

# Stigmatization of People with Disability in Nepal

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## Abstract

Individuals with disabilities constitute a surprisingly small segment of Nepal's total population. Notwithstanding the prolonged Maoist-led insurgency in Nepal leading to a heightened incidence of disabilities, social stigma attached to disability and underreporting of disability cases remain widespread. The opportunities for education and employment for individuals with disabilities are restricted due to societal perceptions, leading many to choose not to disclose their disabilities in order to avoid stigma. Society often views individuals with disabilities as burdens and lacking the capacity for independence, with discrimination beginning at birth. Additionally, families strive to conceal their disabled members to protect their social reputation. This paper tries to examine the societal stigma associated with individuals having physical, visual and hearing disabilities in Kathmandu. Participants expressed the emotional exhaustion of consistently having to showcase their capabilities, facing bias, and experiencing social exclusion driven by cultural superstitions such as stigma. Many people with disabilities exhibit a variety of skills; however, societal perceptions frequently overlook these abilities and reinforce persistent stigmas. Blind people encounter substantial obstacles, including societal perceptions of dependency and inadequacy. Misconceptions impede employment opportunities and social relationships, especially for women who face greater scrutiny. The outcome is emotional stress and social isolation. Addressing these challenges requires a change in societal perspectives, emphasizing abilities rather than disabilities, ensuring open space, and fostering inclusion to counteract pervasive biases.

## Keywords

disadvantage, hearing disability, physical disability, social stigma, visual disability

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Disability consists of impairment in human organs and social barriers, which combinedly, but not always equally, hinder individual's full and effective participation in social life on an equal basis with others (NSO 2024). Human impairment includes physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairment. The Nepal Census 2021 identified 2.2% of the Nepali Population living with some form of disability. Among the male population, 2.5% and the entire female population, 2.0% have some disability. The list of percentages that represent the prevalence of different types of are Physical (36.75%), Low vision (16.88%), Blind (5.37%), (Deaf 7.85%), Hard of Hearing (7.87%), Deaf and blind (1.56%), Speech impairment (6.36%), Psycho-social disability (4.2%), Intellectual disabilities (1.73%), Hemophilia (0.75%), Autism (0.75%), Multiple Disability (8.78%), and Not Stated (1.07%) (NFDN, 2023). This percentage might seem low compared to some advanced western nations, because the definition of disability in Nepal differs from that in economically advanced western countries, which have higher rates of disability. Nepal's history of conflict has increased the number of individuals with disabilities, but cultural stigma and a reluctance to acknowledge disabilities may result in underreporting.

People with disabilities in Nepal encounter discrimination and challenges in various aspects of life, such as education and employment, due to societal beliefs. Many do not openly discuss disabilities due to the associated shame. The term disability refers to conditions that hinder a person's ability to perform certain activities or engage with their environment, encompassing a wide range of physical, mental, and sensory impairments. The United Nations (2006) defines disability as impairments that may, either fully or partially, prevent active participation in society. The WHO (2012) also notes that disability includes activity limitations and participation restrictions.

Disabled individuals in many societies are seen as burdens and face stigmas that lead to self-stigmatization. Interactions between disabled and non-disabled people can cause discomfort to the former. Traditional beliefs result in limited access to services and education

for disabled individuals, with low literacy and dropout rates. Media portrayals of disability are often negative, adding to the stigma. People with disabilities have struggled to be included in decision-making processes that impact their lives, seeking to improve their social and economic standing.

Many people in Nepal view disabilities as a punishment for past sins, leading families to hide disabled members to maintain social status. Society often perceives disabled individuals as incapable of independent action, and discrimination often begins at birth. In some communities, children with disabilities are restrained or isolated due to a lack of understanding them as equal as other human beings. Research has shown pervasive stigma regarding trustworthiness and societal acceptance of disabled individuals, highlighting the need for anti-stigma campaigns.

