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**UNDERSTANDING THE WORK STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE DISABLED POPULATION IN INDIA**

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UNDERSTANDING THE WORK STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISABLED POPULATION IN INDIA

Abstract

This paper examines prevalence of disability across major states of India and attempts to understand how the different types of disability influences the educational and employment opportunities among disabled population in India using the National Sample Survey (NSS) 58th round (2002). Preliminary result indicates a large inter-state variation in the types of disability in India. Disability persists mainly among young (0-14y) and elderly population (60+y). Illiteracy is higher among children with mental disability, blindness and speech disability. Interestingly, more than 75 percent disabled children have not attended pre-school intervention programmes and those who were enrolled to ordinary school have eventually discontinued due to disability. The major reported reasons for not enrolling in special schools are disability status, school not known and 'parents not interested'. Among the disabled population, person's challenged with mental retardation and locomotor disabilities have least work participation. Most of the people had to quit their work due to onset of any type of disability.

Introduction

Disability is a growing national problem of socio economic and political significance, and needs rational and dynamic approach to the rehabilitation of handicapped, which is still lacking in India (Bhatt, 1963). Disability has various dimensions such as the problems of education and employment, for which not much has been done, since dealing with all the aspects of disability is still a continuous challenge in terms of policy and human rights (Karan, 1999; Karan, 2001).

“The first and the foremost problem that bother researcher and policy makers is the identification of the people who are disabled. It is often difficult to put forward certain criteria's which may categories an individual as disabled, due to associated social stigma; therefore many don't not want themselves to be identified as disabled. Every society has a section of people who suffer from some kind of physical or mental disability, which may be congenital, acquired or result from the process of ageing. Their plight, despite the efforts made by the government and non-

government agencies to ameliorate their conditions, continues to be dismal and requires much to be done. In India, this segment of the population needs a specific endeavor not only for the identification of people with disability but also requires special attention for creating conditions allowing people with disability to live life in a dignified manner and with a sense of fulfillment” (Census of India, 2001).

It’s only now that much attention has been given to disabled population after the 2001 Census of India in which disabled population was counted for the first time, but still there exists discrepancy about the exact number of disabled population. One study found (Mitra *et al.* 2006) substantial differences in rates of disability between above two sources that is 58th round of NSSO, 2002 (National Sample Survey Organization) and Census of India (2001).

In India disabled population accounts for 2.1% of the country’s population according to the Census of India 2001, and 1.8 % of the country’s population according to the 58th round of NSS (2002). These small percentages does not show the correct dimension and graveness of the problem that the country is facing, because these small percentage of population in the country like India leads to a large number of 21.9 million population by Census of India, 2001 and a population of 18.5 million by NSS, which stands for an astounding big magnitude.

People with disabilities are vulnerable to social devaluation and negative identities. In order to truly make a change in their lives, it is important to enhance their opportunities and capabilities, since higher social value is usually accorded to people who are perceived to be skilled and competent. Education is critical in expanding life opportunities and further in providing employment opportunity which helps enhance the quality of life of any individual (Sugirtha and Madeswaran, 2008; Narsimha & Mukherjee, 1986), but for the disabled children it still remains difficult to access basic education, and for disabled adults it is even more difficult to be employed. In India among the disabled children about 42 percent are illiterate, and 32 percent disabled population were not able to work because of disability. “Low literacy and employment rates and widespread social stigma are making disabled people among the most excluded in Indian society. Children with disabilities are less likely to be in school, disabled adults are more likely to be unemployed, and families with a disabled member are often worse off than average” (World Bank Report, 2008).

The present paper uses the data from the NSS 58th round (2002) and attempts to study the prevalence of disability in the major states of India. It further attempts to study the educational status of the disabled children (5 to 18 years old) and employment condition of the disabled population.

