

**RESEARCH PAPER****Dependency and Reduced Life Chances: Examining the Challenges faced by Students with disabilities in Higher Education Institutions****¹Muhammad Taqveem Ashraf * and ²Dr Rahla Rahat**

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***Corresponding Author** taqveemwarraich@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the challenge of enhanced dependence on peers among students with disabilities who utilize mobility-assistive devices at higher education institutions in Pakistan. This dependency arises due to the insufficient or inadequately supportive infrastructure available to them. The design of cities and institutions should adhere to principles of inclusion. However, often public spaces, roads, marketplaces, and particularly university campuses do not meet this objective, hence impeding the complete autonomy of students with disabilities. This study employed a qualitative research design, wherein data was gathered from a sample of 10 students who were residing as well as studying at a large public sector university in Lahore. The data was collected by the in-depth interviews and analyzed using the thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the basic objective of an educational institution, which is to provide education, is impeded as a result of inadequately inclusive infrastructure. This inappropriateness of infrastructure has a negative effect on the opportunities available to students with disabilities. Conclusively, this research suggests that eliminating infrastructure barriers from university campuses should be a top priority to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to mobility rights and can lead completely independent lives.

Keywords: Barriers to Education, Dependence, Higher Education Institutions, Mobility Challenges, People with Disabilities**Introduction**

In Pakistan and around the world, a large number of students, including those with disabilities who use mobility aids, join higher education institutions with the aim of improving their life chances. The students, whether residing on or off campus, have to commute to their educational institutions. However, the design and inclusivity of cities and educational institutions in them exert a significant impact on the ease of mobility and their potential for success. Any barriers to accessing educational institutions implicitly deny students with disabilities the right to social mobility and education.

The setting of urban areas should be designed in a manner that ensures the absence of discriminatory practices against any group (Ocejo, 2020). People with disabilities using mobility-assistive devices, such as wheelchairs and crutches experience heightened levels of exclusion when cities and educational institutions are inadequately planned and built. Many times, cities fail their residents in providing inclusive services (Dastrup, 2015). A large number of universities in Punjab province, the largest province of Pakistan, are located in Lahore, which attracts a huge student population. Lahore, being the second largest city in Pakistan, is renowned for its significant development and progress. This characteristic renders the city a benchmark for other less developed cities. Therefore, it is crucial to assess

the extent of inclusion for individuals with disabilities, a commitment likewise undertaken by governments that endorse the Sustainable Development Goals.

The data suggests that around one billion out of eight billion people, in a global population of eight billion, have some kind of disability. This observation has prompted a shift in perspective, with proponents contending that addressing the needs of this demographic is not just a matter of moral obligation, but rather an imperative grounded in practical necessity (Nations, 2022). Goal 11 of the SDGs also emphasizes the need to ensure the safety, sustainability, and inclusion of human settlements (United Nations, 2023). Similarly, goal 4 of the SDGs suggests measures to improve the quality of education by providing inclusive opportunities (UN Goal 4 Quality Education, 2023). Notably, agenda 4.8 of the SDGs places particular emphasis on the necessity for educational institutions to be attuned to the needs of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2023).

The expansion of contemporary cities in the South has given rise to a multitude of issues, including a significant increase in the duration of commuting inside cities. This difficulty exacerbates the difficulties faced by those with disabilities. According to studies, it may be inferred that around 36 percent of the existing physical infrastructure presents various obstacles for individuals with disabilities (United Nations, 2017). Likewise, empirical evidence indicates that urban mobility poses significant challenges for around 64 percent of people (World Bank, 2012). The challenges are essentially the barriers that have increased the heightened dependence of people with disabilities on others for even the most basic and necessary tasks (United Nations, 2019).

The lack of inclusivity in the city design reduces self-sufficiency and exacerbates the need for external support. Dependence on others presents several challenges, with the primary concern being the disruption to regular functioning, resulting in reduced opportunities for social engagement. Additionally, this phenomenon contributes to lower sociability, which eventually impacts the likelihood of encountering possibilities for both professional and personal growth (Kulkarni, 2011). This statement supports the assertion that there exists a discernible connection between the built environments and the performance of the cities (Gandy, 2020).