Educational accessibility remains poor, particularly in rural areas where schools are far from homes. Many children with disabilities miss out on education due to environmental barriers and inadequate resources. Those with visual disabilities face additional obstacles, including stereotypes that limit their employment opportunities and social participation. This study aims to explore different kinds of social stigma encountered by people with physical disability, visual disability and hearing disability in Nepal.

### *Defining Stigma*

Stigma is simply an unjust belief regarding someone. It consists of highly negative sets of opinions about certain individuals, and as a result these individuals feel devalued. Individuals may be stigmatized for various reasons, including poverty, race, or disability. Nevertheless, the stigma associated with disability is distinct from other forms of stigma, as individuals with disabilities are often stigmatized by their immediate social circles, including family members. Consequently, disability has been globally stigmatized. Basically, it was Goffman (1963), who identified the nature, sources and consequences of stigma; a pioneer work in theorizing stigma. He defined stigma as an attribute,

which reduces someone from its whole by which the person becomes 'tainted' or a 'discounted one' (Goffman 1963:3). In some, stigma is all about spoiling one's identity. Goffman emphasized that the key issues faced by individuals stem from societal attitudes rather than just their impairments. He defines stigma as a trait that lowers an individual's status and makes them different from others. Stigmatized people are viewed as less deserving to be dignified being; thus, opportunities to them are denied, thereby pushing them to further marginalization and discrimination.

Stigmatization starts citing some social norms, values and beliefs in which the stigmatized persons are depicted as people having characteristics quite contrary to the socially acceptable character. Stigmatization differs depending on society; however, in all societies, people with disabilities in particular are more stigmatized. Stigma has so many types; and all manifests publicly. As a result, the entire society projects people with disabilities (PWDs) as incapable. We can see disabled people are stigmatized publicly like government offices and public institutions such as schools, hospitals, universities, administrative offices, etc.

More importantly, Link and Phelan described stigma broadly as a process, which revolves five co-occurrences of its components. The process includes labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination (Link and Phelan 2001:363). Labeling means assigning a feature to someone, while stereotyping is categorizing based on that label. Separation occurs when stigmatized people are seen as different. Status loss refers to a decrease in social standing due to stigma, and discrimination means unfair treatment towards those who are stigmatized. They argue that power is necessary for stigma and its processes to co-occur meaning social structures plays a crucial role in maintaining stigma. Stigma impacts employment, housing, crime, health, and life chances, suggesting those with stigmatized traits face systemic disadvantages. This article gives more credit to Link and Phelan because they have detailed the stigma better than other scholars.

Stigmatization has multiple roots, but disability has widely been the easiest weapon to stigmatize people. Disabled people are more stigmatized because they are disabled and are vulnerable at the same time. Therefore, they have poor living and disadvantaged living. Poverty markedly influences disability, establishing a cycle that impacts disabled individuals and their autonomy. It leads to inferior health results for impoverished individuals in comparison to affluent ones, connecting poverty to health problems such as malnutrition, low birth weights, inadequate sanitation, hazardous surroundings, and injuries. It is widely that individuals with disabilities in Nepal face significant barriers in education, employment, and social acceptance. A high percentage of children with disabilities do not receive formal education. Stigma around disability, often rooted in negative cultural attitudes, affects educational opportunities. Some families hide their disabled children due to fear of societal shame. Persons with disabilities are forced to lead a disadvantaged existence because they are unjustly stigmatized.

We can see in Nepal a strong social stigma and negative parental attitudes towards disability, with many attributing it to supernatural causes. This leads families to avoid education for disabled children, sometimes even hiding them to avoid shame. Changing these attitudes is crucial for improving educational outcomes. Lamichhane and Okubo (2014) discussed the linkage between education and employment condition of people with disability. They highlighted the crucial role of education in obtaining jobs, especially full-time white-collar jobs. Age and type of disability also affect employment chances. People with physical disabilities were found to have struggled a lot to find jobs despite they had higher level education. Questions can be raised on whether stigma has been the major factor of not sending disabled children to school. But answer is almost clear that the stigma has significantly contributed to introduce and intensify social and economic challenges to the disabled people.

