



Accessibility and Disability-Inclusive Urban Planning in Kathmandu Metropolitan City

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Accessibility

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This research aims to explore the importance of accessibility and disability-inclusive urban planning. For this, it analyzes the problems of disabled people, especially physically disabled people, living in Kathmandu Metropolitan City. The review of the literature shows that people with disabilities face a widespread lack of accessibility to build environments, from roads and housing to public buildings and spaces and basic urban services such as sanitation and water, health, education, transportation, and emergency response and resilience programs. Particularly, one of the main problems in Kathmandu Metropolitan City is the inaccessibility of urban public spaces such as sidewalks, bus stops, pedestrian crossings, etc. for people with all kinds of abilities. Persons with disability (PWDs), often struggle with the complexities of the built environment in urban areas that hinder their equal participation in daily activities. So, there is a need for accessibility and disability-inclusive urban planning in Kathmandu metropolitan city.

1. INTRODUCTION

A person is deemed disabled when their ability to function like a "normal" individual is impaired. This research encompasses a diverse array of individuals, such as those who are deaf, blind, or use wheelchairs, as well as those who learn at a slower pace, experience chronic pain or perceive the world in atypical ways. What unites them is society's perception and treatment of their disabilities (Mitra, 2006). The world is home to numerous individuals facing disabilities, particularly those with physical challenges. Conversely, urban environments have primarily been designed for individuals with robust physical abilities (Giles, Gunn, Hooper, et al, 2019). In

developing nations, progress often outpaces planning, leading to challenges in achieving the goal of creating livable urban areas, unlike industrialized nations where planning laws and spatial plans have played a crucial role in establishing organized, appealing, secure, and healthy cities.

The initial examination of disability in Nepal took place in 1981 with the Report on the Sample Survey of Disabled Individuals (VRG, 1996). According to the 2021 Population Census, the disabled population increased from 513,321 in 2011 to 647,744 in 2021, constituting 2.2 percent of the national population, up from 1.94 percent in 2011. Kathmandu faces a significant challenge of disorderly and

unregulated infrastructure development, affecting persons with disabilities (PWDs). The city's physical layout, institutional policies, and mobility systems hinder PWDs' engagement in mainstream urban social life. Infrastructural and architectural barriers impede their movements and jeopardize their societal integration. Information and communication barriers, along with negative cultural attitudes, further contribute to the exclusion of persons with disabilities in urban settings (WHO and WB, 2011).

Modern society advocates for social and territorial justice in city living, emphasizing the need for inclusive urban planning. Ensuring the accessibility of buildings, transport networks, recreational facilities, and other urban structures is crucial for the well-being and utilization of talents of physically disabled individuals. This approach also serves as a preventive measure against new disabilities. Investigating the disparity between urban public spaces and the requirements of those with physical disabilities is paramount. The key to overcoming the isolation of physically disabled individuals lies in appropriate land-use planning to create functional and accessible urban spaces. Developing an inclusive and accessible urban environment is crucial. Thus, this research aims to explore the significance of accessibility and disability-inclusive urban planning in Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the review of related literature. It has collected and reviewed the secondary data and literature. It used the content analysis method to analyze the content of secondary literature. content analysis involves systematically examining and interpreting the content of a set of articles, documents, or other media to identify patterns, themes, and trends related to this study. Open-access journals, research reports of government and non-governmental organizations, and the physical library were consulted to collect and review the related literature.

2.1 FINDINGS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers have reviewed the various related literature to understand the disability, issues of People with Disabilities and the need for disability-inclusive Urban Planning. Urbanization is currently one of the most important global trends of the 21st century. Urbanization has the potential to be a great engineer to achieve sustainable and inclusive development for all. The findings are presented under the related sub-sections:

2.2 UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY

In the past, disability was predominantly explored by sociologists within the confines of medical sociology and deviant perspectives, which tended to pathologize individuals with disabilities (Egner, 2016). The sociology of disability emerged during the 1980s as a direct challenge to the prevailing paradigm of special education, which overly focused on individual deficits and solutions (Barton, 1988). Over time, the field broadened its scholarly scope, transitioning from an initial dominance by white scholars and the experiences of white individuals with disabilities to embracing diversity, intersectionality, and interdisciplinary approaches (Frederick and Shifrer, 2019).

Friedson (1965) observed that the conventional perception of disability is rooted in the belief that disabled individuals face impediments preventing them from functioning 'normally.' The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability as a combination of impairments, activity constraints, and participation limitations, encompassing individuals with restricted mobility as well as those with hearing and vision impairments.