The design of public spaces must provide support to marginalized groups, however, in Pakistan, much debate has been initiated by think tanks such as PIDE which suggests that social development has almost every time favored a particular social class over other (Ahmad, 2021). In a similar context, this paper explores how physical barriers make people with disabilities dependent on others which affects their chances of social mobility, in terms of attainment of educational goals and the perception of employment prospects.

Literature Review

The literature review for this study highlights a strong correlation between disability as a phenomenon and the physical infrastructure, particularly in relation to accessibility theology. The examination of the relationship between individuals with disabilities and urban environments is undertaken in order to get insights into the social dimensions of infrastructure. Furthermore, the theoretical understanding of the impact of individuals with disabilities relying on others is conceptualized in terms of life chances, encompassing their participation in social events and their social mobility in terms of accessing the education and employment opportunities. The literature identifies that the phenomenon of disability can potentially be categorized into distinct subtypes, including social, biological, and psychological impairments (Leitef, 2018).

This study highlights the significance of social context, emphasizing that people with disabilities should be viewed as a distinct subgroup within a larger society, positioning them as an atypical or divergent entity from the prevailing norm. Gleason (1991) further supports

this claim and substantiates this assertion and emphasizes that it is considered a deviation due to the rise of liberal ideas in which cultural pluralism was emphasized. People with disabilities often experience social stigmatization, as observed by Goffman (1963), which subsequently intensifies their reliance on others as the result of the inequitable treatment they get from the majority (Wirth, 1964). The level of dependence is further heightened by other social factors, including income levels, mode of mobility, and institutional structures. The social conceptions also highlight the notion that disabilities generally remain consistent, while acknowledging that the challenges posed by physical infrastructure may vary (Letief, 2018).

The design of the urban spaces must support children, women, the elderly, and people with physical disabilities. The comprehension of the design necessitates an understanding within the framework of the social model of disability, which accentuates the notion that it is the urban environment that is impaired, rather than the people themselves (Degreas, 2022). However, there is a phenomenon, 'Disability Discrimination' which particularly emphasizes that the insufficient facilities in a city contribute to the exclusion of people with physical disabilities (Gleeson, 2001). Urban mobility is a matter of utmost importance, including several critical concerns. Among these concerns, physical elements such as staircases, pavements, and entry-exit points of buildings play a central role in impacting the mobility of persons with disabilities (Mwaka, 2023).

Hall (2001) asserts that the need to lessen the distance between individuals and infrastructure is frequently overlooked. According to Chatzitheochari (2022), an inadequately enabling design has the effect of marginalizing individuals. He further contends that institutions play an important part in the creation of social stratification. Mansky (2023) argues that individuals with disabilities are prone to encountering more instances of disadvantages in education and work. The notion of social mobility is supported by research that suggests the presence of a "sticky floor" effect, which ensures that intergenerational social mobility remains relatively stagnant. Based on this premise, a strong correlation has been found between disability and the likelihood of social mobility, hence underscoring the importance of social class as a determining factor in upward social mobility (Chatzitheochari, 2022).

In order to provide equitable opportunities for growth and progress, it is imperative to incorporate those with disabilities into the development process (Santoso, 2023). This necessitates the formulation of sustainable development objectives that take into account the specific needs and considerations of people with disabilities (United Nations, 2019). Understanding the life prospects of those with disabilities is crucial since it significantly impacts policymakers. Given the pressing demand for social inclusion (Sahoo, 2023), it is imperative to provide a functional conceptualization for individuals with disabilities (British Council, 2014). The assertion is made that there exists a societal cost associated with the marginalization of some groups from established societal systems (British Council, 2014).

The World Health Organization (2015) has emphasized the necessity for the advancement of individuals with disabilities. The organization further highlights that without enhancing healthcare infrastructure and providing comprehensive societal training, the achievement of facilitation would be difficult to attain. It is of utmost importance to address the existing vulnerabilities and, in doing so, it is crucial to identify the underlying problems. According to Kitching (2014), there is a significant disparity in the global labor market, and limited attention has been given to the integration of individuals with disabilities into it. The degree of marginalization is such that those who possess comparatively lower levels of education and skill sets are frequently the ones who are physically challenged.

The state of facilities and the need for their provisions by the government and society indicates a clear lack of acceptance and sensitivity for people with disabilities within social systems. The discrimination that occurs frequently goes unnoticed and is disregarded within the institutions. The basis of development, however, is in the notion that it is imperative to incorporate marginalized populations and eradicate inequities (Edmonds, 2005). It is apparent that the obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities extend beyond physical infrastructure. The consequences of these barriers are diverse and encompass various aspects such as social mobility, educational attainment, employment prospects, and overall life chances.

