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Challenges in Education and Employment for Hearing Impaired in India

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ABSTRACT:

Deafness—one neglected chronic condition—is the most prevalent sensory disability across India. As per Census 2011, in India, amongst 121 Cr population, about 2.68 Cr persons are 'disabled which constitute 2.21% of the total population. The challenges faced by person with hearing disability in our community during their learning are very high. Specialized education for people with disabilities and their employment is still limited to certain focal parts in India. Due to the unavailability of financial resources, individuals are forced out of school and made to engage in hawking, selling packaged drinking water and other unorganized sectors to have money for their school expenses. The purpose of this study is to enumerate and highlight the problems faced by these people during their learning period with a special focus on their employment status. This study also describes the current Programmes in place for identification of these impairments and their outcome.

Key words: Hearing Impairment, Years lived with Disability (YLD), Convention on Rights of People with Disability (CRPD), Specialized Education, NPPCD (National Program for Prevention and Control of Deafness)

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INTRODUCTION:

In the process of global epidemiological transition, the economic burden associated with chronic diseases is on the rise. especially in low- and middle-income (LAMI) countries like India (Abegunde DO et al 2006). Deafness—one neglected chronic condition—is the most prevalent sensory disability across India (Suneela Garg et al 2009). The WHO definition of "Hearing Impairment" refers to both complete and partial loss of ability to hear. The statistics are staggering - 360 million people in the world suffer from disabling hearing loss. This constitutes a substantial 5.3% of the world's population. The prevalence of deafness in South-East Asia ranges from 4.6% to 8.8%. Hearing loss is the second most common cause of years lived with disability (YLD) accounting for 4.7% of the total YLD (State of hearing and ear care in the South East Asia Region .WHO, 2007).

As per Census 2011, in India, out of the 121 Cr population, about 2.68 Cr persons are 'disabled which is 2.21% of the total population (Disabled persons in India-A statistical profile, GoI 2016). In India, 20% of the disabled persons are having disability in movement, 19% are with disability in seeing, another 19% are with disability in hearing and 8% has multiple disabilities. This shows that India has the largest hearing impaired population in the world.

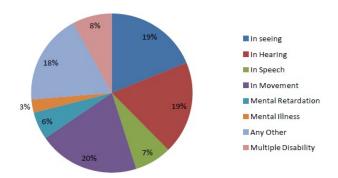


Figure No 1-Different forms of Disability as per Census 2011

In India, "hearing handicapped" as defined by the Rehabilitation Council of India Act., 1992, is – hearing impairment of 70 dB and above, in better ear or total loss of hearing in both ears. This law is applicable to only those persons with severe hearing impairment whose hearing loss is 70 dB and above. A person with hearing levels of 61-70 dB, (although suffering from severe hearing impairment, as per the WHO classification), is automatically excluded from the hearing handicap category. Section 2 (i and iv) of the persons with disability act. 1995, (PWD) states that "hearing impairment" is a disability and a "person with disability" means a person suffering from not <40% of any disability as certified by a medical authority. In addition, in Section 2 (i) "hearing disability" has been redefined as - "a hearing disable person is one who has the hearing loss of 60 dB or more in the better conversational ear range frequencies." This is a step in the right direction, as all person with severe hearing impairment is now included in the hearing handicapped category. Recently the term deaf is being replaced by the term "Hearing Impaired". The purpose of this paper has been to highlight issues that are specific to the field of education of

individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

HEARING IMPAIRMENT AND EDUCATION:

Hearing impairment is a serious and grossly neglected condition in India (Bist etal 2016). The real issue in India is the unfortunate inadequacy of facilities of any type for the deaf. The government of India has signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on Rights of People with Disability (CRPD), which lays standard for Basic Rights of Disabled person. However, despite good intentions, the lack of services and facilities continues to plague the Indian deaf community which directly affects their Education and Employment (Arehart, Yoshinaga, 1999).