In sum, studies on disability highlighted widespread stigma perceptions. Many individuals with disability reported feelings of

rejection from their society. Additionally, social stigma influenced educational decisions, with many parents believing education wouldn't benefit their disabled children. Employment opportunities for PWD were tied to education levels, with better education leading to higher employment prospects. However, all people with disability still face challenges despite educational qualifications. Overall, PWD in Nepal face severe socio-economic challenges due to persistent stigma and marginalization.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Examining the scholarly concepts proposed by esteemed sociologists, this document asserts that stigma possesses a social structural foundation. It unequivocally posits stigma as a socially constructed phenomenon. The stigmatization of individuals with disabilities initiates with the assignment of negative characteristics. This labeling occurs in such a manner that individuals with disabilities are inaccurately classified or socially marginalized. Similarly, just as darkness is perceived as danger, disability is regarded as a threat. Moreover, stigmatization involves the division of individuals into categories of 'us' and 'them.' Non-disabled individuals are categorized as 'us,' while those with disabilities are labeled as 'them'. Consequently, all people with disabilities, specifically those with severe disability, experience significant social deprivation. They perceive social loss due to their positioning within a lower social hierarchy and face discrimination as they are excluded from participating in a fulfilling public life.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This document is formulated based on a study conducted in the Kathmandu Valley. The participants were categorized into three groups: those with physical disability, those with visual disability, and those with hearing disability. A total of seven individuals with visual disabilities, two individuals with physical disabilities and one person with hearing disability were selected as a sample through convenience sampling. This method facilitated the collection of respondents from a diverse range of areas within Kathmandu.

The design employed in this study is of a narrative nature, incorporating certain descriptive elements. Only narrative qualitative data were utilized and examined. This approach involves gathering personal experiences and stories. The interviews were conducted using a checklist that was highly adaptable for collective personal narratives regarding social stigma. This unstructured interview format was designed to foster open expression from the sampled respondents. Interviews were conducted in the local Nepali language and subsequently translated into English for the purposes of this paper. A strong rapport was established with all participants prior to the interviews, and consent was received to document their perspectives.

### **DATA ON PWD FACING STIGMA**

Social stigmas pose a considerable threat to people with all types of disabilities be they are physically disabled or have visual or hearing disability. Stigmatization may differ, yet all persons with disabilities are depicted as inept, which forces them to encounter challenges in educational settings, learning, social interaction in public forums, political engagement, marital prospects, and career development. Let us illuminate the stigma that people with disabilities have encountered in their social lives.

#### *Individuals with Disabilities are Perceived as Beggars*

Persons with disabilities are predominantly regarded as panhandlers. Temples, bus terminals, festivities, and similar venues are the customary locations where disabled individuals are observed soliciting alms. In the Kathmandu valley, numerous visually impaired individuals can be seen on the streets performing songs and begging for assistance. It is almost assumed that they are inherently destined for such a life. This viewpoint is perpetuated by society's lack of recognition that these individuals possess various skills and are capable of excelling in more fruitful domains of social, political, and economic life. A study conducted by Papadaki and Tzvetkova (2013) in Greece revealed a substantial transformation in the perception of blind individuals, as they began to be viewed less as beggars. However, the situation in Nepal presents a stark contrast. The experiences of disabled individuals

in Nepal, however, are markedly different. Pandey, a participant in this study who had a visual impairment, recounted that while he was performing in some paid events, for which he had already received remuneration from the organizers, he was unexpectedly offered additional money by the audience. This suggests that Kathmandu continues to view individuals with disabilities more as beggars than as individuals with talent.

