

Bridging The Gaps

An Analysis Of Rights Of Persons With Disabilities & Policy Implementation In Sindh.

Abbreviations

ACT	Refers to the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AJ&K	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
BRT	Bus for Rapid Transit
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
CWDs	Children with Disabilities
DPO	Disable People Organization
ERO	Employment & Rehabilitation Ordinance
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
HEC	Higher Education Commission
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Organization
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NADRA	National Database & Registration Authority
NAP	National Action Plan
NARC	National Association for Retarded Children
NCRDP	National Counsel for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons
NFWWD	National Forum for Women with Disabilities
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPPD	National Policy for Persons with Disabilities
PAB	Pakistan Association of the Blind
PCRDP	Provincial Counsel for Rehabilitation of Disable Persons
PJNS	Pakistan Journal of Neurological Sciences
PPAF	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
PSRD	Pakistan Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SCNIC	Special Computerized National Identity Card
SDC	Skill Development Centre
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPDPA	Sindh Persons with Disabilities Protection Authority
STEP	Special Talent Exchange Program
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Conventions on the rights of the person with disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USA	United States of America
VRC	Vocational Rehabilitation Centre
WHAR	World Health Assembly Resolution
WHO	World Health Organization

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research has been conducted with the comprehensive and indispensable support of the legal, paralegal, and technical teams of The Pakistan Legal United Society (PLUS). We hereby extend formal acknowledgment and appreciation to each individual whose dedicated efforts were crucial to the successful completion of this project.

We expressly acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Manzoor Sajrani, whose expert insights were foundational to the research process, and Ms. Rizwana Hussain, Executive Director of PLUS, whose leadership and steadfast support critically shaped the direction of this work. Further recognition is accorded to Ms. Salma Habib Bhutto, Ms. Mahrukh Ahmed, and Mr. Ganesh Kumar, for their vital assistance throughout this project.

Special acknowledgment is hereby extended to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Government of Sindh, for their provision of essential data pertaining to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Further appreciation is directed towards the PLUS legal team, consisting of Advocate Javed and Advocate Muneeb Ahmed, whose invaluable assistance in both the collection and analysis of field data, as well as their thorough examination of legal frameworks related to the rights of PWDs, has been instrumental in ensuring the methodological soundness and precision of this research. Their legal expertise has been critical in maintaining the study's accuracy, integrity, and comprehensive scope.

Additionally, we extend our gratitude to Mr. Faizan Ahmed, who expertly designed this document, contributing to its clarity and presentation.

This research, titled "Bridging the Gaps: An Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Policy Implementation in Sindh," is the culmination of the collective efforts of all involved, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions to this significant endeavor.

Foreword

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Government of Sindh, has consistently demonstrated its unwavering commitment to advancing the rights and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Guided by a vision of equitable access, dignity, and empowerment, the DEPDP has worked tirelessly to promote systemic reforms that ensure the social, legal, and economic inclusion of PWDs across all sectors of society.

In this journey of transformative change, the DEPDP has engaged with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, legal entities, and technical experts, whose partnership has significantly bolstered its capacity to achieve impactful outcomes. Among these, the collaboration with The Pakistan Legal United Society (PLUS) has been particularly remarkable. PLUS has emerged as a vital partner, contributing its expertise and resources to address key areas affecting the lives of PWDs, including inclusive education, accessible employment opportunities, mobility and accessibility, and the social and legal rights of PWDs.

This collaboration has yielded substantial progress in identifying and addressing the structural and policy gaps that hinder the equitable participation of PWDs. PLUS's contribution to evidence-based research, policy analysis, and capacity building has complemented the DEPDP's mandate to create a more inclusive and accessible society. Together, we have laid the groundwork for enhanced policy implementation that ensures the realization of the rights of PWDs as enshrined in national and international legal frameworks.

This document, titled **"Bridging the Gaps: An Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Policy Implementation in Sindh,"** encapsulates the collaborative efforts of the DEPDP and its partners. It reflects a shared commitment to fostering inclusion and equality for PWDs through comprehensive analysis and actionable recommendations. The insights and findings within this document will undoubtedly serve as a critical resource for policymakers, advocates, and all stakeholders striving to advance the rights of PWDs.

As we move forward, the DEPDP reaffirms its dedication to working in concert with all partners to uphold the principles of accessibility, dignity, and equity for PWDs. It is our hope that the collective efforts documented herein will continue to inspire and drive meaningful progress toward an inclusive society where every individual can thrive without barriers.

Message by Reviewer

Dr. Keenjhar Rani - Associate Professor - Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Jamshoro

First of all, I appreciate the research has been made by Pakistan Legal United Society (PLUS) team under the leadership of Mr. Altaf Hussain Khoso and with support of the Department of Empowerment of Persons Disabilities. Team including Doctor Manzoor Sajnrani, Salma Bhutto and Ganesh Kumar highlighted issue regarding PWDs. I have gone through main points of the research, it should be appreciated. Most of us are today better informed about PWDs, with a better appreciation of the issues, thus developing a more positive image of PWDs as full and equal members of society. Very few people actually work on it. Sindh Government is steadfast in its commitment to promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Government of Sindh is already working for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are related to PWDs. I appreciate Sindh Government to take steps to complete this. Every person, regardless of ability, deserves the right to live with autonomy, dignity, and respect, free from discrimination or prejudice." As it is said that equality is not privilege its basic right. PWDs are mostly unseen, unheard and uncounted persons in our society. Let us endeavor towards creating a society where the rights of individuals with disabilities are not considered discretionary, but rather integral components of human rights. In this society, they should enjoy unhindered access to all social benefits provided by the state, including medical, social, psychological support and rehabilitation services, as well as education, employment devoid of any discrimination. PWDs should be afforded equal opportunities, reasonable accommodations, and accessibility across all facets of life, encompassing transportation, public spaces, and access to information.

BRIDGING THE GAPS: AN ANALYSIS OF RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES & POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN SINDH.

Abstract

The significance of individuals with disabilities in societal structures has increased, yet governmental policies in developing nations fail to adequately address their needs. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive information regarding persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Pakistan. To bridge this gap, our team Pakistan Legal United Society (PLUS) implementation partner with Department of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Government of Sindh, conducts a thorough literature review and key informant interviews, aiming to identify and address knowledge deficiencies and provide insights to shape recommendations for filling existing gaps in implementation of Laws framed by federal and provincial governments focusing on Sindh Province. Additionally, this paper aims to scrutinize the opportunities afforded to individuals with disabilities by the national and provincial governments. This study employs triangulation methods to capture the contextual nuances and offer recommendations tailored for policymakers and implementing entities. The data was collected from 170 people from different organizations randomly from 6 cities of Sindh Province including Karachi, Sukkur, Badin, Naushero Feroz, Hyderabad, and Dadu. They were professionals, students and PWDs. Data was collected through questionnaire from both males, females and transgender with percentage 70%, 21% and 9% respectively. More than 40% people are not aware of PWDs rights enshrined in the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018. Results indicate that PWDs are not getting their rights and they face discrimination challenges in getting education, health care, jobs, transport services and access to justice. The recommendations have been documented to provide the baseline for advocacy and to create awareness at all levels to protect the rights of PWDs.

Highlights

Keywords: Disability, Disabled persons, Gaps and Barriers, Policy Implementation, Sindh Province

- Approximately 1.3 billion people worldwide live with significant disabilities, representing around 15-16% of the global population, or roughly 1 in every 6 individuals.
- Persons with disabilities (PWDs) have a life expectancy that is, on average, 20 years shorter than that of non-disabled individuals, largely due to their increased susceptibility to various health conditions such as stroke, depression, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and poor oral health.
- PWDs encounter numerous problems such as health, education, discrimination, employment and access to justice.
- Accessing transportation poses a significant challenge for PWDs, being 15 times more difficult and often unaffordable compared to their non-disabled counterparts.
- The health challenges faced by PWDs stem from a range of inequitable circumstances, including poverty, discrimination, stigma, exclusion from education and employment opportunities, as well as barriers within the healthcare system.

1. Background Information

Globally, disability awareness has got great concern because of diversity issues grow and as legislative frameworks highlighting this population growth. Disability is a bitter truth; it is only the condition of body and mind such as blindness, dementia, or spinal cord injury, and some environmental and personal factors. It didn't separate from being human (Bickenbach, Cieza, & Sabariego). Globally, approximately 1.3 billion people experience remarkable disability. It denotes 15-16% of the population of the world, or it can be described as 1 in 6 of us (Kim & Ryu, 2023). PWDs are growing in number due to an increase in non-communicable health condition. PWDs are in several groups and factors including gender identity, age, race, religion, and even economic situation is counted in this society (Veenstra, 2011). PWDs die 20 years earlier than non-disabled people due to poorer health, and other factors (Bickenbach et al.).

Every country has different number of PWDs and different legislation. Pakistan does not have uniform national definition of disability due to no national disability registry in the society (Abidi & Sharma, 2014). The population of Pakistan stands at approximately 231.4 million, as per the findings of Pakistan's 6th Population and Housing Census conducted in 2021. However, there hasn't been a comprehensive national survey conducted to accurately assess the true prevalence of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Pakistan. Estimates suggest that there are around 5.035 million PWDs, although the lack of confirmed data leads to variations in reported figures across different sources. According to recent electoral vote data from 2024, approximately 500,000 individuals with disabilities are registered to cast their votes (Tribune, 2024). The current data regarding disability in Pakistan is both limited and generally unreliable. Unfortunately, comprehensive statistical data on disability has not been collected during any of the previous national population censuses (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). The PWDs experience several sociocultural discriminations in the society of Pakistan. There are mobility barriers for them and they are not considered the part of the mainstream society. They experience difficulties in getting admission in schools, accessing healthcare services and transportation issues. Even they cannot get an official certificate of disability easily or vote for their candidate in elections (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). Regrettably, despite the existence of legislation like Section 9 Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018, aimed at safeguarding the educational rights of individuals with disabilities, its enforcement has been lacking. The law, which specifically addresses the right to education for people with disabilities, remains largely symbolic and has not been put into practice effectively. Furthermore, many educational institutions have failed to adequately address the provisions outlined in this legislation regarding the rights of disabled individuals to education.