The theoretical framework for this study was laid on the theories of Max Weber, Michel Oliver, and Ronald Mace. It helped in understanding the social model of disability, the idea of universal design, and the repercussions resulting from its lack of accessibility. The study is grounded on Max Weber's theory of Life Chances, which asserts that individuals' possibilities in life are influenced by factors such as education, and social class. These factors collectively determine the likelihood of social mobility for individuals (Weber, 1947). Higher economic resources pave a pathway to a higher quality of education, high-paying jobs, and eventually a higher social class, however, a lack of resources would diminish the prospects of upward social mobility. In order to promote inclusivity, individuals with disabilities should be provided with accessibility and complete rights. Another fundamental framework employed was the social model of disability proposed by Michael Oliver, which he asserts in his work, 'The Politics of Disablement'. He asserted that disability is considered a social phenomenon, wherein, the disabilities stem from the environment and physical infrastructure that impede the participation of the people (Oliver, 1990). The theory serves as a fundamental basis as it effectively explains that it is not the person who is disabled but the inadequacies of infrastructure that make one disabled.

Lastly, the theory employed to understand the principles of design was developed by Ronald Mace who expanded upon the Universal Design theory. He asserts that urban architecture plays a crucial role in establishing an atmosphere that fosters inclusivity and active participation. Mace's (2019) principles advocate for the development of flexible designs that facilitate effortless use. Additionally, it necessitates the modification of existing spaces to conform to inclusive criteria.

Material and Methods

The present study utilizes a qualitative research methodology. This research is driven by the fundamental objective of comprehending the phenomenon of dependence encountered by people with disabilities and its consequential effects on their life chances. The inclusion criteria of this research were students with disabilities who use mobility-assistive devices, such as crutches and wheelchairs, and study and reside in a higher education institution in Lahore. A sample of ten participants was selected from a public university in Lahore through the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique emphasizes that a sample must possess shared and specific features (Bhardwaj, 2019). The research sample includes both male and female students. The participants were identified across the campus with the help of the administration and the students.

In-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide formulated carefully to address these questions. The interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the participants. The in-depth interviews were recorded after obtaining informed consent from the participants. The interviews were conducted in both English and Urdu languages. The interviews were then transcribed and translated, with careful attention paid to preserving the contextual nuances of the individual's experiences. In this regard, the audiotapes were repeatedly listened to make sure that transcriptions accurately conveyed the intended message.

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted using a six-step process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). These steps included becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, generating themes, reviewing the topics, defining and naming the themes, and finally, writing up the study. During the process of familiarization, the transcripts were carefully examined and read again in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the material. This facilitated the development of codes and then deciphering and classifying them into categories. This subsequently resulted in the identification and naming of themes. The results were subsequently analyzed within the context of the existing literature. The participants' experiences were further corroborated and validated by the method of observation, which involved visiting the hostels, departments, and other relevant facilities in the university.

Results and Discussion

One of the primary obstacles encountered by individuals with disabilities is their reliance on others for fundamental necessities, such as accessing the university campus, commuting to a workplace, or attending various events. Individuals often find themselves in a situation where they must regularly seek assistance from others, resulting in a perpetual sense of dependence and imposition on others. This predicament poses challenges to their ability to sustain themselves. The students' experiences have indicated that the existing built spaces within the university campus as well as the roads are not conducive to their needs, resulting in challenges with commuting and limited accessibility, hence necessitating dependence on external assistance.

Barriers to Accessing Educational Institutions

Education is often regarded as the most effective means for individuals to achieve upward social mobility. It has the potential to determine one's future or, at the very least, exert influence on it. Education provides individuals with the opportunity to acquire a skill set that is most conducive to their development. Education systems require the students to do a prescribed set of activities such as attending classes and appearing in exams. The assessment of students' skills is predicated upon their success in examinations and active engagement in classroom activities. However, it is imperative to meet a certain level of attendance prior to these examinations. Therefore, this particular method necessitates the physical presence of students in the classroom for a certain duration and mandates their active engagement for the entirety of the academic year. Consequently, this presents a significant challenge for those with physical disabilities. A male Doctoral student who uses a wheelchair believed that his research was highly impacted by his physical disabilities.