Data and Methodology

Data used in this study comes from the NSS 58th round conducted during 2002. In the 58th round, July-December 2002, the field work was carried out during the second half of 2002 starting from July and continuing up to December. A Stratified multi-stage sample design was adopted. At the All India level, 45571 and 24731 households were surveyed in rural and urban areas, respectively from 4637 villages and 3354 urban blocks. The number of disabled persons enumerated in rural and urban India was 49300 and 26679, respectively.

Methodologies used in the analysis of the data

Point prevalence rate (PPR): It has been used to estimate the prevalence of disability across states in India. It may be defined as given below:

$$\frac{\text{No. of existing cases (old and new) of the event at a point in time}}{\text{Estimated mid-interval population at risk}} * K$$

Bivariate analyses have been used to study the educational status of the children aged 5 to 18 years by the reported types of disabilities. Further analysis has been done to study the usual work status, work status before disability and change or loss in work due to disability.

Results

The scenario of the disabled population in India

To understand the condition of disability it is important to understand the distribution of disabled population in India. Table 1 shows the prevalence per (100,000) population by different types of disabilities according to the major states of India, smaller states were not included due to low cell frequencies. From the table we find that the prevalence of mental retardation is highest in the state

of Kerala (1.09 per 100000 population) followed by Punjab (0.89 per 100000 population) and West Bengal (0.82 per 100000 population). Kerala also has the highest prevalence of mental illness (2.22 per 100000 population) followed by West Bengal (1.50 per 100000 population) and Orissa (1.44 per 100000 population). Orissa has the highest prevalence of Blindness (2.26 per 100000 population), Low vision (1.88 per 100000 population) and Hearing disability (3.38 per 100000 population). Uttarakhand has the highest prevalence of speech disability (1.48), were as prevalence of locomotor disability is highest in Punjab (12.18 per 100000 populations) which is much higher than the prevalence of any other type of disability. Kerala has the highest prevalence of population having more than one type of disability at the same time. The overall prevalence of any type of disability for India stands at 16.94 per 100000 populations. State wise prevalence of disability highlights that the prevalence of disability is very high in certain states were as the other states have low prevalence. This highlights the wide interstate variations in the prevalence of disability in India.

Disability is acquired at different ages. In figure 1, we find that disabilities such as mental retardation, speech disability and locomotor disability are acquired at ages 0-14. It may be because large proportion that is 35 percent disabled population had disability by birth. Percentage of people having Mental illness shows gradual increase from 15-29 age group and peaks at 60-64 age group. Disabilities such as Blindness, Low vision and hearing disabilities show increase only in the older age groups of 70-74 and 80+. It can be said that some of the disabilities are specific to certain age groups. Further when we try to see the causes of disability other than for disability which were acquired by birth we find from table 2 that the major cause of mental disability were reported as “Serious illness during childhood” (14 percent) but the major causes were reported as “not known” (35 percent) and “Other reasons” (47 percent) which were not specified. Causes of vision disability was attributed to old age (25 percent) and closely followed by Cataract (24 percent) which again is caused by old age, again for vision disability the major causes were reported as “other reasons” (35 percent). For hearing disability the main causes were reported as Old age (26 percent) other illness (23 percent) followed by Ear discharge (16 percent). Paralysis (23 percent) and other illnesses (22 percent) were reported as the major causes for speech disability and for locomotor disability the major cause was polio (34 percent). But for all the disability types the major causes were reported as “other reasons”, this may lead us to consider that the respondent may not be aware of the exact cause of disability.

Educational situation of the disabled children (5-18) of India

High percentage of disabled population was illiterate, which can be evident from figure 2. Among the persons with different types of disabilities, persons with mental disability which includes both mental retardation and mental illness had high percentages of population who were illiterate (75 percent). Persons with low vision hearing disability and locomotor disability were better off in terms of education, with persons not literate less than 30 percent and with 15 percent population having education up to middle school. Further in table 3 if we look at the enrollment status of children aged 5 to 18 years, we find that 93 percent children with mental retardation have not attended pre-school intervention programme, 72 percent children were never enrolled in ordinary school, among the ones enrolled in ordinary school 54 percent were not continuing among these 73 percent state disability as the cause.

