International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Factors Affecting the Political Participation of People with Disabilities and their Family Life Experience in Nepal

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Abstract

Disability is a diverse and complex phenomenon. It affects the social, economic, and political life of PWDs. This study aims to undercover the factors that influence the political participation of PWDs and explore the family life they experience. A chi-square test and Likert scale analysis were carried out on data obtained from the sample of 200 respondents. The study found that marital status, employment, types, and severity of disabilities significantly affects political participation of PWDs. Further, still larger proportions of PWDs were not involved in family decision making process, participate in family function and gathering, family help and support, and emotional senses of belongingness within their family.

Keywords: Disability, People with disabilities, Family, Political Participation

1. Introduction

Disability is the interaction between individual with a health condition (such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and depression), and personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation, and public buildings, and limited social support (WHO, 2023). It can happen to anyone and at any stage of human life. Often disabilities are associated with sins or social stigma which have resulted in social exclusion of People with disabilities (PWDs). Addressing this misconception and reducing social stigma is important for social inclusion and equality of PWDs.

Often, the needs and wants of PWDs are neglected by the family and society. They are perceived as incapable and treated with pity, which results in low participation of PWDs in social, economic, and political life. Consequently, this study aims to identify the factors influencing the political participation of PWDs and explore the family life situation they experience.

2. Method

2.1Data collection and analysis

The data were collected through face-to-face interviews with selected PWDs aged 20 or older, holding disability cards. Structured questionnaires were used for interviews. Interviews were conducted with consent of respondents at the location that they feel comfortable. After the data were collected from respondents, they were put in excel sheets and “R” software was used for data analysis.

The data analysis involved inferential analysis using chi-square test and Likert scale analysis. A chi-square test was carried out to find the relationship between various socio-economic factors (Gender, education, marital status, economic class, employment, types of disabilities and severity of disability) and political participation. Likert scale analysis was carried out to understand the family life of PWDs.

2.2 Hypothesis Testing

Null Hypothesis: H_0: There is no significant relationship of political participation with gender, education, marital status, economic class, employment, types, and severity of disability.

Alternative Hypothesis H_1: There is a significant relationship of political participation with gender, education, marital status, economic class, employment, types, and severity of disability.

Chi-square Test

Chi-square test is a non-parametric test used to test the hypothesis of no association between two or more groups, population, or criteria and to test how likely the observed distribution of data fits with the distribution that is expected. It is used to analyze categorical data. The formula for calculating Chi-square is:

$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$ (Rana & Singhal, 2015)

Where,

χ^2: Chi-square

O*:* Observe frequency

E*:* Expected frequency

Decision Making Criteria

If P-value is less than a significance level (α), the null hypothesis is rejected. Otherwise, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. For the analysis, significance level (α) of 10% is chosen.

2.3 Operational Variable definition

Operational variable definition is the way in which key concepts of the research are observed and measured. Some of the key's concepts and way it is measure is defined as below:

i. Mild disabilities PWDs who can perform daily activities and engaged in social activities without needing the support others falls under the mild disabilities; and in Nepal, people with mild disabilities holds white disability card. In research, those PWDs who holds white disability card is categorized as having mild disabilities.

ii. Moderate disabilities: PWDs who can perform daily activities and engaged in social activities with or without needing supports of others falls under the moderate disabilities; and in Nepal, People with moderate disabilities holds yellow disabilities card. In research, those PWDs holds yellow disabilities card is categorized as having moderate disabilities.

iii. Severe disabilities: PWDs who can perform daily activities and engaged in social activities with continuous supports of others falls under the severe disabilities; and in Nepal, People with severe disabilities holds blue disabilities card. In research, those PWDs holds blue disabilities card is categorized as having moderate disabilities.

iv. Profound disabilities: PWDs who find difficulties in performing even daily activities with continuous supports of others falls under the profound disabilities; and in Nepal, People with profound disabilities holds red disabilities card. In research, those PWDs holds red disabilities card is categorized as having profound disabilities.