"I have frequently faced the challenge of low attendance. Moreover, my supervisor rejected numerous research proposals that involved fieldwork just because he wanted me to choose a topic that could be conveniently done in a lab. I know he was being considerate but this does not allow me to do something I really want to do. However, even within the laboratory, many instruments are inaccessible to me, necessitating my reliance on fellow students."

The participants talked about the issue of class attendance. Another participant who utilized a manual wheelchair had similar worries pertaining to his punctuality in attending class, citing it as a significant obstacle:

"It is a massive challenge for me to reach class on time. It takes a lot of physical effort as I use a manual wheelchair. I experience physical exertion due to the lack of road infrastructure that is accommodating to a wheelchair. In addition, the hot weather in Lahore makes it hard so I have to take water breaks on my way."

A female student has claimed that she consistently relies on her wheelchair for transportation to her classes. This not only induces physical fatigue but also has adverse effects on her general well-being such as regular weight loss, particularly during the hot summer months.

Crutch users have several obstacles that are similar to those faced by wheelchair users within educational institutions, while also experiencing a distinct set of challenges unique to their mode of mobility. One participant shared:

“I had no desire to pursue studies at this university due to the large size of the campus. I had foreseen that the distance between the main road and the department, as well as the additional facilities inside it, would provide a potential challenge for me. I successfully enrolled at a smaller size university, yet circumstances compelled me to transfer to this institution.”

Accessibility can be described as one of the primary concerns for admission at any university. However certain measures can be helpful for students with disabilities to continue their education hassle-free. In contrast, another female participant who used a wheelchair shared:

“I am enjoying a high-quality education and I am receiving a stipend for my academic performance. I have similar expectations to those of other students since I enjoy equal treatment. In fact, I am pretty satisfied with the academic environment here.”

An alternative viewpoint was expressed by another participant, who emphasized the issue of relying on others for mobility and underlined the everyday challenges he encounters in order to attend his classes. The participant said:

“The academic performance obviously gets compromised when one has to rely on others to reach the classes on time. If my friend fails to reach his classes on time, then definitely I will also be late, and I have experienced this several times.”

Similarly, another participant highlighted that our disabilities are further exacerbated by our reliance on others for routine tasks. Another participant added, ‘It is quite obvious and true that reliance on others for daily tasks is not easy to associate with’. For example, a student shared:

“Basic chores like paying the fee at the bank do not come easy for me since the bank is located far from my department and hostel. Furthermore, there are extensive waiting lines that force me to request my brother to make the payment. Though I try to be as independent as possible. Oftentimes I feel dismayed when I see other people doing the same tasks independently. I fear how I will find or manage a job after I graduate.”

Based on the accounts provided by our participants, it has become apparent that the academic achievement of students with disabilities is influenced by their reliance on external support inside the university environment. The aforementioned reliance can be attributed to a dearth or inadequacy of infrastructure, services, and amenities offered by colleges to these students. The potential decline in academic achievement may subsequently impact the students' prospects for favorable career possibilities. Furthermore, it is worth noting that this phenomenon might potentially exert a lasting influence on the student's physical and emotional well-being.

Barriers to Employment Opportunities

The economic well-being of individuals is heavily dependent on the abilities and skills they acquire. The experiences of several participants indicate that individuals

with disabilities have significant challenges in securing desirable employment opportunities, even after successfully obtaining a degree. The findings revealed that students with disabilities have encountered difficulties when it comes to securing part-time jobs and internships, which are mandatory components of their academic programs. These experiences, along with the experiences of their older peers with disabilities have shaped their impression of limited prospects for securing favorable employment opportunities in the future. The findings revealed that limitations and dependency on others produce an impression of having obstacles to reaching life goals. Conversely, several students with disabilities exhibited a sense of optimism towards their future prospects, despite their negative experiences and perceptions. One of the participants expressed their viewpoint as follows:

“Now there are reserved seats for people with disabilities in many organizations. I am hopeful that I will get a decent job. Although I am aware of the challenges I would face, I also believe I can overcome them.”

Similarly, another participant shared:

“Despite relying on others, I believe that my limitations do not impact my life goals. As far as a job is concerned, I understand why organizations do not want to hire us. They want to make a profit so they would prefer a regular person. Many organizations do not want to invest in special infrastructure for people with disabilities.”