In Pakistan, according to the report published, "PWDs are the victims of only sympathy model. Several organization has made them charitable model, Healthcare organization have made them medical model (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). There are several laws and legislations but true implementation of these legislations and laws are challenging. Despite the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2008 during a meeting in the United Nations General Assembly, Pakistan still faces several unresolved issues in its implementation. Efforts by the Government of Pakistan and the UNCRPD to enforce these legislations on the ground remain incomplete (Hussain, 2022). Reflecting the increase in disability awareness, research concern on PWDs has also been increasing. In Pakistan, there are several departments working on it but no large-scale national survey has been conducted to present the true burden of disability. Due to no confirm data, different sources shows different number. It is still lacking research and policy implementation. The barriers which are faced during this implementation phase are objectives of this research to find and do gap analysis for more productive results during the second or third phase of the implementation process. In addition, this research aims to conduct a critical examination of the existing research gap in fulfilling the needs of individuals with disabilities in Sindh Province, with the goal of contributing valuable insights to better empower and support this community.

This research also aims to identify and analyze the existing gaps in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities for futuristic collective goals. By conducting a thorough examination of available literature, gathering firsthand experiences through surveys and interviews, and collaborating with relevant stakeholders from Sindh Province, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and propose potential solutions.

2. History of Disability and Fight for the Rights

In the world, the problem of disability was first got more concern during 1900s. A league was structured during 1930s, for the physically disabled people. In 1948, National Institute of Mental Health and other organization worked well for the rights of PWDs. During 1960 and 1963, research on disability was conducted by the leadership of that time. As interest in disability issues grew, psychiatric patients in the 1980s united to form a group called "We Are Not Alone." This initiative led to the formation of various other groups, culminating in the establishment of the National Association for Retarded Children (NARC). These collective efforts drew the attention of the UN Congress, resulting in the enactment of laws and policies aimed at safeguarding the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The United States of America spearheaded this movement by enacting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990, marking the first significant civil rights legislation for PWDs. Subsequently, the ADA underwent amendments in 2008, expanding its coverage to better protect individuals with disabilities (Oldfrey et al.). Before this, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities were passed (CRPD, 2006).

3. Current International Storyline of Disability

If we see the history, several countries started to fight for the rights of PWDs since 1800's. International laws are already there, since 1940s, countries have an obligation under global law, it has been mentioned in 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Hussain, 2022). Globally, approximately 1.3 billion people experience remarkable disability with a mild, moderate or severe nature (Yamin, 2005). It denotes 15-16% of the population of the world, or it can be described as 1 in 6 of us (Kim & Ryu, 2023) and 93 million of these are children and most of them are out of school (Haishan fu, 2019; SPRC, 2021a). Recently, the World Health Assembly Resolution (WHAR) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) receive the highest attainable standard of healthcare. Member States are urged to guarantee that PWDs have access to top-tier health facilities as part of global health coverage, equitable protection during emergencies, and equal access to comprehensive public health interventions across various sectors (WHO, 2021). The Convention on the Rights of PWDs requires States Parties to ensure the same facilities. Three main things should be ensured by governments and health sector partners can do. (1) They should consider health equity for PWDs in all health sector actions. (2) They should include PWDs in decision-making processes because they know better about their problems. (3) They can observe how PWDs are being approached and got benefits from health sector services, decisions and actions (WHO, 2021, 2023).

4. Disability Framework and Organizations working for PWDs in Pakistan

Considering the World Health Organization (WHO) report, it is expected that around 31 Million persons are living with some form of disability (WHO, 2021). In 2008, Pakistan became the signatory of the UNCRPD on 25th September 2008. However, it was ratified on 5th July 2011. There are several laws and ACTs have been passed (Hussain, 2022). For instance, laws like the Disabled Persons' (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981, the Punjab Disabled Persons' (Employment and Rehabilitation) Amendment Act, 2015, the Balochistan PWDs Act, 2017, and the Sindh Empowerment of PWDs Act, 2018, focus solely on addressing the needs of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) at both federal and provincial levels. In addition to these, laws concerning PWDs provincial legislations for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir have already been introduced in their respective provincial assemblies.

5. Government Departments Working on Inclusion of PWDs in Sindh Province:

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD) Sindh and Sindh Persons with Disabilities Protection Authority (SPDPA), Government of Sindh, have been working to implement Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018 effectively with different implementing partners to uphold the rights of PWDs in Sindh Province. It works closely with Pakistan Legal united Society (PLUS) to provide free legal Aid to PWDs, to ensure the inclusion of the PWDs in education, health care, transportation, social public places, 5 percent employment quota and raising awareness, through Print Media, Social Media , Radio and T.V as well as through awareness campaigns on the rights of the persons with disabilities. Department of Empowerment of Person with Disability has established several centers in Sindh Province to support and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

(For further information the DEPD can be accessed through www.sindh.gov.pk)

The Provinces also follow its own constitutional, legal, policy, and institutional framework to ensure the rights of PWDs since the 1980s (SPRC, 2021a) because several legislations (Assembly, 1981, 2008; Dgse, 2006; Jcsp, 2022; SPRC, 2021a, 2021b) have been passed related to PWDs in Pakistan since 1980. Few of them are given below:

- Employment and Rehabilitation- Ordinance (1981)
- Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) (Amendment) Act, 2015
- National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002)
- National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities (2006)
- The Accessibility Code of Pakistan (2006)
- The Special Citizens Act (2008)
- Special Citizens (Right to Concessions in Movement) Act (2009)
- Special Citizens (Right to Concessions in Movement) Act, 2009; Government of Pakistan
- Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018
- Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Rules 2021

6. Current Pakistan storyline of disability:

Pakistan stands as the 6th most populated country in the world. Majority of the population lives in rural areas, i.e. 60%. According to Human Rights Watch, the number of PWDs in Pakistan vary from 3.3 million to 27 million (Mohr, 2020). While according to census 1998, number of population of PWDs was 2.49% (3,286,630) of the total population in Pakistan, out of which 58% were male and 42% female. In details, 8.06 (2,64762) percent were blind, 7.43 percent deaf/mute, 18.93 percent crippled, 6.39 percent insane, 7.60 percent mentally retarded (SPRC, 2021a). While Census 2021, the population of Pakistan is around 231.4 million but no large-scale national survey has been conducted to present the true number of disability in Pakistan. It has been reported that estimated number of PWDs is 5.035 million.

Table 3 Disability Details By Province (Till 28-02-2021), Source: pbs.gov.pk (PBS, 2020).

S.no	Province	PWD
1	AJK	13,329
2	Baluchistan	10,495
3	GB	7,886
4	Islamabad	6,706
5	KP	116,491
6	Punjab	147,539
7	Sindh	69,387
	Grand Total	371,833

Because of the absence of confirmed data, various sources present different numbers. Referring to the document from 2020, the compliance with the decision of the Honorable Supreme Court dated 28-02-2020 has resulted in the accumulation of data received from NADRA up to the present, as depicted in Figure 1(PBS, 2020). According to recent election vote data 2024, there are 500 k special people, eligible to cast vote (Tribune, 2024). From above data, a huge difference can be noticed. This indicates that the registered PWDs cases are very less than the actual numbers of PWDs shown in different sources. There should be a national large scale survey to register the exact number of PWDs in Pakistan so that facilities should be given accordingly. According to recent election Vote Data 2024, there are 500 k special people to cast vote (Tribune, 2024). Annual growth rate of PWDs was documented as 2.65 % per annum more than the annual growth rate (2.03%) of total population of Pakistan (SPRC, 2021a). It is very difficult to understand and believe this kind of data (SPRC, 2021a). Employment is big issue recently for PWDs. According to a report, only 14% of PWDs are in work, rest number of PWDs is reliant on family members for financial support.



Figure 1 Disability Details by category (Till 28-02-2021), Source: pbs.gov.pk (PBS, 2020).

Regarding sustainable development goals, practically all of the 17 SDGs can be considered for PWDs either directly or indirectly. The SDGs are portion of a determined 2030 Agendas around the world for Sustainable Development. The main principle of ‘leave no one behind’. In fact, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have evolved from their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). PWDs emphasized their exclusion from the MDGs agenda due to the absence of any reference to disability. Pakistan stands as the pioneer in the world for localizing the SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to realizing its vision. The establishment of SDG units and their diligent efforts followed a unanimous parliamentary resolution passed on 19 February 2016. Certain SDGs hold particular significance for PWDs, as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 Sustainable Development Goals related to Basic rights for PWDs

SDG 01	No Poverty	Eradicate Poverty in All Its Forms
SDG 03	Good Health and Well-being	Ensure Access to Quality Healthcare Foster Well-Being for All
SDG 04	Quality of Education	Achieve Inclusive and Equitable Education Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for Everyone
SDG 08	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Advance Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth Ensure Access to Productive Employment and Decent Work for All
SDG 11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Build Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements
SDG 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development Ensure Access to Justice for All Establish Effective, Accountable, and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels



Except SDGs, Pakistan also has better ordinance. An ordinance was passed in 1981 titled “Disabled Persons (Employment & Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981 that shed light on the responsibility of the state in facilitating and providing the PWDs rights, protection, education, health services and employment (Assembly, 1981). Later Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018, and Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2021 passed by the Sindh Assembly to empower PWDs. According to recent ACT for PWD, following are the basic rights of persons with disabilities (Assembly, 2021; Sindh-Laws, 2018):

a) Basic rights to be implemented

According to special citizen rights and provincial legislation with respect to PWDs, the PWDs should be provided concessions in public and private transport. Air, railway, and other transport authorities are bound to charge half rates from PWDs. Other main rights are explained below which are taken from the recent ACT (Assembly, 2021).