3. Result and Discussion

Political participation based on the gender

Table 1 Political participation based on the gender

S.N.	Political Participation	Male	Female	Total
1	No	74 (56.5 %)	47 (68.1 %)	121 (60.5 %)
2	Yes	57 (43.5 %)	22 (31.9 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	131 (100 %)	69 (100 %)	200 (100 %)
Person's Chi-square test				
$\chi^2 = 2.0934$			d.f. = 1	p-value = 0.1479

Table 1 shows that there is low political participation of persons with disabilities, irrespective of their gender. Notably, political participation of male (43.5 %) is higher compared to female (31.9 %). Nevertheless, the p value of the Chi-square test is greater than 0.10 showed that there is no significant relationship between political participation and gender, χ^2 (1, N = 200) = 2.0934, p = 0.1479. Thus, Null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Political participation based on the educational status

Table 2 Political participation based on the education status

S.N.	Political Participation	Middle school & below	Highschool	Bachelor's degree & above	Total
1	No	68 (60.2 %)	28 (59.6 %)	25 (62.5 %)	121 (60.5 %)
2	Yes	41 (39.8 %)	19 (40.4 %)	15 (37.5 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	113 (100 %)	29 (100 %)	47 (100%)	200 (100 %)
Person's Chi-square test					
$\chi^2 = 0.0887$			d.f. = 2	p-value = 0.9566	

Table 2 illustrates political participation of PWDs based on the educational status. It is noteworthy that most of PWDs have not completed school level education which can be attributed to challenges such as inaccessible school buildings, transportation issues and misconceptions of people in society. This

misconception includes belief that People with disabilities are incapable of studying, don't need education, investing in the education of PWDs are wasteful expenditure, so on.

Likewise, table 2 present that there was not much difference in political participation of persons with disabilities, regardless of their education attainment. Similarly, the p value of the Chi-square test is greater than 0.10 showed that there is no significant relationship between education and political participation of PWDs, χ^2 (2, N = 200) = 0.0887, p = 0.9566. Thus, Null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Political participation based on the marital status

Table 3 Political participation based on the Marital status

S.N.	Political Participation	Single	Married	Total
1	No	89 (69 %)	32 (45.1 %)	121 (60.5 %)
2	Yes	40 (31 %)	39 (54.9 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	129 (100 %)	71 (100 %)	200 (100 %)
Person's Chi-square test				
$\chi^2 =$ 9.988			d.f. = 1	p-value = 0.0016

Table 3 illustrates political participation of PWDs based on the marital status. It is noteworthy that most of PWDs were single. People with disabilities are having a difficult time getting married because of factor such as low self-esteem, lack of self-efficacy, social misconceptions, and negative attitudes of people. These challenges have resulted in insufficient support from their families and communities, making it challenging for PWDs to establish their own families and lead fulfilling lives.

Likewise, table 4 present that married PWDs had higher political participation than single PWDs. Similarly, the p value of the Chi-square test is less than 0.10 showed that there is significant relationship between political participation and martial status, χ^2 (1, N = 200) = 9.988, p = 0.0016. Thus, Null hypothesis can be rejected.

Political participation based on the Economic Class

Table 4 Political participation based on the economic class

S.N.	Political Participation	lower	Middle	Upper	Total
1	No	47 (62.7 %)	68 (58.6 %)	6 (66.7 %)	121 (60.5 %)
2	Yes	28 (37.3 %)	48 (41.4 %)	3 (33.3 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	75 (100 %)	116 (100 %)	9 (100%)	200 (100 %)
Person's Chi-square test					
$\chi^2 =$ 0.462			d.f. = 2	p-value = 0.7937	

Table 4 illustrates political participation of PWDs based on the economic class. It showed that most of PWDs belonged to middle class followed by lower class and upper class. Still, the larger proportion of PWDs were belonged to lower class.