The most common challenges highlighted by the participants included the issues of a lack of or insufficient disability-friendly infrastructure i.e., ramps, elevators, toilets, and walkways. From getting a job to doing daily tasks, independent movement becomes the greatest impediment. A similar view was shared by a participant who wanted to participate in tasks outside the campus but had to give up due to inadequate infrastructure:

“I would like to do a part-time job to be financially dependent. However, currently, most part-time jobs for young people are not office jobs but rather ones that require running around like food delivery or service, sales, marketing, and similar jobs. People with physical disabilities are unable to do them, resulting in their exclusion from such positions.”

In addition to employment prospects, students with disabilities may encounter obstacles while seeking more educational possibilities. One male participant who uses a wheelchair expressed that dependence can lead to difficulties, as evidenced by his personal experience of being unable to pursue vocational training and possible employment due to insufficient mobility support.

On the contrary, some participants exhibited confidence and said that they didn't need any support as they perceived themselves to be self-sufficient and at par with people without disabilities. One of the participants said, ‘I do not think I need to depend on anyone. However, my colleagues have been very cooperative’.

Individuals who rely on crutches had comparable difficulties, as they specifically highlight that their reliance on others hinders their ability to make assertive decisions. One of the male participants who used crutches expressed:

"I want to pursue a career in the civil services. I shared my aspiration with an officer and learned that individuals with disabilities are encouraged to pursue office-based groups even after meeting the necessary qualifications. However, I know a Civil Services officer who was blind and joined the Foreign Services."

The infrastructure is not sustainable for commuting especially for the disabled as the needs for them far exceed the opportunities that they are provided with. Another participant added:

"It is true that the dependence on others has isolated me and it makes me uncomfortable to ask others for a favor. Even I left a job just after two days because of unaffordable fares and difficulties I had to go through."

The issue of dependence on others, particularly for transportation and various other tasks, is a significant challenge. Ultimately, this leads to the social exclusion of this vulnerable group. One participant expressed their current dependence on others for transportation but expressed their intention to purchase a vehicle for commuting purposes. The participant further said, "I intend to buy a vehicle because I frequently miss lectures. My friend who often drives me is a very non-serious student and is often late or absent."

Barriers to Employment and Financial Independence

The most important impetus behind getting an education is to gain social autonomy and the most effective way to achieve financial independence is through getting a job. However, the job market especially for people with disabilities presents limited opportunities. They have to confront further obstacles for their social independence. A female, wheelchair user said:

"I applied for a job at multiple organizations but could not avail of the opportunity, sometimes because of being late for the interview and other times getting rejected. However, I am very optimistic as I have good qualifications and organizations have quotas for people with disabilities."

While the participant appears optimistic, it is important to acknowledge the concerns of potential rejection based on disabilities or reliance on others for transportation. Another person using a wheelchair added:

"It often happens with us (people with disabilities). In fact, I have faced this issue twice this year. I was not hired for a job even after passing the interview because the organization did not have appropriate infrastructure, such as ramps or elevators. Another time was rejected on the spot for my disability. I am apprehensive about the future."

The majority of the participants had a high level of ambition while facing physical challenges. The primary employment opportunities sought by our participants predominantly consist of positions that are either specifically tailored for individuals with disabilities or are allocated to them through designated quotas. Another participant said,

"From my own experience, I know that there are many opportunities for people like me. I even applied for jobs several times and got them all." That being said, I should point out that the work atmosphere is generally more positive and welcoming in Lahore than in other places. When I worked in a call center, I was very driven. Many of my seniors with disabilities work for NGOs and are doing well, while many of them are also self-employed."

Many people with disabilities are inspired to go after the same kind of job by the examples set by others with disabilities. Another participant said, "I hope I can easily get a teaching job because it's not physically hard to be a teacher." While another participant said:

"Although I have never had a job before, I am very hopeful that I will get one soon. Seniors and other guys from my community have told me about the organizations that are supportive of people like us. I would obviously follow their guidance."

Nevertheless, there were others who did not encounter similar references or guidance. As a result, the level of hope and optimism among those participants over employment prospects diminished. One of the participants expressed

"I believe that my classmates have a better chance of getting a job than I do." This is because the course requires hands-on training, which I couldn't get. Because of this, I'm afraid it will be very hard for me to find a good job after I graduate."