In spite of low enrollment in ordinary school only 9 percent mentally retarded children were enrolled in special school. Similarly for children with mental illness, blindness, low vision and hearing disability less than 23 percent children attended pre- school intervention programme. The enrollment in ordinary school was good for children with low vision (71 percent) and hearing disability (72 percent), and percentage discontinuing was also less than 31 percent. Enrollment of children with blindness was the highest (24 percent) in special school and percentage continuing was also the highest at 95 percent. We could state from the above statistics that both ordinary schools and special schools were more favorable to children with blindness as compared to other disabilities.

If we look at the reasons for not enrollment in special among disabled children who have not enrolled in special school or discontinued from ordinary school, we find that 52 percent of children with mental retardation were not able to attend special school because of disability, followed by 47 percent children with mental illness and 43 percent with Blindness. For all types of disabilities about 15 percent state the reason for non enrollment as “School not known” and about 11 percent children with mental retardation and illness, 15 percent children with blindness, speech and locomotor disability, 17 percent children with hearing disability and 27 percent with low vision children stated that “parents were not interested”.

Children who had got enrolled in special school and the discontinued among them 21 percent children with mental retardation stated “difficulty in getting admission as the cause for

discontinuation” but the major percentage consisted of reasons stated as others (36 percent). Nearly all children with blindness discontinued special school stating the reason as “due to disability”, 51 percent children with low vision stated that their “parents were not interested”. From the various reasons stated for not enrollment in ordinary schools, special schools and discontinuations from both ordinary and special schools, we find that the major barriers being disability and lack of interest from the parents side which may partially be contributed by the lack of awareness about special schools and bleak future prospects in terms of employment.

Employment situation of the disabled population of India

If we look at the working status of people with disability before the onset of disability (figure 3) we find that, about 50 percent people with mental illness, 53 percent of people with blindness, 60 percent people with low vision and 50 percent people with hearing disability were working before the onset of disability. About 34 percent with locomotor disability and 36 percent population with multiple disabilities were working before the onset of disability. But *the issue of concern is that high percentage of population with disability lost work after the onset of disability*. 77 percent persons with mental illness followed by 70 percent persons with multiple disability and 61 percent persons with mental retardation lost their jobs after the onset of disability, percent of persons losing job after onset of hearing disability was lowest at 16 percent. Nearly 18 percent persons with locomotor disability, 13 percent with low vision and 11 percent with multiple disabilities had to change their work after the onset of disability.

If we look as the present status of usual activity status of disabled population (Table 6), we find that 60 percent of persons suffering with mental retardation and mental illness are not able to work because of disability. Among the mentally retarded persons who are working, they are mostly engaged in “other works” (23 percent), attending educational institutes (8 percent) and “attending domestic duties” (3 percent). Among the mentally ill who are working 6 percent “attend domestic duties” and 4 percent do “own account work”. Most of the persons with multiple disability (42 percent) and persons with blindness (55 percent) are also not engaged in any kind of work because of their disability. Among the persons with blindness, 7 percent “attend domestic duties” and about 4 percent do “own account work” and “attend educational institution”. Contrary to the above people with low vision, hearing, speech, locomotor and multiple disabilities have better work status. Best being for hearing were only 8 percent are not able to work because of disability.

Eighteen percent persons with hearing disability “attend to domestic duties only” and about 15 percent do “own account work” and “other types of work”. About 30 percent person with speech disability and 20 percent persons with locomotor disability “attend educational institution”.