Likewise, table 4 present that there is high political participation of PWDs belonging to middle class followed by lower class and upper class. However, the p value of the Chi-square test is greater than .05 showed that there is no significant relationship between economic class and political participation of PWDs, χ^2 (2, N = 200) = 0.462, p = 0.7937. Thus, Null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Political participation based on the employment

Table 5 Political participation based on the employment

S.N.	Political Participation	Employed	Unemployed	Total
1	No	56 (53.8 %)	65 (67.7 %)	121 (60.5 %)
2	Yes	48 (46.2 %)	31 (32.3 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	104 (100 %)	96 (100 %)	200 (100 %)
Person's Chi-square test				
$\chi^2 =$ 3.455			d.f. = 1	p-value = 0.0631

Table 5 presents political participation of PWDs based on the employment status of PWDs. It shows that employed PWDs (46.2 %) have higher political participation than unemployed PWDs (32.3 %). Moreover, the chi-square test shows that relationship between political participation and employment are statistically significant at 10 % p-value, χ^2 (1, N = 200) = 3.455, p = 0.0631. Thus, Null hypothesis can be rejected.

Political participation based on the Types of disabilities

Table 6 Political participation based on the types of disabilities

S.N.	Political Participation	Physical impairment	Sensory impairment	Total
1	No	71 (66.4 %)	50 (53.8 %)	121 (60.5 %)
2	Yes	36 (33.6 %)	43 (46.2 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	107 (100 %)	93 (100 %)	200 (100 %)
Person's Chi-square test				
$\chi^2 =$ 2.7952			d.f. = 1	p-value = 0.0945

Table 6 presents political participation of PWDs based on the types of disabilities. It shows that people with sensory impairments (46.2 %) have higher political participation than physical impairment (33.6 %). Moreover, the chi-square test shows that relationship between political participation and types of disabilities are statistically significant at 10 % p-value, χ^2 (1, N = 200) = 2.7952, p = .0945. Thus, null hypothesis can be rejected.

Political participation based on the severity of disabilities

Table 7 Employment Status Based on the Severity of Disabilities

S.N.	Political participation	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Profound	Total
1	No	14 (40 %)	28 (54.9%)	45(68.2%)	34 (70.8%)	121 (60.5 %)

2	Yes	21 (60 %)	23 (45.1 %)	21(31.8%)	14 (29.2 %)	79(39.5 %)
	Total	35 (100%)	51 (100 %)	66(100%)	48(100 %)	200 (100 %)
Pearson's Chi-squared test						
	$\chi^2 = 10.5982$		d. f. = 3	p-value = 0.0141		

Table 7 shows that as the severity of disabilities increases, political participation of PWDs decreases. As the severity of disabilities increases from mild to moderate, the political participation of PWDs decreases from 60 % to 45.1 %. Likewise, as the severity of disabilities increase from moderate to severe and severe to profound, political participation of PWDs decreases from 45.1 % to 31.8 % and from 31.8 % to 29.2 % respectively. Further, the p value of the Chi-square test is less than 0.10 showed that there is significant relationship between political participation and severity of disabilities, χ^2 (3, N = 200) = 10.5982, p = 0.0141. Thus, Null hypothesis can be rejected.

Family Life of People with Disabilities

Table 8 Family and Social Life of Persons with Disabilities

S.N.	Items	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Always	Total
1	Consultation while making decisions	29 (14.5 %)	9 (4.5 %)	71 (35.5 %)	55 (27.5%)	36 (18%)	200 (100%)
2	Involved in family gatherings	25 (12.5 %)	23 (11.5%)	74 (37 %)	54 (27 %)	24 (12 %)	200 (100%)
3	Help from family members to daily activities	41 (20.5%)	17 (8.5 %)	20 (10 %)	72 (36 %)	50 (25 %)	200 (100%)
4	Feelings as though one is part of the family	28 (14%)	7 (3.5 %)	39 (19.5 %)	81 (40.5 %)	45 (22.5%)	200 (100%)

Table 8 illustrates the family life experience of people with disabilities (PWDs). It explores their participation in the family decision making process, family function and gathering, the support they receive from their families, and emotional senses of belonging they feel within their family units.
About 14.5 % of PWDs (29) reported that they were never consulted while making any decision on their family, 4.5 % (9) were rarely consulted and 35.5 % (71) were consulted sometimes only. Thus, 54.5 % of PWDs were not regularly involved in the decision-making process. Often, PWDs are viewed as incapable of contributing to decisions making, which has resulted in low participation of them in decisions making. Addressing this misconception will not only empower the PWDs but also enrich their family life and those around them.