Pandey further articulated that the societal tendency to devalue physically disabled individuals has jeopardized their professional prospects. The labor market and recruitment agencies exhibit reluctance to offer employment opportunities to persons with visual disabilities, anticipating that hiring them is more costly than employing other candidates. Pandey faced repeated rejections for jobs, which were justified by claims that he could not produce the expected results due to his visual impairment. Securing employment proved exceedingly challenging despite his effective demonstration of skills. The devaluation of blind individuals knows no bounds. They navigate independently, engage in their work without external assistance, yet are presumed to be dependent and face stigmatization. They are unnecessarily characterized as reliant on others.

### *Disabled People's Capacity is Questioned*

People with disabilities may have knowledge and abilities but are socially viewed as strange or disabled. This leads to disability causing and worsening poverty. Disability is often viewed simply as the condition of being blind, deaf, or having difficulty with daily functions. This view focuses more on individual incapacities instead of the societal factors that contribute to disability. Hence, disability is viewed as a personal tragedy rather than a result of social construction. People often underestimate that everyone has unique abilities and fail to recognize the oppressive nature of society. Society tends to favor some individuals while neglecting others, leading to unequal treatment. Adhikari, an employee, shared her disheartening experience:

"When I first entered my office, I was inquired whether I required assistance to operate the computer. It felt more like a mockery



to me, as people failed to acknowledge me as a professional first and a visually impaired person second."

The sentiments expressed by Adhikari highlight that the administrative and bureaucratic echelons, occupied by highly educated and able individuals, are rife with negative stereotypes that not only undermine persons with disabilities of all types but also discourage them from achieving quality performance.

It is rather common for sighted individuals, whether they are acquaintances, colleagues, or relatives, to demonstrate an intense desire to assist a visually impaired person. Often, this behavior is based on the assumption that the blind or low-vision individual requires aid, although this may not accurately reflect reality. Individuals with visual impairments may perform a routine task at a slower pace, yet this does not signify that they lack the ability to accomplish it. Unprompted offers of assistance to the visually impaired may leave them feeling powerless rather than autonomous. Furthermore, obstructing a visually impaired person from completing a task independently denies them the opportunity to learn to do so on their own.

#### *People with Disability are Underrated or Overrated*

The experiences articulated by participants in this investigation are similarly reflective. Within their accounts, some individuals presume that those with visual impairments lack the ability to perform tasks independently, while others irrationally expect them to demonstrate extraordinary talents as a form of compensation for their disabilities. An example of underestimation is illustrated by Gnawali, an educator at a governmental institution, who endured persistent degradation throughout her collegiate experience. Her peers frequently questioned her future prospects, expressing skepticism regarding her capacity to secure a partner. As a result, Gnawali felt too much psychological stress.

Conversely, there are instances when they face unrealistic expectations, wherein individuals assume they possess extraordinary capabilities

while being a disabled. One blind man recounted his experience as:

“We do not possess extraordinary abilities; we are merely humans. We must depend on our other senses in the absence of sight, which does not make us superhuman. This fundamental truth often escapes others.”

Another participant with a physical disability remarked that society expects individuals with disabilities to exhibit greater capabilities than their non-disabled peers. During his education, he was expected to surpass his classmates. He shared:

“All individuals, regardless of disability, expect us to excel. When I was in school, educators would ridicule me for not being exceptional academically. They incessantly indicated that my performance was inadequate, while the same standards were sufficient for other students. I am fond of playing wheelchair basketball, but no one hears me.”

### *Individuals with Visual Impairments are Presented with Dark Days Ahead*

It is widely believed that people with disability in general and people with blindness in particular lack good days ahead. As a result, they receive prejudice in different areas of life such as education, career development, etc. Studies indicate that individuals with disabilities face numerous obstacles, stemming from familial oppression to societal stigma and exclusion. Those with visual impairments also encounter difficulties, as prevailing perceptions regarding them are based on the idea of a lack of future possibilities.