b) Women, children, elderly people and transgender with disabilities

In order to officially recognize Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), they should be granted a Special CNIC (Computerized National Identity Card) to all on easy accessible conditions. This Special CNIC guarantees access to education, social welfare programs, healthcare services, employment opportunities, and various facilities such as discounts at utility stores and on transportation services. Empowering PWDs in this manner enables them to actively participate in society on the basis of equality as well as equity being citizens of state. However, while implementation is underway, it remains somewhat inadequate. Therefore, there should be a Commission tasked with auditing the situation to ensure effective implementation and address any shortcomings (DAWN, 2024).

c) Equality and non-discrimination of persons with disability

PWDs encounter discrimination and various social challenges. They often experience isolation and live on the fringes of society. With the exception of children, they are not commonly observed participating actively in societal activities such as education, employment, or business ventures, alongside their able-bodied counterparts. The isolation of PWDs is influenced by multiple factors (Oldfrey et al.). Disability is still considered a stigma in our society; it is even considered a punishment for the sins and ill-doings so most families feel shame (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). Even for those who strive to overcome societal barriers and integrate, they often encounter obstacles related to mobility.

d) Ease of access and mobility

The buildings, educational institutes, and religious places are not designed in such a way to fulfill the needs of PWDs who have mobility dysfunction. Very few public and private buildings and shopping malls constructed with facilities for PWDs (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). A ramp is very important facility for the mobility of a PWDs using wheelchair. Every building should have this facility specially hospitals. Courts, schools and colleges do not have such facilities. In religious places, there should be this facility. Parks do not have such facilities to enter in the park for PWD (Oldfrey et al.). Have you ever seen a train? Can any normal person climb those stairs? Of course not. There should be such facilities.

e) Equity in education

Several children with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries cannot attend school. With the purpose of education is for all including children with disabilities, research is needed on barriers to schooling to identify targets for intervention (Eide, Lamichhane, & Neupane, 2021). There has been positive initiative for educating PWDs such as mild Autism and other several organizations are making great efforts. Sindh Government itself and other organizations with the support of Sindh Government have been working on education of PWDs. Even though, many children with disabilities cannot get admission in school due to several factors such as reference, poverty and other discrimination in enrolment assessment process tons, behavioral misconduct, bullying by fellow students are major causes. It is reported that children with disability were directly refused to get admission in elite schools due to physical disability, even though they are very intellectual. They have the medical certificate proof with no intellectual limitation and can perform equally as other children do (Shaukat, 2023).

According to Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2013, “ensure that the PWDs child should not be discriminated, he/she has equal rights of pursuing and completing education (PAS, 2013). Likewise, the government has extended its support to the education sector through new policy reforms outlined in the ICT Act of 2020. As per the provisions of this Act, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are entitled to receive free education in both public and private institutions without facing any discrimination. This includes ensuring the availability of necessary infrastructure, free textbooks, wheelchairs, white canes, as well as addressing their psychological needs and facilitating personality development. While laws exist to safeguard these rights, it is imperative to focus on their effective implementation in accordance with the established policies. This requires strengthening the educational sector as whole and allocating resources to ensure the inclusion of all children.

f) Equity in the Employment

Filling significant gaps in the research and understanding of the treatment of PWDs in the workplace could assist in improving employee success on the job and developing more disability-inclusive workplaces (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020).

However, job opportunities for PWDs have been enhanced but Law for 2-5% quota in jobs is not being implemented fully. Human resource practitioners play a vital role in stimulating equitable treatment of PWDs. There should be guidance to practitioner's decisions by solid evidence-based research (Kunbhar, 2023). PWDs are increasing every year and this is an alarming statistic considering the current economic situation in the country that how PWDs can survive. It is reported that most PWDs have God gifted skills; they just need some basic facilities at workplace. If these clever and zealous PWDs are facilitated for community reintegration and employment position, they can play vital role and contribute to the society and the country (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020).

g) Equity in Health and Medical Rehabilitation Services

There is a notable lack of understanding among prominent healthcare professionals regarding the unique challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) except this staff and administration of hospitals is completely unaware of the legal rights of differently-abled persons in health care facilities, in such situation their behavior towards PWDs is not supportive as it should be. Certain hospitals neglect to prioritize the needs of PWDs. Physicians ought to place emphasis not only on the treatment of disabilities but also on their prevention, accurate assessment, and understanding of their profound impact on the lives of PWDs (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). Several PWDs cannot get admission in center, only rich people can, this is discrimination. Of course, this type of attitude in health department is not only discriminatory, but point out a hollow and biased mindset for PWD. There is a need to seriously highlight the difficult situation of disability in our society. It needs input from several stakeholders including the PWDs, governmental organizations, WHO, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media, medical societies and healthcare professionals from different disciplines (WHO, 2021)

7. Policy Implementation

Services and facilities for PWDs are already known and described in the ACT but there is no implementation on several services, for example in higher education institutions (HEI) are rigorously providing limited job opportunities to PWDs. Consequently, programs and policies for PWDs were implemented ineffectively. There are gaps between proposed policy goals with reality experiencing by PWDs (Rathore & Mansoor, 2019; Razaq & Rathore, 2020). The federal government also requires ensuring that the legislation to implement and the movement barriers for PWD are removed. Along with the PWDs themselves, medical professionals and social workers involved with disability management should be asked before drafting any healthcare legislation or policy for the PWDs in future, in the country. Community based Data on PWDs is the necessary to guide these policies. Sindh persons with disability Protection Authority has framed policy and rules according to the Sindh Empowerment of persons with disability (SEPD) 2018 Act on August 12, 2021, which is under implementation process. The rules for policy implementation Published by the government of Sindh in Sindh government gazette ensure free of cost health care insurance, Skill development and livelihood Programs in collaboration with STVETA, interest free loans, on property purchasing at 5% quota 50 percent discounts, and many other benefits are listed in the implementation policy rules regarding free movement, inclusive education as well as social or institutional participation of PWDs under the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2021. The assessment test mechanism tool during the admission should be addressed for PWDs, refusal is cognizable offence. Gaps between proposed policy goals with reality experiencing by PWDs should be checked by concerned authorities. Highlighting the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Sindh Province requires a multi-faceted approach that involves raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, fostering inclusivity, and empowering PWDs themselves.

a) Role of NADRA

PWDs should be issued the special CNIC by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), which permits the registered PWDs to gain several benefits provided by the federal and provincial governments in the country. It has not been Accessible for the PWDs of rural areas. This Special CNIC also ensures access to education, social welfare programs, healthcare services, job positions and facilities like concessions on utilities stores, services of healthcare, education, and transportation could empower PWDs to become active citizens. Including this PWDs from the farther villages face many difficulties to provide documentation such as, birth certificates, B forms for getting their National Identity Cards. Secondly NADRA offices fall into cities mostly in tehsils, where there reaching and arranging private transportation for PWDs becomes difficult to afford that's why many of PWDs have no CNICs. Another step by DEPD organizing Disability Registration Certificate Camp in different districts with working partner and SPDPA it will have a positive impact in the society.

b) Role of Health Department

The healthcare system of every country has a diverse structure and functioning designed to meet the needs of its people using the available resources. Due to the ever-growing population needs and constantly emerging public health issues, it is imperative for any healthcare system to remain dynamic, ready to adjust, identify its limitations, and rectify its flaws by learning from other healthcare models around the world. The systematic care of persons with disabilities should be brought into focus (Khan, Asif, Aslam, Khan, & Hamza, 2023). Rehabilitation plays an essential role in a patient's recovery process. The need for rehabilitation is particularly pronounced in low-to-middle-income countries (LMICs) due to the prevalence of infectious diseases such as pulmonary and spinal infections, armed conflicts, natural disasters, homicides, trauma, and poor access to healthcare. Basic infrastructure should be readily available both at study sites and service centers. Barriers to accessing rehabilitation services include transportation costs, environmental obstacles, lack of employer support, and strain on caregivers. Therefore, attention and investment in research, as well as allocation of funds, are necessary to strengthen the rehabilitation service delivery system. Hospitals, in collaboration with the health department, need to develop a strategic plan to set future directions and standards for available rehabilitation services (Ahmed, Shaikh, Riaz, Midhet, & Zia, 2023).

c) Role of Police Department

Police play a vital role in setting behavioral standards and determining appropriate responses when interacting with PWDs, such as during the filing of a First Information Report (F.I.R) or in other situations. It is crucial to promulgate and enforce laws, policies, and programs aimed at monitoring and protecting the rights of PWDs to information and communication. This includes legislation mandating training for law enforcement agencies, including the police, on the rights and protection needs of PWDs (PID, 2023). Disability-responsive policing is necessary to combat abuse, harassment, incitement to hatred, and discrimination against persons with disabilities living in various communities, with women and children with disabilities being particularly vulnerable. Specific strategies are needed to protect their lives and prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and violence. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mandates that PWDs be provided with "reasonable accommodations" by the police to ensure their equal and unhindered access to justice (PID, 2023). Law enforcement agencies, including the police, should undergo sensitization and training to assist persons with disabilities in their independent living and community inclusion, ensuring their right to privacy and social protection. It is our shared responsibility to raise awareness and provide adequate and appropriate training to police for assisting PWDs in personal mobility in public places, including roads, markets, and community centers. Disability-sensitive and responsive policing can also play a crucial role in overcoming attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disabilities in all settings.

d) Role of social protection programs

Several social protection schemes operate for PWDs, such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), and Pakistan Baitul Mal (PBM). These programs are designed to provide social protection to deserving individuals, with the needs of PWDs being particularly prioritized.

8. Problem Statement

PWDs are not getting treated well in the society. There are very few facilities for them so it's hard to live in Sindh Province. Rights are available in documents but it is lacking of implementation. In school several people bully kids with disabilities and aren't treating them the appropriate way even though ACT has been passed that they have equal rights. Except some schools, the opportunity to participate simply does not exist. Far too often, PWDs are among the last in line for resources and services. Far too regularly, they are the objects simply of pity or, worse, discrimination and abuse. It's sad how many people know PWDs aren't getting treated well and doing nothing about it. It is time to highlight this before all and give them their rights and equal living standards in Sindh Province with the help of Sindh Government and PLUS team.