Conclusion

The result shows considerable state-wise variation in prevalence of disability in India. Illiteracy is higher among children with mental disability, blindness and speech disability. Interestingly, more than 75 percent disabled children have not attended pre-school intervention programmes and those who were enrolled to ordinary school have eventually discontinued due to disability. The major reasons for not enrolling in special schools are disability status, school not known and ‘parents not interested’. Among disabled, people challenged with mental retardation and locomotor disabilities have least work participation. Most of the people had to quit their jobs due to onset of disability. This highlights the need for intervention to meet the alternative educational and employment needs for the disabled population in India. Recognizing the different type of limitation of opportunities due to disability, sensitive programmes for improving the educational status and work participation are urgently warranted to bring the disabled in the mainstream of society

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Table 1: Prevalence of all types of disabilities per 100000 populations in the major states of India, 2002.

Major States	Mental		Low				Total		
	retardation	Mental illness	Blindness	Low vision	Hearing	Speech		Locomotor	Multiple
Tamil Nadu	0.81	0.75	1.51	0.83	2.75	0.80	9.38	2.75	19.58
Andhra Pradesh	0.59	0.62	1.90	0.96	2.01	1.14	9.26	2.77	19.24
Assam	0.37	0.85	0.88	0.38	1.16	1.02	3.38	0.35	8.39
Bihar	0.52	0.84	1.12	0.40	0.73	0.69	8.87	1.22	14.39
Chhattisgarh	0.44	0.76	1.42	0.75	2.52	0.60	9.21	2.72	18.42
Gujarat	0.58	0.83	0.99	0.27	1.67	0.68	8.77	2.40	16.20
Haryana	0.62	0.77	1.13	0.24	1.57	0.91	10.38	1.25	16.87
Jammu & Kashmir	0.73	1.23	1.22	0.66	1.21	0.90	5.40	0.76	12.10
Jharkhand	0.45	0.66	0.98	0.18	0.99	0.81	5.73	1.06	10.87
Karnataka	0.57	0.35	1.46	0.80	1.25	0.57	6.73	1.91	13.66
Kerala	1.09	2.22	1.28	0.85	2.39	1.09	8.72	3.50	21.16
Madhya Pradesh	0.55	0.89	1.81	0.50	1.08	0.72	9.89	1.55	16.98
Maharashtra	0.70	0.76	1.88	0.55	1.97	0.83	9.63	2.35	18.67
Orissa	0.77	1.44	2.26	1.88	3.83	0.74	9.93	2.23	23.08
Punjab	0.89	0.74	1.48	0.48	1.35	0.81	12.18	1.53	19.46
Rajasthan	0.56	0.66	1.29	0.29	0.95	0.62	7.65	1.19	13.21
Uttar Pradesh	0.68	0.86	2.04	0.54	1.23	0.67	10.88	2.06	18.96
Uttaranchal	0.79	0.84	1.58	0.59	1.85	1.48	7.28	1.25	15.65
West Bengal	0.82	1.50	1.55	0.75	2.00	0.92	7.43	2.29	17.27
India	0.65	1.50	1.56	0.61	1.63	0.79	8.83	1.98	16.94

Figure 1: Percentage of people acquiring disability at different ages in India.