It appears that many families, including parents, are hesitant to provide education to their disabled or blind children. These families perceive any financial commitment made for the disabled as a gamble, leading to the assumption that such an investment yields no returns. The potential of disabled individuals excelling in the educational sphere is frequently questioned. Thapa, an NGO worker in the Kathmandu Valley, recounted that his parents were unwilling to enroll him in school during his childhood. Nonetheless, he pursued education,

completed a university degree, and began a professional career. Thapa stated:

"I was supposed to believe that I could not continue my studies. Yet here I am, a university graduate, married, and a father of two. Who prevented me from living the life I desired? While people remain skeptical about my existence, I am confident that I can lead a life superior to that of a typical person. "

Another respondent was a university lecturer with low vision. He faced numerous challenges during his academic journey. After completing his university degree in Nepal, he received a part-time teaching position at a campus in Kathmandu. Prior to that, he had obtained his first university degree through a scholarship from the Government of India. Even after attaining his master's degree and serving as a lecturer at the university, he faced discrimination in his workplace. He remarked:

"The university staff were unkind; I was denied the opportunity to mark my attendance in the official register. Most of the staff were unhelpful when it came to assisting me with my signature. While I strived to satisfy my students in class, I continued to be questioned by others. When I was in school, people often inquired about my motivations for studying, claiming I would not secure employment. Some directly asked, while others advised my parents against investing too much in my education, suggesting they would always need to look after me."

Individuals who are blind encounter challenges in establishing romantic relationships. Their marital prospects are questioned despite possessing sexual and reproductive attributes. They are often expected to marry within the disabled community. It is believed that unions between disabled and non-disabled individuals create an imbalance. Furthermore, it is asserted that disabled people are better able to understand one another and can demonstrate greater deference to each other. This belief applies to a blind individual named Acharya. Acharya stated:

"I wed according to my preference, yet I had often heard from

my family and social network that my union was unattainable. An individual ought to be evaluated based on what he possesses rather than what he lacks. Due to my visual impairment, my capacity to marry was unjustly scrutinized during my youth."

Another participant mentioned that he was cautioned about confronting significant obstacles if he chose to marry a non-disabled individual. This underscores a perception that persons with disabilities ought to form partnerships within their own community, impacting personal decisions and potentially restricting opportunities for relationships. It clearly signifies that disabled individuals are intentionally segregated or excluded from the non-disabled category, presenting a considerable barrier to the inclusiveness of social relationships.

*Reality of People with Disability is Distorted*

Many people with disabilities, who possess considerable intelligence, are frequently perceived as lacking intellect. Their knowledge, insight, cognitive capabilities, academic achievements, and substantial potential are intentionally disregarded. They are aware of a multitude of information, yet are categorized as incompetent. They have the capacity to excel, yet are regarded as insignificant. They generate income, but their earnings are devalued. Herein lies a poignant account relayed by a man with hard-of-hearing:

"I am a permanent educator in a government institution. The majority of student express satisfaction with my instructional performance. I am aware that parents are also content to have me as their children's teacher. I engage in card games with my acquaintances; at times I win, at times I lose. I am not deaf, yet I am labeled as such. "

The respondent articulated that he experienced a hearing disability, but he did not identify as deaf. He was capable of communicating effortlessly with others. His singular reality was that of being hard of hearing; however, society refused to acknowledge this, instead classifying him as deaf. The genuine circumstances of an individual with a disability were obscured by public perception. The failure to

recognize the true status of a person due to their disability created significant stigma.

A respondent with complete visual disability said:

"Today I climbed the Chobhar Hill, but people do not imagine that I can climb the hill. Who is solely capable of living independently? I had one friend, and we climbed the hill. I cannot do certain works meaning that no one can do all the works. But we are stigmatized, disabled people are only stigmatized".