The pursuit of a better future necessitates the prioritization of accessibility as an important factor. The observation has been made that individuals with disabilities often face outright employment denials or, in cases where they are employed, encounter difficulties in accessing the necessary support to fully engage and thrive at work. Another participant expressed similar concerns:

"I really believe it would be hard for me to find a good job. When I worked at an IT company before, it was really hard for me to get to my workspace on my own. Personally, I believe that a disabled person cannot survive on their own in Pakistan. So, I want to move to a different country where there are better services and more opportunities to improve one's life."

Barriers to Social Participation

Max Weber's theory of life chances is used to examine people's social engagement, and a connection is made between structural problems identified by Kimberle Crenshaw and people's obvious reliance on one another as members of a community. The effective functioning of a given society is associated with the capacity of its members to actively engage and contribute, a factor closely intertwined with their level of social involvement. However, the functioning may be considered impeded when an individual's social integration is contingent upon another individual's presence.

The extent of an individual's social interactions significantly enhances their prospects for employment and productive engagement, since opportunities tend to be accessible primarily to those with a higher degree of social visibility. However, the concept of socializing for individuals with physical disabilities encounters several obstacles, which can be attributed to factors such as their introverted nature or the absence of a colleague to accompany them to social events. A participant shared his experience:

"The students mostly talk to each other; they don't talk to me, and I often feel left out." It's been four to five months since I started my new class, and only a few of the students know my name. I once asked a friend for notes, but she said no. There were also no games for people like me at a recent sports event, I felt invisible."

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that some participants expressed a general sense of satisfaction with regard to their interpersonal interactions with others. One of the participants expressed, "I engage in sports activities in accordance with my personal capabilities." I participated in the dice challenge and even got to opportunity for recitation and Naat performance.' This finding demonstrates that individuals with disabilities may actively engage and participate in many activities, even when faced with limited possibilities, provided that they have access to appropriate assistance. One other participant brought attention to the matter of social acceptability. She asserted that the nature of interpersonal contact is mostly subjective:

"I'm fine with spending time outside with other people." I also enjoy interacting with them on social media. The community is very inclusive and supportive. I like to hang out with my classmates a lot. But I don't spend time with my hostel roommates because I don't feel as safe around them."

Another participant highlighted the current trend of organizations making special arrangements to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities. These are events like seminars and workshops, particularly the ones arranged by international organizations or those hosted at big hotels. Another participant expressed her experiences:

"During Ramadan, my friends planned a get-together, and once a trip was arranged. On all these occasions they ensured special measures so that I could participate. At a recent seminar, I could only join because the organizers had special seating arrangements for me."

Crutches users were comparatively less dependent on others for their social interaction. One of the participants said;

"I often go to social events. I even manage a small Jazz Cash store. I've also been taking part in a number of events inside and outside of university that involve writing because I like it. However, I prefer not to attend social events like farewells, etc."

However, with the exception of one person, the majority of the participants refrained from engaging in social activities due to various reasons. Within the given context, another participant expressed, 'Typically, I tend to limit my social interactions and refrain from attending social gatherings. Nevertheless, on the occasions when I do participate, I consistently find comfort in the support and assistance provided by my friends.' Another participant raised the point that the activities often organized for the general population lack sufficient inclusivity measures to promote the social capabilities of individuals with disabilities. One of them shared:

"I don't go to many university events because they usually involve sports like cricket and football that I can't play." Social events are not designed for people like me."

Mostly, the events lack sufficient inclusivity to accommodate the participation of all individuals. Nevertheless, in certain instances, the limited social engagement of individuals with disabilities can be attributed to personal preferences, while in other cases, it can be attributed to factors such as infrastructural design or reliance on others. Nevertheless, the consequences of physical obstacles are significant making it extremely hard for individuals with disabilities to function independently.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which individuals with disabilities rely on others, either formally or informally, for their fundamental needs, encompassing tasks of daily living, educational pursuits, and employment opportunities. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the obstacles presented by infrastructure barriers and how they may affect the life chances of individuals. The research findings provide evidence to support the assertion that there exist significant infrastructure barriers that give rise to a variety of challenges that are either presented or intensified as a result. Similar to the study of Tam (2022), the institution under study provides limited formal support to address the infrastructural obstacles and aid students with disabilities in their pursuit of educational objectives. The data is categorized into three distinct sections, which are determined by the extent of dependence: attainment of educational objectives, employment outcomes, and social engagement.