Likewise, 12.5 % of PWDs (25) reported that they had never been to family gatherings or functions, 11.5 % of PWDs (23) had rarely attended family gatherings or functions and 37 % (74) had attended sometimes only. Thus, 61 percent of PWDs were not able to regularly attend family gatherings and functions such as wedding ceremonies, festivals, local ceremonies, picnics, and so on. The low participation of PWDs can be attributed to a combination of physical and social barriers. Inaccessible road and public transportation make it difficult to include PWDs in family gathering and functions. Moreover, negative behaviors and perception towards PWDs, including the perception of them as an extra burden or possibility of blaming

them for any mishap, also had contributed to limited participation of PWDs in family gathering and functions.

Additionally, 20.5 % of PWDs (41) never received any help from their family, 8.5 % (17) rarely received help and 10% (20) received help from their family sometimes only. Notably, 39 % is still a significant portion without sufficient support from their family. It can be due to financial constraint, social discrimination and stigma, or lack of understanding about the needs or challenges faced by PWDs. So, understanding the driver factors and addressing it is essential to improve the well-being of PWDs.

Similarly, 14 % of PWDs had never experienced a sense of belongingness within their family. 3.5 % rarely experience such a sense of belonging while 19.5 % experience it only sometimes. Even though PWDs who experience sense of belonging within their family are higher than those who don't. It is important to highlight that 37 % is still a larger proportion who don't feel a sense of belonging within their family most of the time.

Making choices regarding one's own life

Table 9 Family and Social Life of Persons with Disabilities

S.N.	Items	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Always	Total
1	Making decisions regarding daily activities yourself	17 (8.5%)	24 (12 %)	30 (15 %)	74 (37 %)	55 (27.5 %)	200 (100%)
2	Taking major decisions in your life yourself	17 (8.5 %)	20 (10%)	23 (11.5 %)	67 (33.5 %)	73 (36.5 %)	200 (100%)

Table 9 presents the participation of PWDs in the decision related to daily activities (what they will eat, what they will do, where they will go) as well as significant life decision including matters related to education, relationships related matters, and so on. The majority of PWDs were actively involved in making daily activities (64.5 %) and significant life decisions (70%).

Conclusion

The study revealed that factors such as marital status, employment, types, and severity of disabilities significantly impact the political participation of the PWDs. It indicates the importance of supporting spouse and achieving economic independence for PWDs to engage in political activities. Economic activities not only increase their self-esteem, and communication skills, but also increases their social connection, thereby, fostering the positive influences in their political participation.

Different types and severity of disabilities faces different challenges. To people with physical impairment overcoming physical barriers maybe major challenge while to people with sensory impairment overcoming communication barriers maybe major challenge. Similarly, as severity of disabilities increases more support are required to overcome the social and environment barriers. Thus, understanding the diverse and complex nature of disabilities. And formulating and effectively implementing policies that

focus on creating disability friendly infrastructure and promoting employment are key to increase the political participation of people with disabilities.

Likewise, many people with disabilities were not able to regularly participate in family decisions making (54.5%), family gatherings and functions (61 %), get support from family members (39%) and feel sense of belongingness within family (37%). Thus, a lot more can be done to improve the family life of PWDs. Government should encourage and provides families with disabilities with consultation facilities which focus on eliminating the any misconception regarding the PWDs, and provides training on how to communicate, and take care of their family members with disabilities is necessary.

In addition, the study identified that most of the PWDs can make decisions regarding daily activities (64.5 %) and important life decisions (70 %) themselves. It is positive and should be encourage.

It was noteworthy that, most of PWDs are struggling to even complete school level education and there is low participation of PWDs in college level education. Thus, education infrastructure and system need to be made disabilities friendly. Similarly, most of PWDs are difficulty to get married due to lack of self-efficacy, societal misconceptions, and lack of necessary support from the family and society. Thus, to improve the marital situation of PWDs, any misconception regarding them should be eliminated through general awareness programs and promoting education and employment of PWDs to increase their self-efficacy.

Abbreviations

PWDs : People with disabilities
WHO : World Health Organization

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