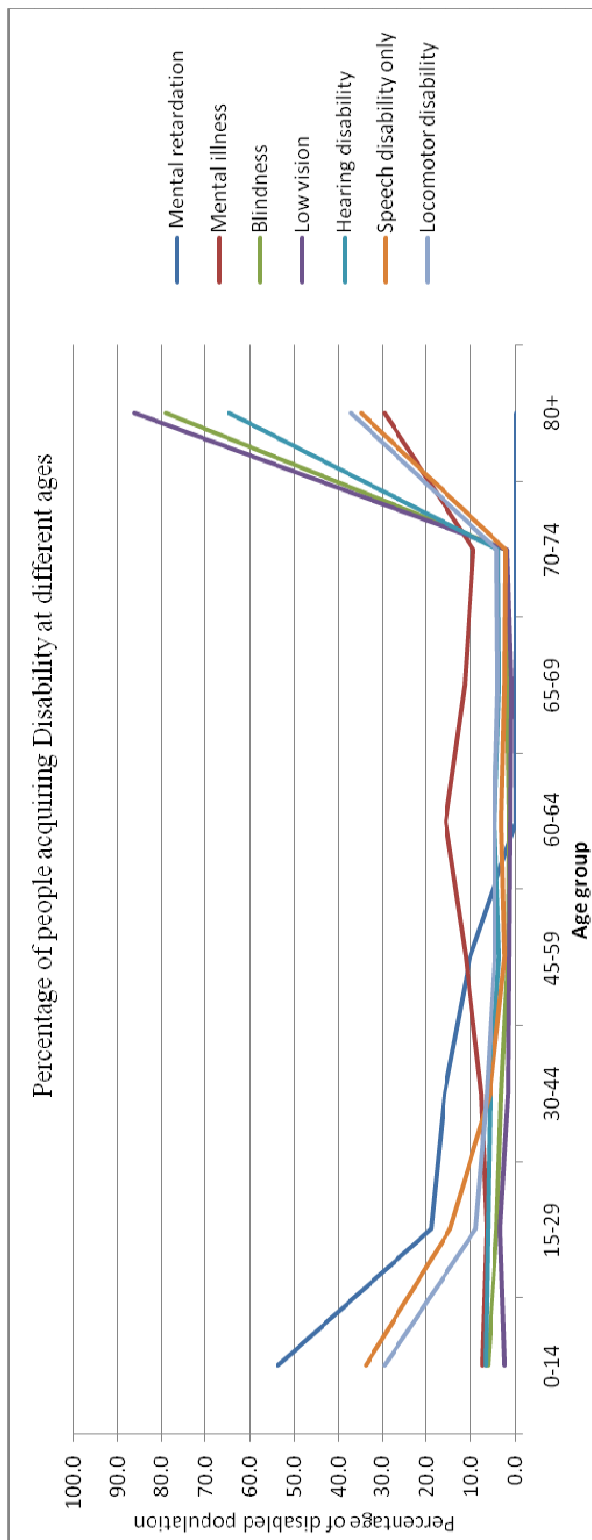


Table 2: Percentage distribution of causes of disabilities by disability types, India, 2002.

Type of disability by various causes of disability			
	(100)	(100)	(100)
Mental Disability	Vision Disability	Hearing Disability	(100)
Serious illness during childhood	14	Cataract	24
Head injury in childhood	4	Other eye disease	16
Not known	35	Old age	25
Other reasons	47	Other reasons	35
Speech Disability	(100)	Locomotors Disability	(100)
Paralysis	23	Polio	34
Other illness	22	Stroke	8
Not known	15	Injury other than burns	30
Other reasons	40	Other reasons	28

Figure 2. Bar diagram showing the level of education of the disabled children aged 5 to 18 years, India, 2002.