The challenges faced by person with hearing disability in our community as a student is very high. According to Lang et al, there are significant differences between the perceptions of deaf students staff regarding and university accommodation of deaf and hard-ofhearing students in classrooms (Lang et al 2004). The research reported that the differing perceptions could be due in part to the lecturers having had little or no training to meet the communication needs of deaf learners. Another scientific work mentioned that the teachers reported their inability or unwillingness to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual students (Semmel et al 1991; Hutchinson and Martin 1999). A recent work pointed that the major challenges faced by individuals with hearing impairment are related to (i) Access, (ii) Participation and Equity, (iii) Quality, (iv) Relevance, and (v) Management. All these have resulted in

poor enrolment and retention of students in educational programmes (Gathoo, 2006).

Due to the shortage of financial resources, deaf individuals are forced out of school and made to engage in hawking, selling packaged drinking water and the like in order to save money for their school expenses making them vulnerable for exploitation. Most often they cannot afford instructional material and are always at the mercy of examiners during examination time (Asikhia, 2010).

The number of special schools currently available in India cannot cater to the educational needs of 'all' children with hearing impairment. Children with Mild/Moderate hearing loss who do not require specialized support are given the opportunity to pursue their education in general schools alongside their hearing peers (Moores, 2011).

There are plenty international and national variation in sign language currently in practice. In India, there is no officially recognized sign language system. The signs used by deaf people in India are very different because of their cultural, geographical and historical context (Stkoe, 2005). As a result, 99 percent of hearing-impaired people are either uneducated or drop out after Class VI or VII, because they are not able to cope. There are hardly any people with hearing impairment who have cleared Class X (Komesaroff, 2000).

Another factor is the inadequacy of sign language interpreters and trained teachers. There are only about 250 certified sign language interpreters in India, translating for a deaf population of between 1.8 million and 7 million (The wide range in population estimates exists because the

Indian census doesn't track the number of deaf people — instead, it documents an aggregate number of people with disabilities). This existing gap in Manpower and Infrastructure directly and indirectly affect scope of employment of disabled person in a country of 1.4 billion people.

HEARING IMPAIRMENT AND EMPLOYMENT:

Census 2011, reveals that of the 13.4 million people with disabilities in India in the employable age group of 15-59 years, 9.9 (73.9 percent) million were nonworkers or marginal workers. Which means that only 26.1 percent of the productive age group of the country are employed. Specialized education people with disabilities is still limited to certain pockets in our country and therefore, many basic skills that other children acquire in schools at a young age, like operating computers, basic knowledge of English as well as general knowledge, hearing-impaired persons don't get a chance to acquire. As a result of which latter It become extremely stressful for the hearing impaired to search for and find employment.

A 2014 survey by UK-based charity Action on Hearing Loss reveals a variety of issues faced by people who are hearingimpaired or have a hearing loss, both inside and outside the workplace. Some of its salient features are as follows:

• One third (31 percent) of people feel they are treated differently because of their deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus

- 33 percent of people who are deaf avoid social situations because they find it difficult to communicate
- More than double (68 percen)t of people with hearing loss feel isolated at work as a result
- Inclusion of people with hearing impairment is not that difficult

WAY FORWARD:

Education and Employment, two fundamental rights of hearing impaired individuals is an urgent need to be addressed in countries like India. Actions like early identification through new born screening, Awareness generation in community regarding their special need are some of welcome moves taken by Government of India in recent years (Paul, 2011).

National Program for Prevention and Control of Deafness (NPPCD) has been in place since 2006. It envisages a reduction in the burden of deafness and prevention of future hearing loss in India. The program aims to cover three levels of prevention and care: primary, secondary and tertiary ear care by provision of an appropriate response at these levels (National programme for, DGHS 2006). It aims at preventing avoidable hearing loss on account of disease or injury, identifying early and treating major ear problems, and medically rehabilitating persons with deafness of all age groups.

Early hearing detection and intervention strategy (EHDI) through Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening (UNHS) has been endorsed through this programme. This early diagnosis can help in identification and interventions like early fitting of hearing aids with which a deaf

child can be introduced to sound. "This has to be followed by speech and language therapy so that a child can learn to talk and lead a normal life (Yoshinaga Itano 2006). At the end as a treaty to International Sustainable Development Goals (2015), which pledges for "leaving no one behind" robust Infrastructure, Trained Man Power, Accessible quality care for heaing disabled individuals is the definite need of hour.

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