9. Scope and Objectives of the Research

Globally and nationally, there exists a basic need for truly groundbreaking, collaborative inquiry in education, careers, and easy life to advance approach for PWDs. The scope of the study is limited to Sindh Province, specifically the socioeconomic, gender, legal empowerment of the target group. There is an implementation gap between policies with PWDs in Sindh Province. Purpose of this research is to conduct a literature review of already published research on PWDs. Another objective is to determine the main barriers faced by persons with disabilities in Sindh Province. For this, site visits were undertaken with a set of structured questions to evaluate the actual situation in different sectors. Additionally, group discussions were held with the research team to shape the direction of the study

10. Research Methodology

In this study, a historical, analytical, and comparative approach was adopted in Sindh Province. The research was structured into two main components:

(i) **Literature Review:** A comprehensive review of relevant documents, including research papers, review papers, project reports, review reports, and news articles, was conducted to identify implementation gaps.

(ii) **Primary Data Collection:** Site visits were undertaken with a set of structured questions to evaluate the actual situation in different sectors in Sindh Province. Additionally, group discussions were held with the research team to shape the direction of the study.

After data collection, thorough analysis was conducted to draw conclusions from both the literature review and original Data. Recommendations were formulated based on the findings, focusing on the contributions of the research project and identifying gaps and needs for future consideration.

11. Study Design

This research also aims to identify and analyze the existing gaps in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities for futuristic collective goals. By conducting a thorough examination of available literature, gathering firsthand experiences through surveys and interviews, and collaborating with relevant stakeholders, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in Sindh Province and propose potential solutions. To achieve this objective, the study used a qualitative research method. The primary impetus behind this research method is to develop a well-rounded perspective on the issue, using primary and secondary Data analysis.

a) Sample Size and Sampling Methodology

The targeted sample size was determined using convenient random sampling within categorized clusters.

b) Data Collection

Data were collected from 170 individuals representing various organizations from Sindh Province across six cities: Karachi, Sukkur, Badin, Naushero Feroz, Hyderabad, and Dadu. Participants included professionals, students, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). The primary aim was to assess the level of awareness regarding PWDs' rights and to support the implementation of awareness sessions in organizations. Questionnaires were administered to individuals of all genders, with 70% males, 21% females, and 9% transgender individuals participating.

c) Data Protection

To ensure transparency, the collected data were encrypted and stored securely, with limited access granted only to individuals directly involved in the research team.

d) Language

Data collection teams were carefully selected from the target districts to facilitate communication in the local languages includes Sindhi and Urdu, ensuring participants could share their experiences comfortably. Subsequently, the data were translated into English for analysis and reporting.

e) Privacy and Confidentiality

Personal details of participants were not recorded during data collection to maintain confidentiality and privacy. The research team adhered strictly to ethical guidelines, seeking verbal and/or written informed consent from participants in the target communities before proceeding with data collection.

f) Data Protection:

The data collected was encrypted and stored to ensure transparency, with limited access to individuals outside the direct research team.

g) Ethical Considerations

The Data collection team sought verbal and/or written informed consent from participants in the target communities.

By adhering to robust Data collection methods and ethical standards, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the status of PWDs' rights awareness and inform future interventions to address existing gaps and challenges.

12. Results and Discussion

Demographic Analysis of Participants

The questionnaire survey yielded a robust response, with a total of 170 participants contributing valuable insights. Among these participants, a significant majority of 70% identified as males, highlighting a notable gender distribution within the sample. Conversely, 21% identified as females, while 9% bravely identified as transgender individuals, reflecting a diverse representation of gender identities in the study cohort (see Figure below for a graphical representation). Geographically, the participants showcased a wide-ranging representation, spanning across six prominent cities in Sindh Province.

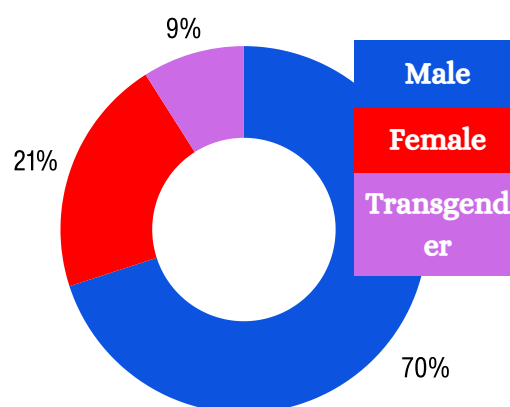


Figure 2 Demographic Analysis of Participants

These cities include Karachi, Sukkur, Badin, Naushero Feroz, Hyderabad, and Dadu, each contributing unique perspectives shaped by their distinct cultural and social landscapes. The inclusion of such diverse geographical backgrounds enriches the study's findings, offering a comprehensive understanding of disability experiences across various regions of Sindh Province. Furthermore, it's noteworthy that the survey encapsulated individuals with a spectrum of disabilities, underscoring the study's inclusivity and sensitivity towards diverse needs. Participants encompassed individuals with physical disabilities, mental health conditions, effects of polio, and hearing impairments, reflecting the multifaceted nature of disability experiences. This comprehensive representation ensures a holistic exploration of disability-related issues, paving the way for nuanced discussions and informed interventions.

13. Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Safeguarding Their Legal Rights

The Pakistan Legal United Society (PLUS), in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Government of Sindh, and Sindh Persons with Disabilities Protection Authority (SPDPA), has diligently undertaken comprehensive measures to promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and safeguard their legal rights. In furtherance of this objective, PLUS has adopted a holistic approach to ensure full compliance with the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018. Through its partnership with DEPD, PLUS has made concerted efforts to protect and advance the rights and interests of PWDs in accordance with the provisions and mandates of the Act.

Following are the key themes which are focused under this research:

- a) Access to justice
- b) Inclusive Education
- c) Right to Health
- d) Disability Registration
- e) Accessible Transportation
- f) Social inclusion
- g) Right to Employment

a. Access to justice

Utilizing a rigorous socio-legal methodology, our research team embarked on a comprehensive examination of the myriad challenges, potential avenues, and notable instances of effective practices pertaining to access to justice for individuals with disabilities within the legal frameworks. Through meticulous analysis, our findings shed light on a pervasive lack of awareness surrounding the rights and provisions safeguarded by the Disability Act of 2018 within the justice system. Alarming, our data revealed that a substantial 40% of respondents remained oblivious to the existence of this crucial legislation and the fundamental rights it enshrines for persons with disabilities (refer to Figure below for a visual depiction of these findings). This glaring knowledge gap not only underscores the pressing need for heightened awareness campaigns but also emphasizes the systemic barriers hindering individuals with disabilities from accessing justice on equal footing.

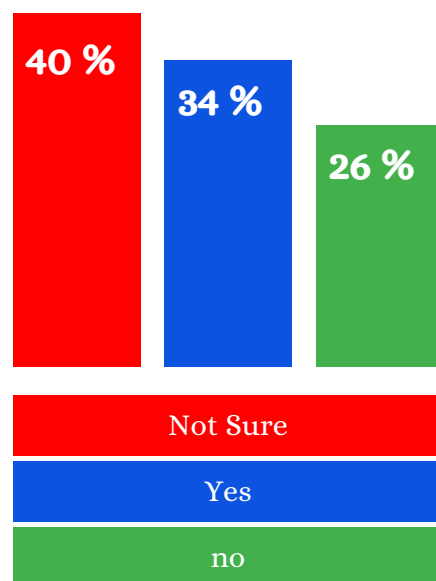


Figure 3 Justice System within the judiciary for PWDs

By uncovering these crucial insights, our research endeavors to spark informed discussions and propel significant reforms toward a justice system that is more inclusive and equitable for every individual in society, regardless of their abilities. The absence of litigation on disability rights issues underscores a broader lack of awareness among persons with disabilities and their advocates regarding their legal rights and obligations. Consequently, urgent attention is warranted not only in disseminating relevant information but also in enhancing its accessibility through various formats and channels. Access to justice serves as a cornerstone for the realization of all human rights, necessitating concerted efforts from judicial actors, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, and persons with disabilities to enhance awareness.

A notable 29% of participants reported instances or experiences of discrimination against persons with disabilities within the judicial system, while 27% remained unsure. Moreover, a staggering 45% highlighted the inefficiency of courts in ensuring easy access to justice, citing the absence of translators for PWDs with hearing or speech impairments. This issue was further highlighted by the PLUS Advocate Mr Muneeb Ahmed Dhamra, who noted that the DEPD department should have facilities available upon our recommendation.

Additionally, 49% of respondents lamented the lack of facilities such as ramps, elevators, disclaimers, or signboards in courts for physically impaired PWDs, indicating a concerning situation within the Sindh Province. Concerning criminal reporting, 47% of respondents noted the absence of user-friendly reporting mechanisms for PWDs to report crimes or seek assistance. Though discriminatory behaviour from the police based on disability was reported rarely, instances of neglect or ignorance towards PWDs were mentioned, such as the charging of a blind worker during a peaceful protest in Lahore. Despite sporadic instances of positive interactions with law enforcement, gaps persist in law, policy, and practice concerning the provision of representation and information on rights for persons with disabilities. The government's efforts are commendable but hindered by a persistent lack of awareness. Efforts should be redoubled to remove barriers to justice through comprehensive awareness-raising strategies encompassing training programs and Media campaigns. These initiatives should adopt a human rights model of disability, targeting judicial officers, lawmakers, policymakers, and law enforcement officials to combat prejudice and promote rights recognition.

Critical to this endeavour is the provision of training on disability rights to a wide array of stakeholders, including police officers, judicial officers, lawyers, victim service professionals, social workers, and detention staff. Enhanced data collection in this domain could further elucidate existing barriers and potential solutions, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable justice system for people with disabilities.

b. Inclusive Education

Within the framework of law and legislation, students with disabilities are unequivocally entitled to equal access to higher education, mirroring the same rights extended to their non-disabled peers. The principle of "equal access" mandates that educational institutions cannot erect barriers preventing individuals with disabilities from participating fully in their programs, services, or activities solely on the basis of their disability. Furthermore, the segregation or exclusion of students with disabilities from enrolment or from interacting with their peers runs counter to these legal mandates. However, our research has uncovered a troubling reality: a staggering 36% of respondents reported instances of discrimination within educational settings, ranging from direct and indirect discrimination to the failure to implement reasonable adjustments, instances of harassment, and even victimization.