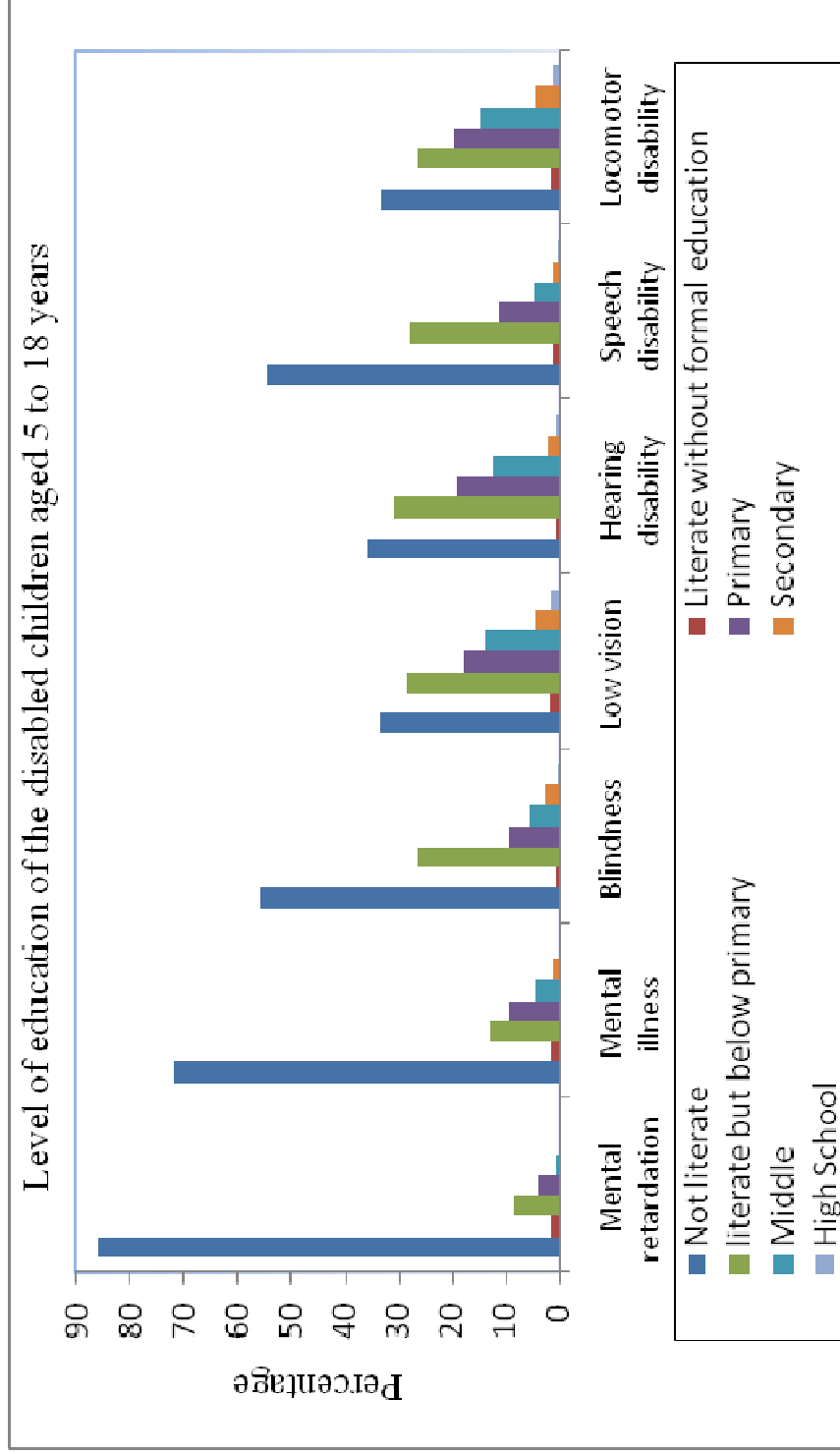


Table 3: School enrollment status of children aged 5 to 18 years in India.

Type of disability	Whether the child has attended pre-school intervention programme		Whether the child was ever enrolled in ordinary school		If ever enrolled in ordinary school whether continuing		If enrolled in ordinary school whether discontinued due to disability		If never enrolled or discontinued in ordinary school then whether enrolled in special school		If enrolled in special school whether continuing	
	yes	No	yes	No	yes	No	yes	No	yes	No	yes	No
Mental retardation	6.94	93.06	28.23	71.77	45.8	54.2	73.32	26.36	8.71	91.29	74.63	23.98
Mental illness	10.29	89.71	39.77	60.23	32.37	67.63	75.62	24.38	6.45	93.55	60.69	35.08
Blindness	22.71	77.29	28.41	71.59	64.76	35.24	72.56	27.44	24.19	75.81	94.84	5.16
Low vision	16.59	83.41	71.43	28.57	68.9	31.1	66.45	33.55	6.58	93.42	22.5	77.5
Hearing disability	15.79	84.21	72.2	27.8	69.55	30.45	55.92	44.08	3.01	96.99	86.94	13.06
Speech disability	17.08	82.92	47.61	52.39	74.13	25.87	51.09	48.9	18.03	81.97	85.24	14.33
Locomotor disability	12.92	87.08	72.68	27.32	77.7	22.3	33.34	66.5	2.3	97.68	44.72	54.39

Table 4: Reasons for non enrollment in Special School if not enrolled / discontinued in Ordinary school of children aged 5-18 years in India.