The Disabled Protection and Welfare Act (DPWA 2006) of the Government of Nepal characterizes disability as "the state of trouble in completing everyday exercises typically and in taking part in a public activity because of issues in parts of the body and the physical framework just as obstructions made by physical, social and social conditions, and by correspondence." According to the Nepal Gazette published

by the Government of Nepal (volume 56), the classification of disability is as follows:

Physical Disability: It is the issue that emerges in activity, use, and development of physical part because of issues in nerves, muscles, and structure and task exercises of bones and joints.

1. Disability related to Vision: It is the condition because of the issue in a vision where the general population has no information about an article's figure, shape, frame, and shading. This is of two kinds: visually impaired and low vision.
2. Disability related to hearing: Problems emerging in an individual identified with segregation of organization of the parts of hearing and voice, rise and fall of position, and level and nature of voice is a disability identified with hearing. It is of two kinds: hard of hearing and in need of a hearing aid.
3. Deaf-Blind: A person who is without both hearing and vision.
4. Disability related to voice and speech: Difficulty delivered in parts identified with voice and discourse what's more, trouble in the rise and fall of voice to talk, misty discourse, redundancy of words and letters.
5. Mental Disability: The powerlessness to act as per age and circumstance and deferral in scholarly learning because of issues in performing scholarly exercises like issues emerging in the mind and mental parts and mindfulness, introduction, readiness, memory, dialect, and computation. It is of three kinds: scholarly disability/mental impediment, psychological maladjustment, and chemical imbalance.
6. Multiple disabilities: Multiple disabilities is an issue of at least two sorts of disability referenced previously. (Government of Nepal, 2012)

Based on seriousness, the Government of Nepal has categorized disability as:

1. Complete disability: It is where there is trouble in doing everyday exercises indeed, even with the constant help of others.
2. Extreme disability: The state of having to persistently depend on other individuals' help with requests to complete individual day-by-day exercises and to participate in social exercises is an intense (serious) disability.
3. Moderate disability: The state of having the capacity to perform everyday exercises without anyone else's input with or without taking others' help, if the physical offices are accessible, the physical boundaries are evacuated and there are chances of preparing and instruction, is called moderate disability.
4. Gentle disability: The circumstance where partaking in the customary day-by-day exercises and social exercises by oneself is conceivable if there is no social and natural snag is a normal (gentle) disability (Banskota, 2015).

Disabilities are categorized into four levels of severity: profound disability, severe disability, moderate (mid-level) disability, and mild disability. These categories are denoted by the designations "ka," "kha," "ga," and "gha" accordingly. Disability identity cards are issued based on the severity of the condition, with colors red, blue, yellow, and white corresponding to the different levels. Social security benefits are determined by the type of identity card issued. Individuals falling into the first two categories receive direct cash assistance and other social security payments. While those in the last two categories may not qualify for immediate monetary aid, they remain eligible for other benefits such as work, education, and healthcare (Holmes et al., 2018).

2.3 ISSUES OF DISABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF NEPAL

Social exclusion related to disability has been significantly shaped by societal perceptions of individuals with disabilities, leading to their limited interaction with family members and professionals and resulting in social isolation (Dhungana, 2006). In Nepal, people with disabilities encounter various challenges in their daily lives, influenced by the cultural belief that the privileges and shortcomings in their current lives are consequences of sins committed in past lives (Gabel & Danforth, 2008). The prevalent view is that disability is a punishment for past wrongdoings (Thapaliya, 2016; Timilsana, 2018), reinforcing the notion that disabled individuals are paying for the depravities of their previous lives (Subedi, 2012).

A study by Pradhan (2017) delved into the difficulties faced by workers with disabilities, focusing on evaluating the physical and social workplace environment and the satisfaction of physically challenged employees. The study revealed that social situations, physical environments, and attitudinal barriers posed significant challenges for physically challenged employees. A poor physical work environment hindered their job performance, with the level of difficulty varying based on their career, level, and gender.

Lamichhane's (2013) research used the ten-year civil war in Nepal as a case study to explore the social inclusion of people with disabilities. While families treated participants without discrimination, community behavior was inconsistent due to inadequate facilities, issues with social inclusion, and limited employment prospects, causing concerns about their daily lives.

Multiple studies highlight challenges for disabled individuals in terms of social inclusion. A SINTEF study revealed that 15% of disabled people were excluded from social events, 14.6% were not consulted in family conversations, and 19.2% were not involved in family decision-making (Eide, Neupane, and Hem, 2016).

