumulated in the form of pie chart to get a closer look and accurate look in the matter.

Real numbers and percentages were calculated for the characteristics and perceptions of people with disabilities. Do you think that people with disabilities want to be treated just like everyone else?

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted on college students from a particular department of one university, because of which the thinking and ideology of students were somewhat similar. Secondly, due to limited responses, caution was taken in generalizing the result of this study.

RESEARCH RESULT

As a result of analysing the subject's perception towards the disabled, regarding living standards, the people with most number of "yes" or "strongly agree" are willingly ready to accept this change or difference in environment. Students that prefer "no" or "strongly disagree" are the ones that fall under the category of mockery or adamant.

It was observed that 63.3% of the people are ready to accept the co-existence without a doubt. 17.8% have an aversive behaviour towards the same. Whereas the rest of the percentage's opinion varies according to the environment. The perception of the educational environment highly depended on the year they are currently studying in. In the senior classes (4th year) the curriculum had a subject that made the elder students highly sensitive towards the differently abled. Hence, a shift in mindset was observed as shown in Table 1.

DISCUSSIONS

An attempt was made to provide basic data. In this study, the target audience was highly influenced by their peers. It was recognized that there were more people than people themselves when one talks about taking decisions.

A person living in a living facility lives with their family and in this case with their fellow peers too. Rather than being neighbours, they are people who are uncomfortable living together. Additionally, disabled people have health problems and as this is a weak class and a group that requires constant

Table 1. Perceptions towards co-existence with disabled individuals.

S.N.	Preferred ideal answers	Most common answers
1.	Strongly agree	Agree
2.	Agree	Agree
3.	Yes	Yes
4.	Disagree	Neutral
5.	Yes	Yes
6.	No	No
7.	No	No
8.	Strongly agree	Agree
9.	No	No
10.	Yes	Yes
11.	Agree	Neutral
12.	Yes	Yes

management, people prefer not to spend majority of their time with them. Sometimes this discrimination is seen in educational institutes by not incorporating the factor of educating all in the same class regardless of their disabilities.

When asked if the disabled should study in regular schools with other students or should have special schools the answers played a huge role in understanding the actual acceptance of this group in the society. Even though Section 20 of the Indian constitution talks about the rights in educational sector, people still consider them different from themselves.

This is an implied result, and it applies to all students in general colleges. There is a need to reduce distance and create an atmosphere for integrated education depending on the type of disability and placement institution for the disabled students. There is a need to strengthen a diverse and appropriate special school support system. Education through friends, volunteer work or organization related to disability can provide a larger impact on these young minds. After the interaction and survey, the results say that the establishment of special schools is generally perceived positively. Regarding measures to improve awareness of the disabled, there is a government-level dramatic support. It is often pointed out that the effect of improving disability is not significant.

As for the attitude, the result shows that the 4th and 5th year students are highly sensitive as compared to the 1st years who have recently left home. In order to achieve a positive change in attitude towards people with disabilities it is important to understand when to introduce education or programs related to disabilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated college students' perception and attitude. By doing so, we will establish correct awareness of disabled people among future college students. The basis for developing a plan to establish a positive attitude.

This was survey-based research that used pie charts, averages, one on one contact and percentages to analysis the performance of college students. The results were as follows:

- Firstly, the subject's perception of the disabled is related to the people around them.
- Majority of students would prefer working in a space which is free from locomotion disabilities.
- Even with sufficient knowledge they prefer walking away from the situation
- They do not want to consider them as equals or normal.

Based on the results of this study, we would like to suggest the following:

1. Provide support to people with disabilities targeting college students and various classes.
Changing our perception and attitude to be more positive and active
2. Expanding the number of research subjects and regional scope.
3. Universities should ensure proper inclusivity of all kinds of people.

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