Type of disability	Due to disability	School not known	Difficulty in getting admission	School far away	Expensive	Parents not interested	For participation in household economic activity	For other economic reasons	For attending domestic chores		Other reasons
									attending domestic chores	Other reasons	
Mental retardation	52.24	17.19	0.87	5.88	3.17	11.17	0.27	2.24	0.06	6.9	
Mental illness	46.9	15.21	1.45	5.21	3.8	11.29	0.67	1.95	1.23	12.27	
Blindness only	42.54	15.8	0.11	7.54	5.36	14.25	1.74	2.99	0.22	9.45	
Low vision only	21.05	22.05	-	2.71	4.37	27.32	-	6.26	2.18	14.07	
Hearing disability	25.52	18.87	0.59	8.25	4.25	16.94	5.68	4.67	1.08	14.14	
Speech disability	34.3	18.53	0.9	9.96	4.57	15.48	0.98	5.37	0.3	9.63	
Locomotor disability	30.78	16.4	0.5	6.69	5.2	15.36	2.25	6.97	0.93	14.93	

Table 5: Reasons for discontinuation in Special School of children aged 5-18 years in India.

Type of disability	Due to disability	Difficulty in getting admission	Expensive	Parents not interested	For participation in household economic activity			Other reasons	For attending domestic chores	Other reasons
					economic activity	economic reasons	domestic chores			
Mental retardation	19.77	20.54	10.14	10.7	-	-	2.7	-	36.15	
Mental illness	30.33	10.25	5.2	11.45	15.37	-	-	-	27.39	
Blindness	37.16	9.22	6.54	-	-	-	-	-	35.74	
Low vision	-	-	-	50.79	-	-	-	-	49.21	
Hearing disability	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Speech disability	7.61	24.6	3.28	9.35	0.61	6.84	0.04	43.63		
Locomotor disability	15.52	8.69	4.61	4.44	1.38	42.64	1.63	20.98		