Enshrined within the Equality Act is a clear directive prohibiting discrimination against students with disabilities by institutions of further education and training, including colleges, universities, as well as their respective faculty and staff members. This prohibition encompasses all facets of the educational experience, spanning from admissions procedures and the provision of educational services to disciplinary measures, assessments, and the accessibility of physical environments and facilities. See the figure below about the responses for current educational policies for students with disabilities. Results indicate that 49% respondents have described that current educational policies for PWDs are not very effective.

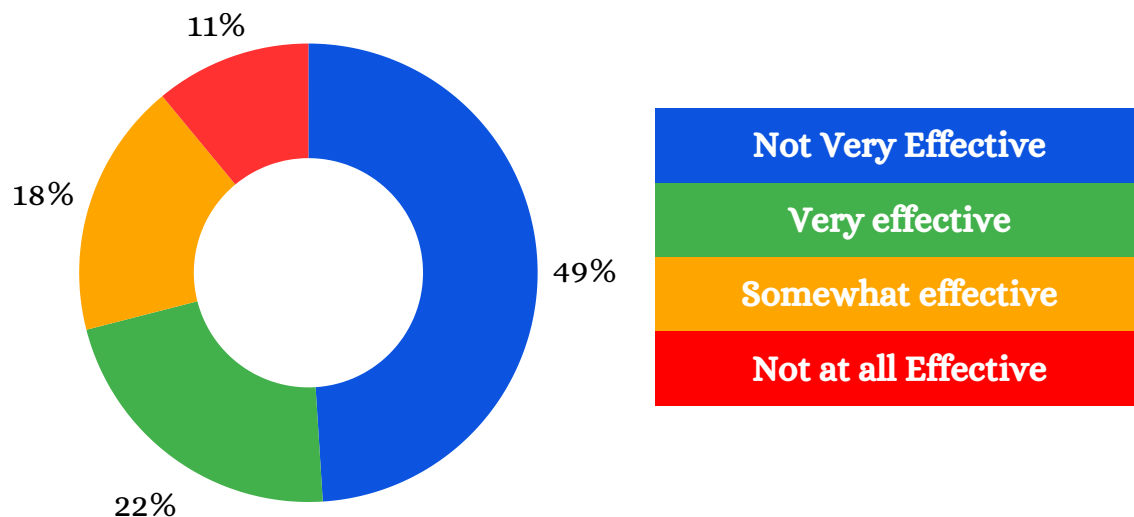


Figure 4 Responses for current educational policies for PWDs

This holistic approach underscores the imperative of fostering an inclusive educational environment where every student, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed on equal footing. Through our research, we endeavour to illuminate these systemic challenges and advocate for meaningful reforms that uphold the principles of inclusivity and equity within our educational institutions. In addition to that that Private and Government school have no such policy regarding the assessment, they conduct physical and imposed stigma regarding the PWDs, we will suggest these kind of policies should prepare for slow learner, and if Private and Government school shall take share burden for inclusive education many PWDs are out of school due to none of the facility, where DEPDA school are situated same facility are provided but we need to focus at every union council and at Taluka level .

Our study, conducted by a diverse team across various departments, underscores the variability in educational policies across institutions. While some institutions exhibit commendable practices, others fall short. Notably, there's a positive trend of classmates cooperating to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in classroom activities, as attested by a quarter of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should not feel guilty or inferior for necessitating modifications or an accessible learning environment. They possess the same rights to education as their peers and should advocate for their needs to achieve their educational goals. Unfortunately, 43% of respondents highlighted the absence of essential facilities like ramps and elevators in schools for PWDs. However, many noted the availability of support services such as special education programs or accessible learning materials. Regarding teacher training, participants indicated that educators are typically trained to accommodate diverse learning needs only within designated centres, rather than across the entire educational system. While improvements have been observed post-ACT implementation, awareness campaigns are crucial to highlighting existing shortcomings to both educational authorities and individuals with disabilities.

In response to the denial of inclusive education, the Department of Empowerment of Sindh Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with Pakistan Legal United Society (PLUS), has taken proactive measures. Secretary DEPDA, Mr. Tahu farooqui conducted meetings with governing bodies of public and private educational institutions to ensure the implementation of inclusive educational rights. PLUS has further initiated legal action through public interest petitions against private schools failing to uphold inclusive education standards. While initiatives are underway to enforce the SEPDA Act of 2018, there remains an urgent need for widespread awareness and acceptance of inclusive education. Internationally, efforts to promote inclusive education were underscored by a meeting in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, where representatives from governments and international organizations convened to advance the objective of Education for All, particularly emphasizing the need to serve children with special educational needs within mainstream schools.

c. Right to Health

The right to health stands as a fundamental pillar of human rights, yet for individuals with disabilities, this right remains elusive, overshadowed by persistent health disparities that contribute to alarmingly high mortality rates. Research indicates that people with disabilities face mortality rates up to twice as high as their non-disabled counterparts, with their average life expectancy shortened by a staggering 10 to 20 years. These disparities are not merely statistical outliers but manifestations of systemic barriers that impede access to essential healthcare services. At the forefront of these challenges are prohibitively high treatment costs, rendering vital medical interventions financially out of reach for many individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the physical inaccessibility of transportation and healthcare facilities poses significant hurdles, effectively erecting barriers between individuals with disabilities and the care they urgently require. Moreover, pervasive societal stigma surrounding disability perpetuates misconceptions and prejudices, further marginalizing individuals and hindering their access to equitable healthcare services. Compounding these challenges is a healthcare workforce often ill-equipped and inadequately trained to address the unique needs and concerns of individuals with disabilities.

Addressing these entrenched disparities necessitates a multifaceted approach that prioritizes the right of individuals with disabilities to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination. By dismantling barriers to healthcare access, fostering inclusivity within healthcare systems, and enhancing training for healthcare professionals, we can work towards realizing the full spectrum of health rights for all individuals, regardless of disability status. Through concerted efforts aimed at eliminating disparities and promoting equity, we can strive towards a future where every individual, regardless of ability, can access the healthcare they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. Fig shows responses of participants regarding How accessible are healthcare facilities for individuals with disabilities in your community.



Figure 5 Accessibility of healthcare facilities

Research conducted by Hana Kuper, Professor of Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene, underscores the disproportionate health burdens faced by people with disabilities. They are three times more likely to have diabetes, twice as likely to experience malnutrition during childhood or to contract HIV/AIDS, and ten times more likely to experience serious illnesses in childhood. Additionally, they are 50% more likely to incur catastrophic health expenses (Kuper, 2022). Furthermore, nearly 40% of cases contributing to their shortened life expectancy are attributed to failures within healthcare systems. Healthcare facilities must actively prevent discriminatory practices, ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive equitable access to healthcare services, including provisions for food, fluids, and other necessities, without regard to their disability status. These rights should be guaranteed to all individuals with disabilities without exception or discrimination based on various factors, including race, gender, language, religion, or socioeconomic status.

Regrettably, our survey revealed concerning gaps in healthcare provision for individuals with disabilities. Approximately 33% of respondents highlighted the inadequate training of healthcare professionals to address the diverse needs of patients with disabilities, reflecting a systemic issue stemming from the lack of disability-related curriculum in medical universities. Additionally, 34% of respondents noted the absence of designated spaces or services catering to individuals with disabilities within healthcare facilities. Moreover, there is a notable deficiency in provisions for accessible information about health services for individuals with visual or hearing impairments, affecting their ability to access essential healthcare services. In Sindh Province, the healthcare system's limited understanding of disability perpetuates health inequities, manifesting in premature mortality, morbidity, and functional impairments. These disparities are compounded by a multitude of factors, including barriers to healthcare service delivery (e.g., transportation, environmental, and communication barriers), insufficient capacity and resources within the healthcare workforce, and complex and inefficient health funding mechanisms. Furthermore, governance challenges contribute to ineffective departmental coordination and a lack of meaningful participation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes, exacerbating health disparities. Example of lack of coordination is that health department have own data, NADRA have own data, police department have own data and figures but no one is ready to share with DEPD department. Coordination is needed in this regard.

d. Disability Certification

A disability certificate serves as a vital government-issued document confirming the type and extent of disability for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), granting them access to essential benefits, facilities, and rights. In Pakistan, reliable data on persons with disabilities remains scarce, exacerbating their vulnerability, same in Sindh Province. To address this, the government implemented a 50% concession in air, rail, and road fares for PWDs based on a special Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) bearing a universal disability logo, prompting many PWDs to seek disability certification. (Reference: notification issued by the government of Pakistan for concessions in air, rail, and road fares for PWDs). However, 28% of respondents encountered challenges in obtaining disability certifications, primarily due to procedural complexities and limited accessibility of assessment facilities, particularly for those residing in rural areas. Additionally, financial constraints and bureaucratic hurdles hinder many PWDs from obtaining essential documentation, further marginalizing them from accessing socio-economic support services.

Secondly- those persons with disabilities who reside in farther rural areas into village they can't easily visit district office neither local transportation facilities are accessible for them to travel easily to district office for certification, they can't afford private vehicle to reach at the medical camp. Similarly a case of village Peroz Khan Jamali was highlighted by PLUS team in district Badin, in this village almost 16 people are PWDs while no one was certified, resultantly they couldn't apply for the Baitul Mall fund or other source for socio-economic or financial support. For CNIC with disability logo is another issue which is faced by numerous PWDs as National Data Base Authority NADRA also has set criteria for PWDs which is another barrier in getting most important document for any kind of inclusive rights in society ,and this makes the life of PWDs more challenging. According to the survey results, regarding obtaining CNIC from with disability logo from NADRA, positive responses were given, see fig below.