The 2015 Nepali Constitution ensures equal rights for people with disabilities through the Right to Social Justice, emphasizing inclusive participation in public service for those who are physically or mentally unable or citizens of underdeveloped regions (Eide, Neupane, and Hem, 2016). Despite constitutional recognition, national legislation in Nepal falls short in precisely ensuring equal access to education, employment, and health facilities, contributing to the social exclusion and economic dependence of disabled individuals (Lamichhane, 2013).

In a nutshell, we can say that numerous studies have demonstrated that managing a person's life while physically incapacitated is challenging. Numerous difficulties and obstacles exist in a variety of contexts, from social acceptance to educational attainment to employment. Physically challenged persons in Nepal have extra difficulties because of the cultural and social structure of Nepalese society. The available infrastructures are not disabled-friendly.

2.4 DISABILITY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF URBAN PLANNING

Due to the pressures of industrialization, poverty, overcrowding, and the elimination of traditional methods of living during the 19th century, the majority of European towns had public health issues linked to unfavorable living conditions (Michael & Anthony, 2000). Consider England in the middle of the 19th century. As the cities experienced economic growth, the quality of life in the metropolis was worsening, leading many residents, particularly those with higher incomes, to choose to relocate to the suburbs. Disease outbreaks impacted the poor who could not move, which prompted the creation of an environmental remedy through the Town and Country Planning Act (1932) (Chadwick, 1965). Chadwick stressed environmental management and public health by introducing town and rural planning legislation. Urban planning began in Britain during the Industrial Revolution as a response to bad urban circumstances and

challenges, albeit having certain flaws and failures in its attempts to attain its goals (Eversley, 1973).

Urban planning relies on a multidisciplinary approach that enables diverse governments, communities, commercial sectors, and civil society organizations to pinpoint their issues, analyze them, and consider potential solutions to achieve broad objectives (Gordon, 1974). In *Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Communities*, published in 2005, Lynda H. Schneekloth and Robert G. Shibley make the case that the professions of architecture, urban planning, civic engineering, and landscape design represent the professional appropriation of placemaking and have historically excluded the rest of the community from participation in a fundamental form of human expression. As author and well-known urbanist, Jan Gehl correctly notes: Urban planners must adopt the human perspective, closely study and analyze people's behavior in the urban environment, and designate city spaces as genuine gathering places if we wish to construct "cities for people" or "people-friendly" cities. Four planning and design strategies have successfully encouraged social cohesion and offered areas for encounter and interaction, according to experiences from around the world (Schreiber & Alexander, 2016).

2.5 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 announced that there shall be no discrimination in the application of general laws based on religion, race, origin, caste, tribe, gender, sexual orientation, physical conditions, health conditions, physical impairment/needs, marital status, pregnancy, economic situation, language, or geographic region. The 2015 Constitution and the 2017 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, among other laws, provide for the rights of people with disabilities. On a national level, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (MoWCSW) and a National Disability Direction Committee are in charge.

The government of Nepal creates periodic national development plans that outline its development strategies and initiatives. In March 2020, the current 15th Three-Year Plan received approval. The 14th Three-Year Plan's goals are to "reduce absolute poverty, share economic prosperity, rebuild and rehabilitate after earthquakes, expand physical infrastructure, and promote good governance." It draws attention to significant problems faced by people with disabilities, such as children with disabilities not being able to get to school, their high dropout rates, budget allocations for sign language, community-based rehabilitation programs, and rehabilitation services for people with mental, psychosocial, intellectual, autism, severe, and profound disabilities, as well as support for parents (NIDA, NIDWAN & AIPP, 2018).

People with disabilities were also addressed in the earlier plan, which aimed to create rehabilitation facilities for those without guardians and expand the availability of assistive technology (GoN, 2013). A transition in national disability policy from viewing people with impairments as passive beneficiaries to one based on self-empowerment and rights is evident (Poudyal et al., 2018).

2.6 NATIONAL DISABILITY LEGISLATION OF NEPAL

People with disabilities are mentioned under several rights in the 2015 Constitution, including the right to free higher secondary education and political rights (Eide et al., 2016; NIDA, NIDWAN & AIPP, 2018). The 2015 Constitution of Nepal comprehensively addresses the rights of individuals with disabilities through explicit provisions. It delineates clear objectives, policy measures, and action plans to secure the health, education, livelihood, skill development, and employment rights of persons with disabilities. Specifically, the constitution ensures the right to education, healthcare, nurturing, appropriate upbringing, sports, recreation, and overall personality development for children, including those with physical impairments.