The primary expectation placed upon university students is the attainment of educational objectives (Tam, 2022). The study conducted by Kapsalis (2022) revealed that a significant issue encountered by several participants was the lack of accessibility to the department. The primary concern among these matters pertained to disability-friendly transportation for accessing the departments, while additional concerns, such as class absences and the inability to attend significant events or training, stemmed from this

central issue. The life goals of students exhibit considerable diversity; however, even simple tasks may require significant effort, therefore impacting both decision-making processes and overall productivity.

According to Kapsalis (2022), the participants expressed their aspirations to get vocational training or secure employment but encountered difficulties in realizing these goals because of issues related to accessibility. One participant further claimed that achieving independence in everyday tasks, such as depositing fees at a bank, becomes difficult. The results of the study indicated that the institution or administration does not currently possess any adequate infrastructure to support individuals with disabilities throughout the campus. A significant number of participants face are dependent on the support of peers and at times feel uneasy seeking assistance from their peers. Nevertheless, some participants faced little or no challenges of mobility and expressed satisfaction with the informal assistance provided by their peer

To acquire education, one has to follow institutional rules and regulations. However, individuals with disabilities encounter challenges within this process, such as low attendance resulting from difficulties in accessing the campus. Hot weather conditions in Lahore were a significant factor that frequently exacerbated the challenges faced by individuals already experiencing hardships. The aspirations of students seeking to achieve specific educational objectives, such as conducting research on a particular area of interest, were often unable due to concerns about accessibility (Kapsalis, 2022). Regarding the aspect of formal institutional support, it was found that the institutions were providing tuition waivers and scholarships to certain students with disabilities, which resulted in a notable level of satisfaction among a selected number of participants. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of participants expressed that their ability to attend classes and perform well is, at times, compromised as a result of the challenges they face in accessing their classrooms.

The primary objective of pursuing an education is often to secure a good job. However, the data revealed that students with disabilities often encountered difficulties in this regard. Some participants shared considerable difficulties in getting and keeping employment, even part-time work because of their mobility challenges (Mansky, 2023). One of the participants voiced his concern about giving up on a job because the shared mobility services were too expensive for daily commute. However, a significant number of individuals who did not have a negative experience expressed a high level of optimism, drawing inspiration from other students with disabilities who were able to get good jobs. Nevertheless, a significant number of students expressed apprehension over their future aspirations and perceived their classmates to have a higher likelihood of getting better employment opportunities in comparison to themselves.

The essential requirements of persons with disabilities, including educational aspirations and obtaining employment, are impeded, blocked, and halted by infrastructural hurdles, which also impair the social lives of the people. The review of the literature suggests that the social interactions and relationships of individuals eventually exert a significant influence on their life chances. The potential for possibilities is greatly enhanced based on socialization. Moreover, active participation in a variety of events is crucial for the proper functioning of individuals and their integration into society. The experiences of the participants revealed that many of their university acquaintances actively avoid them, while just a limited number engage in any form with them.

Likewise, one participant expressed that there was a lack of specific games tailored to their needs. However, the statement provided reflects a subjective viewpoint, since there were individuals who expressed alternative perspectives, suggesting the existence of several more opportunities associated with their engagement in social activities. An additional viewpoint on socialization emphasizes that individuals with disabilities possess

a shared sense of identity within their own group, fostering a high level of integration and enhancing their social inclusion. Several participants who use crutches also said that they are able to participate well in the community. For instance, one participant reported successfully operating a small business, while others expressed contentment with the assistance they received from their peers and fellow individuals.

Conclusion

It can be conclusively argued that the cities in general and the universities, in particular, must prioritize being inclusive and sensitive in their design to accommodate students with disabilities. The dependence of the students with disabilities largely owes to the infrastructural incapacities. The primary purpose of an educational institute is to provide education to the students, and eventually make them capable to contribute in society. However, the study has found that Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 11 remain unaccomplished due to the dependence of students with disabilities heavily influencing their ability to get education, find and sustain jobs, and ultimately achieve upward social mobility. In order to mitigate disparities, it is important to design urban areas in a manner that minimizes infrastructure obstacles, hence fostering self-sufficiency in both transportation and overall livelihoods.

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