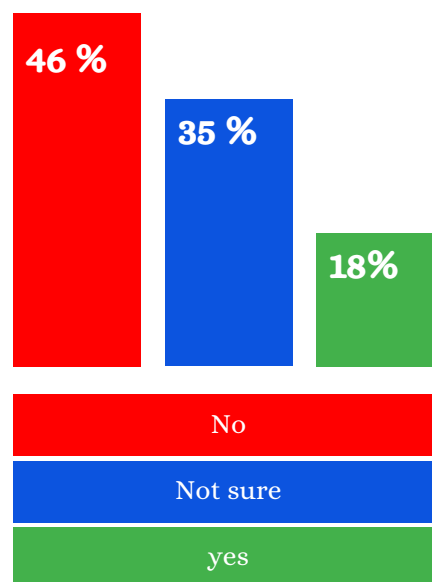


Figure 6 Challenges in obtaining CNIC with disability logo from NADRA

Securing a CNIC with a disability logo from the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) presents further obstacles, with stringent criteria and documentation requirements impeding access for many PWDs. The lengthy and convoluted disability registration process, lasting between 3 to 6 months, compounds these challenges, as the concerned departments often lack the necessary resources and accessibility to accommodate persons with disabilities effectively.

e. Accessible Transportation

The importance of accessible transportation cannot be overstated in fostering the social inclusion and mobility of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Yet, despite advancements in accessibility measures, PWDs continue to confront myriad obstacles when utilizing public transport, effectively curtailing their access to vital services and opportunities. Our survey findings illuminate the stark realities faced by PWDs, highlighting the pervasive challenges encountered in accessing medical facilities, maintaining social connections with friends and family, and pursuing educational or employment endeavors, all of which are hindered by inadequate transportation infrastructure. The barriers to accessible transportation not only impede individuals' ability to access essential services but also exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly for those with mobility impairments. For children with disabilities, inaccessible school transportation systems present a significant barrier to educational attainment, perpetuating cycles of exclusion and hindering their overall development.

Addressing these challenges demands a concerted effort to enhance the accessibility of transportation infrastructure and services, ensuring that they are designed with the diverse needs of PWDs in mind. By prioritizing universal design principles and investing in accessible transportation options, we can empower individuals with disabilities to navigate their communities independently and participate fully in society. Through collaborative initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity and removing transportation barriers, we can create a more equitable and accessible future for all members of our society, regardless of ability. Fig below indicates the responses from participants regarding how accessible is the justice system in transportation services for persons with disabilities, following the Disability Act 2018.

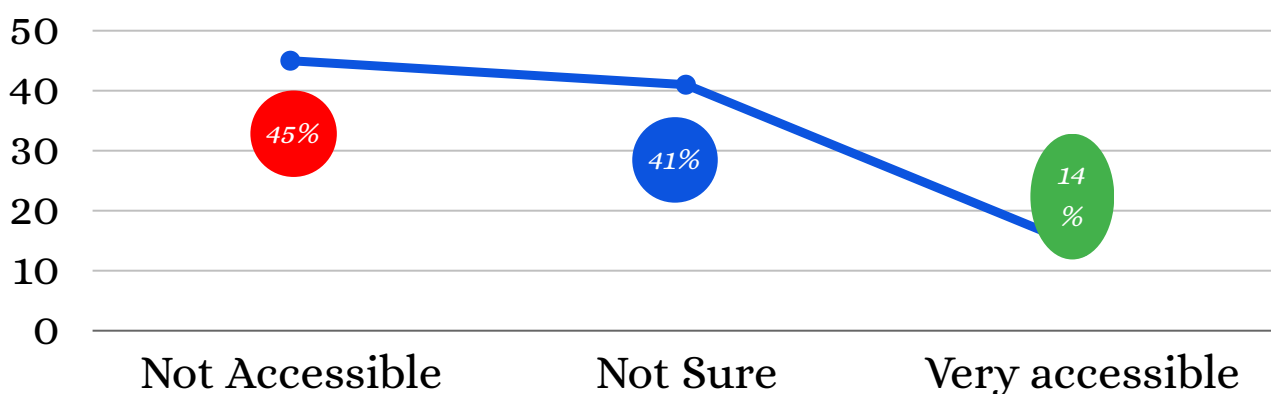


Figure 7 Responses about transportation services for PWDs

Globally, the exclusion of PWDs during the planning and design stages of public transport systems remains a prevalent issue, leading to a myriad of challenges faced by PWDs in accessing transportation services. Open-ended responses highlighted various barriers, including difficulties in reaching bus/train stops, overcrowded public transport, uncooperative staff, inadequate infrastructure (e.g., lack of designated spaces and ramps), and insufficient provision for carrying mobility aids. According to open ended questions are discussion, they said, (1) walking to bus/train stop is difficult, (2) Public transport is too crowded, (3) Public transport staff is not cooperative, (4) Public transport stops are too far from my origin or destination, (5) Bus/train floor is too high (difficult to get on the bus/train), (6) No trained staff at stop or inside public transport for helping/guiding PWDs, (7) No designated spaces in public transport for PWDs, (8) Not enough space for carrying mobility aids in the public transport buses/trains, (9) Passengers are not cooperative and (10) There are no accessible ramps to enter/exit the bus at bus stops. In the Sindh province, transportation accessibility varies across different regions, as depicted in the accompanying figure below. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address transportation barriers and ensure the equitable mobility of PWDs across all areas.

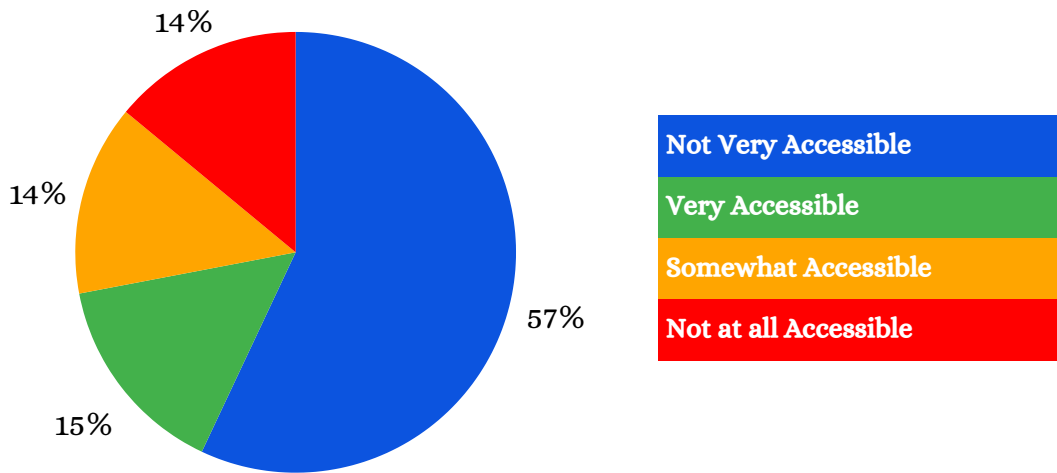


Figure 8 Transportation services accessible for PWDs in Sindh Province

Discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities in public or private transportation services were found to be rare, according to participant responses. People generally offer support to PWDs during their journeys; however, concerns were raised regarding the lack of wheelchair spaces and special seating for PWDs in public transport. Additionally, some drivers do not wait for PWDs in certain areas, highlighting the need for greater responsibility and support from transportation providers, as observed in other developed countries.

f. Social Inclusion

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of social awareness regarding the legal rights of persons with disabilities. Findings revealed the absence of dedicated care centers for disabled children in several areas, reflecting gaps in support services. Moreover, respondents reported a lack of accessible amenities in private establishments such as shopping centers, restaurants, banks, ATMs, and entertainment venues. Even when available, some facilities fail to meet the criteria for PWDs' needs, lacking essential features like elevators, ramps and Washrooms. While participating in this survey, most of them are not aware of related information, see fig below.

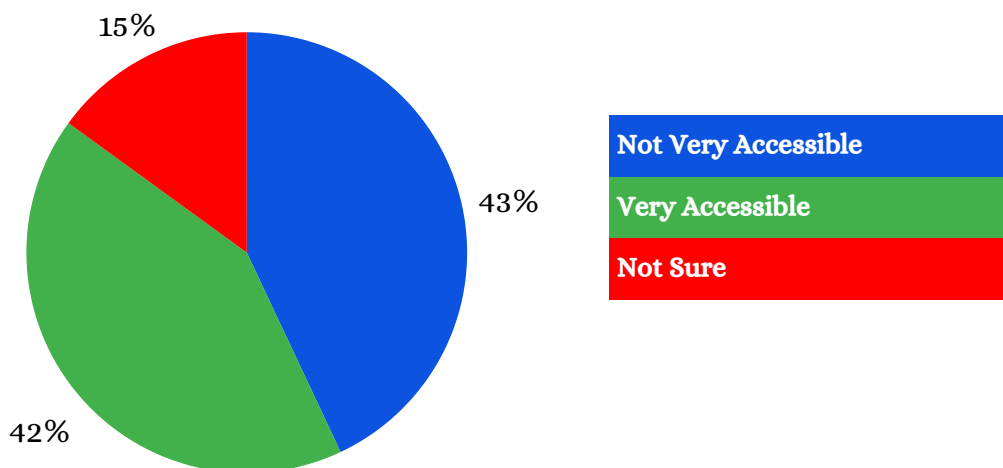


Figure 9 Responses for accessibility to public parks, recreational areas, and cultural institutions for PWDs

Our investigation into the accessibility of public parks and recreational areas for individuals with disabilities revealed compelling insights. Among the respondents, a significant 54% expressed dissatisfaction with their current living arrangements, shedding light on pervasive inefficiencies within housing and accommodation provisions tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

This finding underscores the systemic shortcomings that individuals with disabilities encounter in their everyday lives, particularly in accessing suitable housing options that accommodate their unique needs. The challenges extend beyond mere physical accessibility; they encompass broader considerations such as affordability, adaptability, and the availability of support services within residential communities. Moreover, the implications of inadequate housing provisions extend beyond mere inconvenience, impacting individuals' overall well-being and quality of life. Access to safe and suitable housing is not merely a matter of convenience but a fundamental human right, essential for fostering independence, social inclusion, and community participation.