Moreover, it guarantees free higher education for individuals with physical impairments and mandates free education in Braille script for visually impaired persons. The constitution underscores the importance of integrating disability issues into sustainable development strategies, recognizing disability as an evolving concept shaped by the interaction between individuals with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. In essence, the Constitution of Nepal-2015 demonstrates a dedicated commitment to safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring their access to education, healthcare, and holistic development, while emphasizing the integration of disability issues in sustainable development agendas (Adhikari, 2019).

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2017, developed in alignment with the UNCRPD and Nepal's constitutional clauses on disability, adopts a rights-based approach, prohibiting discrimination and violence against individuals with disabilities. The legislation ensures equal access for them to employment, education, healthcare, public facilities, transportation, and information and communication services (Holmes et al., 2018; Prasai & Pant, 2018).

The National Policy and Plan of Action on Disability BS 2063 (2007) identified seventeen priority sectors, encompassing national coordination, information and research, public awareness, training, employment, transport, education, health, rehabilitation, poverty alleviation, assistive devices, and support services. Special provisions for women and girls with impairments, along with affirmative action templates for hiring and training individuals with disabilities, were outlined (Raut, 2018; Prasai & Pant, 2018). The Protection and Welfare of the Disabled Persons Rules mandate reserving 5% of training seats for individuals with disabilities and offer tax benefits to businesses employing persons with impairments (Prasai & Pant, 2018).

To ensure effective protection of the inclusion and accessibility of people with

disabilities, the Accessible Physical Structure and Communication Service Directive for People with Disabilities, 2069 (2013), has been enacted, requiring reasonable accommodations in schools, homes, and workplaces (Prasai & Pant, 2018).

Individuals with a handicap card are entitled to discounts, subsidies, and social protection under various policies and statutes, including disability allowances, free education for disabled children, school quotas and scholarships, free healthcare, discounted medications, financial support, or provision of assistive materials. The government's efforts to delay disability law enactment, citing insufficient funding and employing avoidance strategies, have been noted, highlighting challenges related to inadequate funds and effective monitoring systems (Holmes et al., 2018; Eide et al., 2016).

3. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION OF THIS STUDY

3.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The literature review begins by highlighting the historical perspective of disability, noting that early sociological views often pathologized people with disabilities. The emergence of the sociology of disability in the 1980s challenged the individual deficit-focused paradigm of special education, expanding its scope to include diversity, intersectionality, and interdisciplinary approaches. The Government of Nepal defines disability in its Disabled Protection and Welfare Act, categorizing it into various types and severity levels. Disability identity cards are issued based on severity, with corresponding social security benefits. The review emphasizes the social exclusion faced by individuals with disabilities in Nepal, driven by cultural beliefs linking disability to past sins. Studies underscore challenges in education, employment, and social inclusion for people with disabilities.

The perspective of urban planning is introduced, highlighting historical developments and the multidisciplinary approach required for effective planning. The review then explores disability-related

aspects in the context of Nepal's National Development Plan, emphasizing the rights of people with disabilities in the Constitution and the 2017 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.

The National Disability Legislation in Nepal is discussed, including constitutional provisions and the 2017 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. The Act prohibits discrimination, ensures equal access, and outlines priority sectors for empowerment. Affirmative action measures and provisions for accommodations in education and workplaces are also mentioned. The review concludes by acknowledging the challenges faced by people with disabilities in Nepal and the government's efforts to address them through legislative and policy measures.

3.2 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of disability in the context of Nepal, examining historical perspectives, societal beliefs, and legislative frameworks. The review underscores the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in Nepal, including social exclusion and obstacles in education and employment.

The role of urban planning is discussed in the context of improving accessibility for people with disabilities. The National Development Plan and Disability Legislation emphasize the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities, with affirmative action measures aimed at empowerment. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, including cultural beliefs and the need for effective implementation and monitoring of disability-related laws. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to address the complex challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in Nepal. Legislative measures, policy frameworks, and societal attitudes all play crucial roles in promoting inclusivity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities in the country.

4. RECOMMENDATION

Nepal should focus on implementing and monitoring disability laws, promoting education and awareness to challenge cultural myths, integrating accessibility in urban planning, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders. Community engagement, positive narratives, and capacity-building programs are essential for empowering individuals with disabilities. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of policies will ensure responsiveness to evolving challenges. Embracing these measures will enhance inclusivity and improve the lives of people with disabilities in Nepal.

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