### *People with Disability are Taken as Financially Unproductive*

A significant stigma encountered by people with all types of disabilities is the diminished perception of their capability to generate income and oversee domestic responsibilities. Numerous families pose inquiries regarding how individuals with disabilities can contribute to the family economy and enhance productivity. For instance, Pandey experienced considerable challenges in securing a partner, notwithstanding being a well-compensated professional. His narrative exemplifies the prevalent notion that visually impaired individuals are incapable of achieving financial stability or productivity, thereby limiting their opportunities for personal relationships and adversely impacting their self-worth. Women with visual impairments are often questioned about their competence in performing culinary tasks or other household chores, which are typically categorized under traditional gender roles. Thapa, another participant, faced disrespect from his family members from his early age for being discouraged to study. Visitors to Ghimire's home frequently expressed skepticism regarding her ability to independently carry out most household tasks. Ghimire's capabilities and the doubts cast by others, whether outsiders or guests, illustrate a significant disparity between the realities of disabled people and societal perceptions of them.

### *Women with Severe Disability are Excessively Stigmatized*

It has been observed that blind women in Nepal endure a triple disadvantage: firstly, being female; secondly, being disabled; and

thirdly, being blind. Sunar's situation underscores the complications she has long faced, as she has not been regarded as a typical housewife. She was able to manage all household chores; however, her performance was continually questioned. The presence of hair in the rice could result not only from inadequate oversight by the cook but could happen to anyone at any moment, yet the responsibility was unjustly attributed solely to the blind individual. In this manner, Sunar became an unfortunate victim.

Parenting the child by people with visual disabilities is often questioned. Such a question has deep connections with social beliefs. People irrespective of accepting blind people as authentic parent of their children, they take blind people as incapable of handling their children citing that they cannot protect them from external threats. This belief raises a question on whether disabled people have not a single connection to the wider society in which they also receive social support. However, the most prevalent form of stigma is that they are suspected for giving birth to blind children always.

Adhikari, one respondent of research said, "I had in mind that story illustrates these challenges. Initially, her in-laws were against her due to fears about her visual impairment affecting her children. However, with support from her partner, she has proven to be an effective parent. Her experiences highlight how women with disabilities face extra criticism regarding their roles as mothers and wives.

This issue reflects a larger societal problem, where insufficient understanding fueled for the underestimation of the capacity of people with visual disability and their ability to guardianship of their children. Studies show these perceptions negatively affect the capabilities and future of visually impaired individuals, particularly women, who experience heightened scrutiny in fulfilling traditional roles.

### *People with Visual Disability are Depicted as Harbingers of Misfortune*

People with vision disability are denied to be a part of feasts, festivals,

social gatherings and cultural rituals. Because of the stigma attached to blindness, blindness is bad luck, these people are deliberately excluded from social spheres. One prevalent belief persists in Nepal in which disability is the result of bad activities committed by people or their parents in their past life. Maharjan was not accepted to be a participant of the wedding ceremony of his close kin because he was perceived as bad luck. He described it as distressing to be seen as a source of misfortune by people who should support him. However, he noted that such occurrences are now less common.

Maharjan's experience illustrates how deeply rooted cultural biases affect personal relationships and social acceptance. This exclusion only reinforces negative stereotypes, further isolating visually impaired individuals from community activities. Adhikari, another respondent, also described a similar situation in which her participation in a name-giving ceremony of her relative's baby was plainly rejected. She was rejected because she could bring misfortune to newly-born baby and the entire house. Such experiences reveal the painful reality of exclusion, even during joyful occasions.

Many participants recalled past exclusions but suggested that these practices have lessened. Yet, they still feel invisible in social settings. Sharma recounted feeling overlooked at a community celebration, highlighting the ongoing neglect faced by visually impaired individuals. This social exclusion can lead to feelings of isolation and emotional distress, as Adhikari also noted feeling sidelined at a wedding. Such experiences deny them a sense of belonging that is vital for their well-being.