Fig 3 Work status before the onset of disability in India

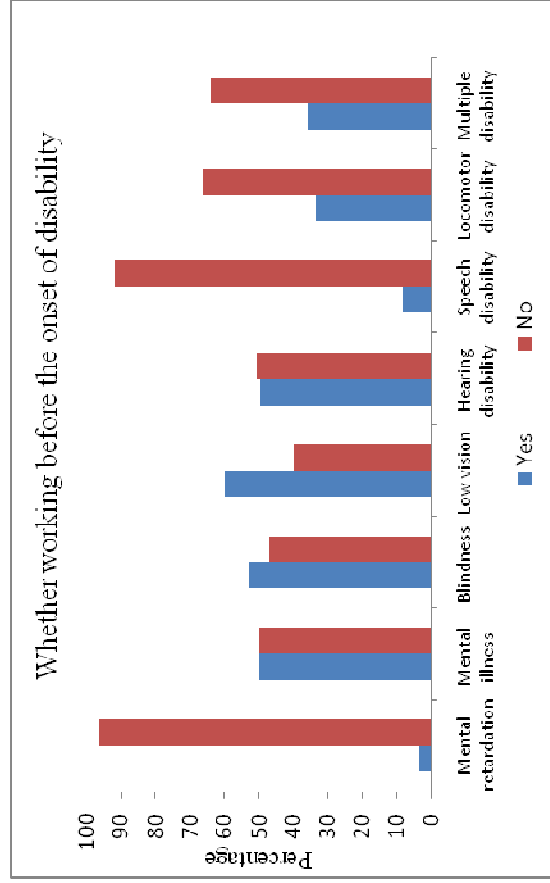


Fig 4 Loss/change in work due to onset of disability in India

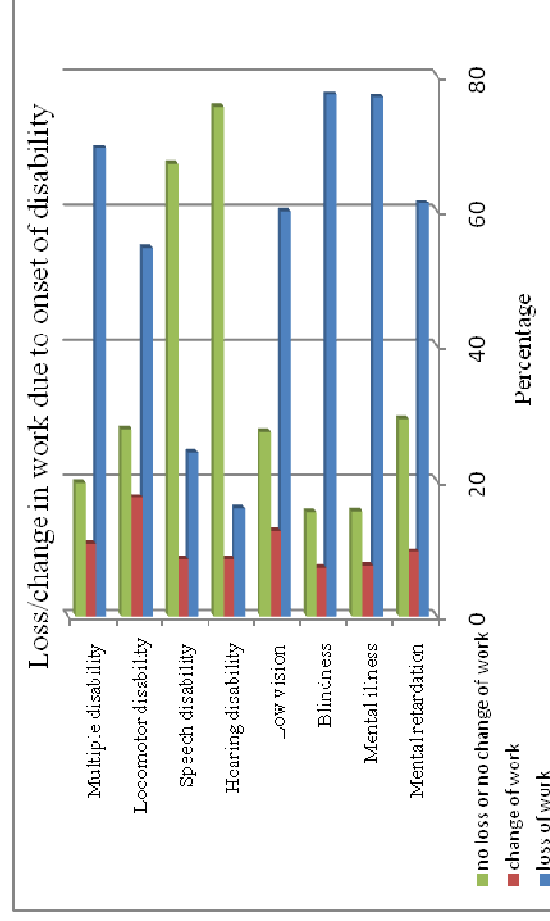


Table 6: Usual activity status of the disabled population in India

Type of disability	Own account worker	Worked as helper in h.h. Enterprise	In other types of work	Attended educational institution	Attended domestic duties only	Not able to work due to disability	Other work
Mental retardation	0.9	2.7	2.2	8.4	3.4	59.1	23.4
Mental illness	3.6	3.1	5.7	2.7	6.4	60.3	18.3
Blindness	4.3	1.7	2.6	4.5	7.2	54.6	25.1
Low vision	8.8	3.6	7.2	4.7	13.3	36.3	26.2
Hearing disability	15.6	5.9	15.6	7.3	17.5	8.8	29.5
Speech disability	5.4	5.7	8.4	30.1	8.3	14.7	27.5
Locomotor	11.8	4.4	7.3	19.0	10.1	26.0	21.7
Multiple	6.7	5.7	8.8	1.1	9.8	42.0	26.3

APPENDIX

Definitions of disability followed by NSS

Disability-Person with restrictions or lack of abilities to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being was treated as having disability. It excluded illness/injuries of recent origin (morbidity) resulting into temporary loss of ability to see, hear, speak or move.

Mental disability- Difficulty in understanding routine instruction. Who do not carry out activities like others of similar age, Exhibit behavior like talking to self, laughing crying, staring, violence, fear and suspicion without reason.

Vision disability-No light perception (both eyes), has light perception but can't count fingers correctly at a distance of one meter even with spectacles (normally uses spectacles, normally does not use spectacles). Has light perception but can't count fingers correctly at a distance of three meter even with spectacles (normally uses spectacles, normally does not use spectacles).

Hearing disability-Will not be considered disabled if he can hear with one ear. Person will be considered disabled irrespective of hearing aid. Profound disability: cant hear at all or only loud sound. Severe: Can hear only shouted words. Moderate: nor profound nor severe, but would usually ask for repetition

Speech disability-Speech not understood by listener. Those who speak only limited words. Speech not understood due to defect in speaking (stammering, nasal voice etc).

Locomotor disability-Loss or lack of normal ability to execute distinctive activities associated with movement of self and object from place to place. Physical deformity (other than those involving hands or legs).loss or absence or inactivity of whole or part of hands legs or body due to problems like paralysis. Those with physical deformity other than that of limbs.