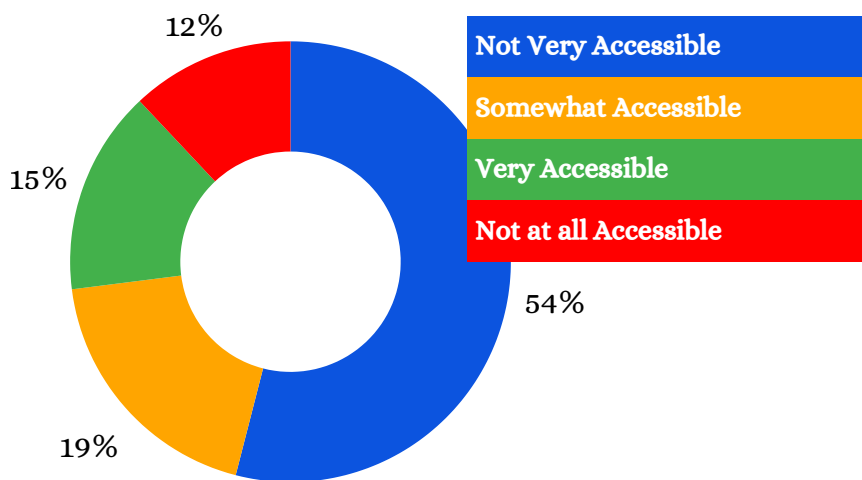


Figure 10 Responses for current living arrangement for PWDs

In light of these findings, it is imperative to prioritize efforts aimed at addressing the systemic barriers hindering individuals with disabilities from accessing suitable housing options. By adopting a holistic approach that integrates accessibility considerations into housing policies and urban planning initiatives, we can create inclusive communities where individuals with disabilities can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. Through collaborative action and advocacy, we can pave the way for a future where housing is truly accessible and equitable for all individuals, regardless of ability. While private organizations are making efforts to enhance accessibility for PWDs, with 55% of participants acknowledging these efforts, significant challenges persist in WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) services accessibility for individuals with disabilities in both community and workplace settings. Only 15% of respondents expressed appreciation for the limited efforts made by NGOs and the government in this regard.

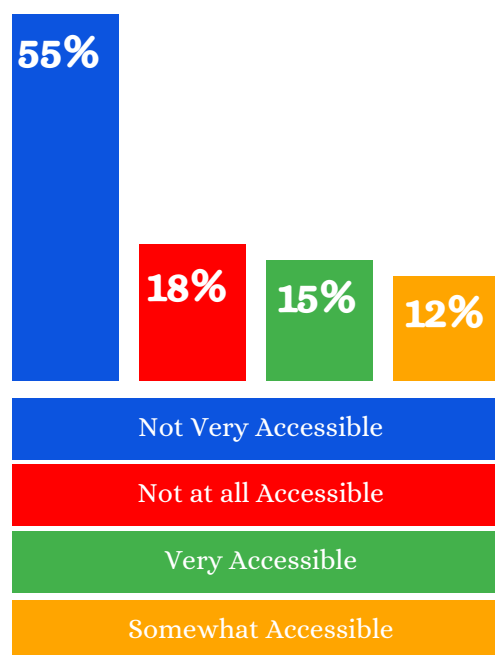


Figure 11 Responses for WASH services for PWDs in community

Limited access to free legal assistance further compounds the challenges faced by PWDs, with issues ranging from physical accessibility discrimination and financial barriers to the scarcity of suitable housing and support services. Communication barriers persist for individuals who are deaf or mute, exacerbating their social exclusion. According to the results, most of people demonstrated that there has been no any public awareness programs conducted regarding the rights and needs of persons with disabilities under the Disability Act 2018, see fig below.

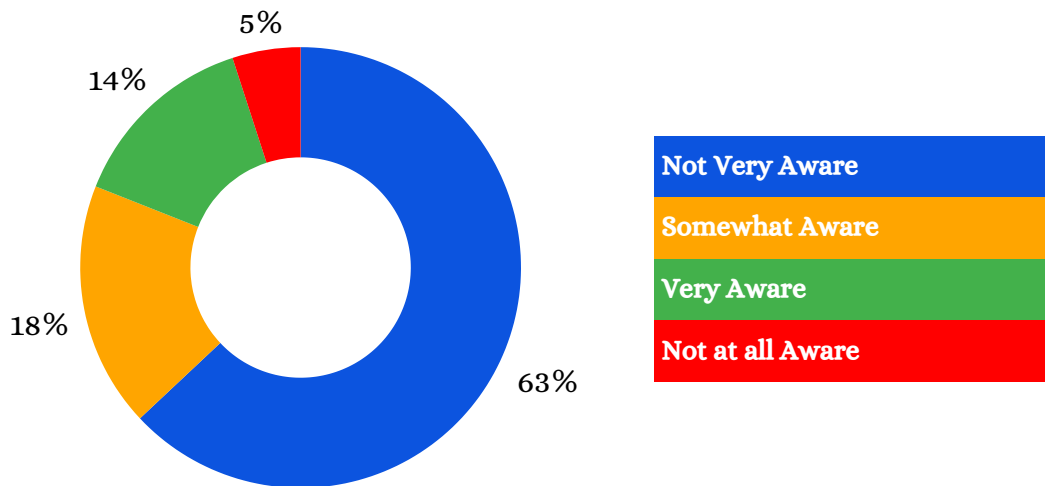


Figure 12 Responses for either private businesses are aware or not regarding their responsibilities for the rights of PWDs

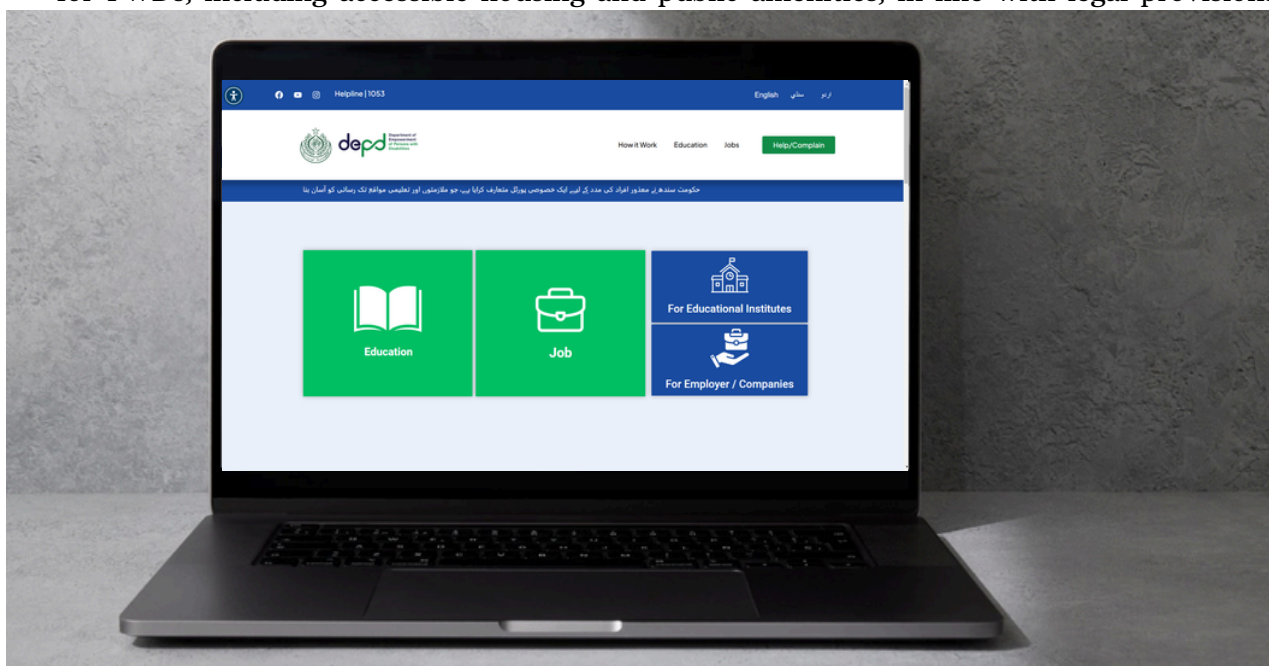
Despite the enactment of the Disability Act 2018, public awareness programs regarding the rights and needs of persons with disabilities remain largely absent, as highlighted by survey respondents. Additionally, private businesses demonstrate a lack of awareness regarding their responsibilities under disability rights legislation, signaling a need for enhanced Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices.

g. Right to Employment

Laws in respective provinces in Pakistan (including Sindh Province) clearly allocate job quotas for PWDs. It specifies that employers with 100 workers or more must ensure that at least 2% (according to federal government in 2015) and 5% in Sindh as per section 12 and 15 ACT -2018 of their total workforce consists of persons with disabilities, or pay a levy. But they are not implemented in true spirit. The Supreme Court has ruled that employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs) was not a charity but their right, stressing that work and contribution to society was central to human society and it was even greater for the PWDs given the stigmatization typically associated with them. PWDs are found in every organization in different job positions but the quota set by government is still not being followed. Every organization has to implement the ACT regarding this because it's their right otherwise PWDs cannot get courage to live. However, survey results indicate that few employers actively implement inclusive hiring practices, citing challenges such as the requirement for disability certificates or special CNICs, communication gaps, and structural barriers to employment accessibility. They face challenges because some organizations ask disability certificate or special CNIC. There are other problems being faced such as communication gap, accessibility of employment rights, structural hurdles to accessing employment for people with visual, hearing, speech, mental, or physical impairments remain. This includes: getting to work (road quality and transportation), doing the work itself, with the help of technology, sign language challenges and availability of assistive devices and other accommodations. There are other issues regarding moving around the workplace (ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, etc.). In short, while legislative frameworks exist to safeguard the rights of PWDs, their effective implementation and enforcement remain critical to achieving meaningful social inclusion and equitable access to opportunities. Being as PLUS implementation partner issued letter to different Government and Private institutions and companies to implement the 5% quota, in case of failure, they will deposit fund in favor of the Government of Sindh Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD) account for the welfare of the PWDs. Whereas, DEPD and PLUS collaboratively has filed petitions for implementation of quota. This action leads to true policy implementation.