### *Capability of People with Disability is Questioned*

All individuals possess distinct characteristics. Not every person is capable of walking. Not every individual is able to read. Not all can sing. Not everyone can drive. Individuals exhibit unique traits and interests. This should be recognized as diversity. However, in various contexts, specific individuals are categorized and treated as disabled rather than as diverse. Concerning the general populace's inquiries

about the capabilities of those with disabilities, one physically impaired individual stated:

"Individuals commend me when I perform a song. Yet, I am perpetually stigmatized as physically disabled. People do not realize that I cannot sing continuously for 24 hours. Therefore, it is fundamentally about how others diminish me solely as a disabled person. If they truly regarded me as a singer, how could they possibly undervalue my abilities? "

It appears that society unjustly expects more from individuals with disabilities, which is why their capabilities are inadequately recognized. If they were acknowledged as singers, workers, teachers, or writers, they would not carry the stigma of being disabled. Another respondent recounted his distressing experiences:

"I am precluded from participating in gatherings and festivities because my family perceives that I have challenges in ambulating, leaving me at home. However, the truth is that I relish attending celebrations, a notion they do not accept. They fail to recognize that sight is not the only sense through which one can experience joy. We possess other senses that allow us to connect with others and find entertainment if we are taken into public spaces. "

The above statements illustrate that individuals with disabilities desire to engage with the community and partake in shared enjoyment. There exists a profound contradiction; family members find it challenging to assist individuals with disabilities in accessing public spaces yet attribute the difficulty to the disabled individuals themselves regarding social gatherings. The issue lies with the non-disabled family members, while the individuals with disabilities are framed as the problem. A disabled person yearns to venture outside but faces restrictions. They possess the capability but are forcibly hindered. It can be asserted that disability is superimposed over the impairment.

Another respondent remarked:

"Observe how many individuals have been lost in the Israel-



Palestine conflict. Were all those deceased individuals disabled? Non-disabled people also perish. Disability is a construct of society and is sanctioned by the state to subjugate people. We are systematically excluded, intentionally marginalized. The state has the capacity to provide opportunities for all. I can cultivate land even if I lack the ability to read or write. The state does not grant us opportunities by recognizing our potential. It is the state that is disabled, not we, the individuals. "

It can be said that the individuals with disabilities possess unique abilities and desires for social engagement, yet are often stigmatized and marginalized by society, which fails to recognize their capabilities and contributions. The real disability lies within societal constructs and the lack of opportunities provided by the state.

## **DISCUSSION**

An examination of the experiences shared by individuals with disabilities indicates that they possess numerous abilities; however, their talents are frequently dismissed by both the general public and governmental entities. Designating capable individuals as incapable constitutes a significant error, and society is committing numerous such errors. Disabled individuals face stigmatization due to their inability to drive; however, it is important to recognize that many non-disabled individuals also lack the ability to drive. This indicates that the issue resides in the perspective that intentionally undermines individuals with disabilities.

The perception of disabled individuals, particularly the blind in Nepal, is heavily stigmatized, leading society to view them primarily as beggars and overlook their talents, ultimately hindering their job prospects and reinforcing negative stereotypes. The devaluation of blind individuals persists as they strive for independence, overshadowed by societal perceptions of their disabilities, which focus on limitations rather than capabilities, thereby perpetuating poverty and hindering true autonomy despite well-intentioned assistance from others.

Individuals with visual impairments often face undervaluation of their abilities and unrealistic expectations, highlighting the need for society to acknowledge that being blind does not equate to superhuman capabilities. Blind individuals encounter significant challenges in building romantic relationships due to skepticism regarding their abilities, societal beliefs that they should seek partners within their group, and concerns about imbalances in mixed-ability relationships, leading to their continued isolation from society.

Individuals with disabilities are often unjustly perceived as lacking skills and knowledge, as exemplified by stigmatized hearing-disabled teachers and those achieving tasks like climbing hills, highlighting their capabilities and the detrimental effects of societal stigmas on their recognition. Disabled individuals encounter significant barriers to employment and financial acceptance, while stereotypes about blind people's financial capabilities hinder their relationship prospects.

Women with disability frequently confront skepticism from family concerning their domestic skills, rooted in conventional gender roles. Blind women in Nepal endure significant challenges due to their identity as female, disabled, and blind, facing skepticism about their household roles, parenting abilities, and societal acceptance in marriage, particularly regarding the perception of their capacity to bear healthy children.

Individuals with disabilities frequently face labeling that overshadows their unique talents, highlighting the necessity for societal appreciation of diversity. Many seek social inclusion but remain homebound due to family fears and misconceptions. Some challenge societal norms by asserting that both disabled and non-disabled individuals encounter difficulties, emphasizing that disability arises from social frameworks rather than personal circumstances. The diverse abilities of disabled individuals merit acknowledgment and inclusion, yet are frequently disregarded in societal engagements.

In summary, social stigmas present a substantial hurdle for people with disability throughout their lifetimes. Society frequently regards them as incapable, leading to barriers in education, social engagement, marriage, and careers. While some communities have started to perceive disabled individuals differently, many continue to confront entrenched stereotypes that restrict their opportunities. Friends and family often presume that blind individuals require assistance, even when they are fully capable of executing tasks independently, resulting in feelings of helplessness among those with visual impairments.

The stigmas also encompass both underestimation and overestimation of abilities. Some individuals assume that those with visual impairments are incapable of managing tasks independently, while others anticipate extraordinary talents as compensation for their disability. These unrealistic expectations generate emotional strain and inhibit blind individuals from being perceived as ordinary rather than exceptional cases. The future for individuals with visual impairments is frequently regarded with skepticism, culminating in discrimination within educational and employment sectors.

Families also hesitate to invest in the education of blind children due to apprehensions about underachievement. Social relationships, particularly regarding marriage, are also influenced by stigma. Many assert that blind individuals should exclusively marry within their community, creating barriers to forming connections outside their demographic. There exists significant societal disbelief towards the marriage choices of blind individuals, underscoring the necessity for society to evaluate individuals based on their abilities rather than their disabilities. The capability of visually impaired individuals to parent is regularly scrutinized, with society presuming they cannot adequately care for their children or ensure their safety. Such perceptions can prevent disabled individuals from being recognized as competent parents, leading to additional scrutiny, particularly for women, who encounter further challenges in fulfilling conventional roles.

There exists a damaging belief that people with disability are commonly considered omens of bad fortune and should refrain from engaging in social activities or celebrations. Numerous accounts reveal experiences of exclusion from festivals and cultural rites, reinforcing feelings of isolation and emotional turmoil. This illustrates how deeply entrenched cultural biases can affect social relationships and community acceptance, resulting in ongoing struggles for inclusion among individuals with all types of disability.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of experiences shared by individuals with disabilities underscores a widespread pattern of societal stigmatization, particularly towards the blind in Nepal, who are often viewed as incapable and relegated to beggary, undermining their talents and job prospects. Misconceptions about their capabilities perpetuate poverty and hinder independence, despite a push for assistance. The challenges faced by blind individuals extend to personal relationships, where skepticism about their romantic prospects leads to isolation, as societal norms dictate unrealistic expectations. Disabled individuals, including hearing-impaired educators, regularly face barriers to recognition and employment due to societal stigmas that overshadow their skills. Furthermore, women with disabilities encounter compounded skepticism regarding their domestic roles and parenting abilities, especially when coupled with cultural biases about childbirth. This situation highlights the dire need for societal change, recognizing that disability stems more from social frameworks than from personal deficits. The impact of stigmas manifests in limited social engagement, employment discrimination, and barriers in education, further restricting opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Ultimately, both the undervaluation and misjudgment of abilities illustrate the necessity for society to appreciate diversity among individuals, fostering an environment where capabilities are acknowledged rather than overshadowed by disabilities, allowing for genuine inclusion and acceptance.

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