14. Collaborative Contributions: PLUS and DEPD

- We have actively engaged with relevant judicial bodies, including Bar Associations, District Courts, and the High Court, to advocate for the establishment of specialized courts tailored to the needs of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), thereby ensuring their equitable access to justice within the Sindh province.
- We have provided pro bono legal representation to PWDs, conducted legal capacity-building initiatives, and facilitated trainings on the legal rights of PWDs, with the overarching aim of safeguarding their access to justice.
- PLUS has taken legal action against educational institutions failing to comply with inclusive education standards and has collaborated with the Department of Empowerment of Sindh Persons with Disabilities (DEPD) to enhance policy frameworks, ensuring the protection of the right to education for students with disabilities.
- Through strategic advocacy, We have exposed health disparities faced by PWDs and advocated for mandatory training for healthcare professionals and enhanced accessibility within healthcare facilities, thus ensuring the realization of PWDs' right to health and rehabilitation.
- We have pursued the streamlining of the disability certification process and civil documentation by advocating for the removal of bureaucratic and financial barriers, facilitating easier access to essential documentation for PWDs, thereby enabling them to secure necessary socio-economic support.
- We have campaigned for improved accessibility in public transportation, addressing systemic inadequacies in infrastructure and service provision to ensure PWDs' mobility rights and access to essential services.
- We have worked to elevate public awareness and advocate for enhanced facilities and services for PWDs, including accessible housing and public amenities, in line with legal provisions



15. Conclusion

In conclusion, disability is an inherent component of human diversity, encompassing a range of physical and mental conditions such as blindness, dementia, and spinal cord injuries, which are often exacerbated by environmental and personal factors. Approximately 15-16% of the global population identifies as persons with disabilities (PWDs). Despite their prevalence, PWDs experience significant challenges, including reduced life expectancy and poor health outcomes. Societal perceptions, particularly in Sindh Province and other regions of Pakistan, often frame PWDs through a lens of sympathy rather than recognizing their inherent rights. This perception, coupled with mobility barriers, leads to the marginalization of PWDs from mainstream society. The study conducted highlights a lack of comprehensive national data collection and uniform policies, exacerbating the challenges faced by PWDs in accessing essential services and entitlements. Specific issues include discrimination within the judicial and educational systems, lack of accessible healthcare, and transportation challenges. For instance, 39% of respondents were unaware of disability rights legislation, and 47% reported difficulties in crime reporting due to the absence of accessible mechanisms. In education, many children with disabilities face direct and indirect discrimination, with 43% of respondents reporting insufficient accessible facilities in schools. The healthcare sector is similarly lacking, with 33% noting that professionals are not adequately trained to address the specific needs of PWDs.

PWDs face significant challenges in obtaining disability certification, with bureaucratic delays and geographical barriers. Moreover, the transportation infrastructure is largely inaccessible, with limited provisions for PWDs, while social inclusion is hindered by inadequate public amenities and employment barriers. Despite legislative mandates, such as the 2% federal and 5% Sindh employment quotas for PWDs, enforcement remains inadequate, with communication gaps, structural hurdles, and lack of accommodations persisting across workplaces.

In summary, the study concludes that systemic barriers prevent PWDs from accessing justice, education, healthcare, employment, and social inclusion. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive research, data collection, and policy interventions to address these barriers. Raising awareness, enforcing disability rights legislation, and fostering inclusive practices are essential to ensure equitable treatment and full participation of PWDs in society. Public awareness programs and further research must be prioritized to address the gaps in understanding and implementation of the Disability Act 2018.

16. Recommendation

It is imperative to address the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) comprehensively to ensure inclusivity and equality within society. Highlighting the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Sindh Province requires a multi-faceted approach that involves raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, fostering inclusivity, and empowering PWDs themselves. Here are some effective recommendations and strategies to achieve this:

a) Legislative Reforms:

The national and provincial level legislation must be rigorously enforced in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), focusing on comprehensive anti-discrimination statutes, accessibility benchmarks, and mandates for reasonable accommodations across all domains.

b) Policy Reforms:

Advocate for the development and implementation of inclusive policies and legislation that protect and promote the rights of PWDs. This includes lobbying for effective implementation of the UNCRPD, as well as advocating for specific measures to improve accessibility, education, employment, healthcare, and social welfare services for PWDs.

c) Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns:

Launch public awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes, promote acceptance, and foster a culture of inclusivity and respect for PWDs. Workshop should be conducted in every place awareness is needed in people and strong initiative to implement the law. This should involve collaboration with media, educational institutions, and community leaders. Utilize various media channels, including television, radio, social media, and community events, to disseminate information and challenge stereotypes.

d) Capacity Building:

Provide training and capacity-building programs for government officials, enforcement agencies, jail authorities, policymakers, educators, healthcare professionals, employers, NADRA and other stakeholders on disability rights and inclusive practices. Empower them to become advocates and champions for PWDs within their respective sectors.

e) Data Collection and Monitoring Mechanisms:

Develop robust Data collection mechanisms to accurately assess the status of PWDs in Sindh Province and monitor progress towards achieving their rights. This Data should inform evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation. There is a need to collect the comprehensive Data on the persons with disabilities (PWDs) in order to evaluate the problems faced so that an efficient policy can be made to tackle the problems faced by this vulnerable group. The survey must have physicians involved in the management of disability (rehabilitation medicine physicians, neurologists, pediatricians and neurosurgeons). It should document the epidemiological pattern of disability in a scientific manner instead of categorizing it into vague categories like blind, mute, crippled, deaf, insane, mentally retarded, and having multiple disabilities.

f) Healthcare and Rehabilitation Services:

Improve access to healthcare facilities and rehabilitation services tailored to the needs of PWDs. This involves training healthcare professionals, providing assistive devices, and ensuring affordability and availability of essential medical treatments.

g) Education and Employment Opportunities:

Promote inclusive education by integrating PWDs into mainstream schools and providing necessary support services. It is necessary both to strengthen the entire educational sector and at the same time allocate resources that will ensure that all children are on board and that particular efforts are implemented to cater for those who are easily side-lined. There is a substantial need to improve the curriculum and comply with the needs of PWDs. The vocational training and skills development programs are most needed to be implemented. Additionally, create employment opportunities through affirmative action policies, vocational training programs, and incentives for employers to hire PWDs. Girls with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged. A special effort is required to provide training and education for girls with special educational needs.

h) Enhance professional development in schools for inclusive education of students with disabilities:

Enhance support for educators and school administrators in promoting disability-inclusive education through the establishment of policies and frameworks for ongoing professional growth within schools. Encourage school-based professional development initiatives and foster the exchange of knowledge among teachers and special education professionals.

i) Enhance Coordination Mechanisms:

Examine and fortify coordination within ministries and between governance tiers. The national administration has initiated the creation of improved coordination mechanisms. In a context like Pakistan, where various departments (e.g., education and welfare) oversee the education of children with disabilities, effective coordination and expertise-sharing are particularly vital.

j) Assess pre-service and ongoing teacher education and training:

Evaluate the curriculum for pre-service teacher education and the programs for in-service teacher training, ensuring they incorporate essential competencies for teaching across various subjects and environments, in accordance with the social model of disability. Place a strong emphasis on integrating Universal Design for learning principles into all teacher development efforts.

k) Accessible Infrastructure, Information and Communication:

Implement measures to ensure accessibility in public spaces, transportation, buildings, and information and communication technologies (ICTs). This includes easy accessible ramps, elevators, braille signage, accessible websites, and audio descriptions for the blind and visually impaired. : Ensure that information and communication materials are accessible to PWDs in formats such as braille, large print, audio, and sign language. Make public spaces, buildings, transportation, and digital platforms accessible to individuals with diverse disabilities. Government should provide and ensure availability of wheel chairs for disabled persons at airports, parks, railway stations and at other public places

l) Social Welfare and Support Systems:

Establish social welfare programs to provide financial assistance, caregiver support, and community-based services for PWDs and their families', levy funds can be used for this purpose. Foster partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society to expand outreach and support networks. The NGOs and organizations working in the field of disability management should have better coordination and data sharing to avoid duplication of efforts and to improve the quality of services for a better life for PWD in Sindh Province.

m) Community Engagement:

Foster dialogue and collaboration between PWDs, their families, local communities, government officials, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. Encourage inclusive practices and community support networks that promote acceptance and inclusion.

n) Consultation and Participation:

Involve PWDs and their representative organizations in decision-making processes at all levels of governance. Ensure their voices are heard and their perspectives are integrated into policies and programs that affect them. Media should also be more proactive in promoting PWD as a possible role-model and to highlight that they can live a normal and fulfilling life. The success stories of PWD should be shared more often and advocacy against social discrimination towards PWD.

o) Adopt a comprehensive national disability strategy and action plan:

Adopt a national disability strategy and action plan incorporating a long-term vision to integrate disability into development. This strategy must include a thorough situation analysis, stakeholder collaboration, priority setting, and measurable outcomes. The action plan shall detail short and medium-term actions, with clear timelines, responsible agencies, resource allocations, and targets. Effective coordination, accountability, monitoring, and resource management are required.

p) Empowering Persons with Disabilities (PWDs):

To empower persons with disabilities (PWDs), the Sindh Government should: (1) establish a help desk for immediate query resolution; (2) create region-level shelter homes for street children with disabilities; (3) form committees within government departments for the effective implementation of PWD laws; (4) revise educational curricula for inclusivity; (5) ensure universal accessibility in infrastructure; (6) allocate special funds for PWD education; (7) implement a centralized data system for PWDs; (8) fully activate the Disability Advisory Council; (9) conduct awareness programs on PWD rights; (10) integrate special education teachers in regular schools.

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