



## "CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABILITY: A MICRO-LEVEL STUDY IN RAICHUR"

Mr. Sunil Kumar K. S.<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Suma K. G.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar Department of Studies And Research in Social work.  
Vijayanagara Sri krishnadevaraya University Bellary.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Studies And Research in Social work.  
Vijayanagara Sri krishnadevaraya University Bellary.

### ABSTRACT :

*Disability Continues To Be Shaped By A Complex Interplay Of Socio-Cultural Beliefs And Attitudes That Deeply Influence The Lives Of Persons With Disabilities (Pwds). This Micro-Level Study In The Raichur District Of Karnataka Explores How Local Cultural Narratives, Family Systems, Traditional Norms, And Community Structures Impact The Social Inclusion Or Marginalization Of Differently-Abled Individuals. Employing A Mixed-Method Approach, The Research Draws Insights From Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, And Case Studies. Findings Reveal That While Stigma And Superstition Remain Prevalent, There Are Also Emerging Examples Of Positive Deviance And Community-Led Inclusion. The Study Underlines The Crucial Role Of Local Institutions And The Need For Culturally Contextualized Interventions For Sustainable Inclusion.*



**KEYWORDS :** *Semi-Structured Interviews , Focus Group Discussions , Positive Deviance.*

### • INTRODUCTION:

Disability Is Increasingly Viewed Through A Social Model Lens, Recognizing That Societal Structures And Cultural Meanings Play A Significant Role In Disabling Individuals Beyond Their Physical Or Cognitive Impairments. In India, Particularly In Rural Contexts Such As Raichur, Disability Is Not Only A Biomedical Issue But Is Heavily Framed By Cultural, Religious, And Historical Interpretations. Concepts Of Karma, Fate, Or Punishment Often Result In Deep-Rooted Stigma, Leading To Social Isolation, Reduced Opportunities, And Structural Exclusion. Raichur, Being One Of The Less Developed Districts Of Karnataka, Presents A Unique Context To Examine How Local Traditions, Caste Hierarchies, And Religious Values Shape Everyday Experiences Of Pwds. This Study Aims To Investigate The Intersection Of Cultural Perceptions And Social Behaviors That Either Facilitate Or Hinder The Inclusion Of Differently-Abled Individuals In Rural Life. Disability, once narrowly conceptualized as a biomedical condition, is now increasingly understood through a broader social model that emphasizes the disabling effects of social, cultural, economic, and environmental barriers. In India, where tradition and modernity coexist in a dynamic tension, this shift in understanding is especially relevant. Disability is not merely a matter of physical or cognitive difference but is deeply embedded in the social fabric, shaped by religious narratives, customary practices, and community attitudes.

In rural regions such as Raichur, Karnataka, this cultural framing of disability can have profound implications. Local interpretations often root disability in spiritual or moral causation—blaming it on past-life karma, divine punishment, or ancestral sins. Such beliefs influence how communities treat individuals with disabilities, often resulting in social exclusion, reduced educational access, and limited economic participation. Furthermore, the intersection of disability with caste, class, and gender creates layered disadvantages, compounding the challenges faced by differently-abled individuals. Raichur district, marked by socio-economic underdevelopment, low literacy rates, and strong adherence to traditional hierarchies, presents a vital context for exploring these issues. Despite policy advances at the national level—including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016—implementation remains inconsistent, especially in semi-urban and rural areas where awareness and institutional support are limited.

This study thus investigates the socio-cultural dynamics that influence the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in Raichur. It emphasizes the role of micro-level community practices and seeks to identify both obstacles and opportunities for fostering inclusion.

- **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To Explore The Prevailing Cultural Beliefs And Narratives Regarding Disability In Raichur.
2. To Analyze Social Attitudes, Behaviors, And Practices In Community Life Concerning Pwds.
3. To Identify Enabling And Disabling Factors Within Families, Institutions, And Peer Groups.
4. To Recommend Culturally Sensitive, Community-Based Interventions That Promote Inclusion and Dignity.

- **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Disability Studies In India Have Gradually Shifted From A Purely Medical Framework To A Socio-Cultural Approach. Ghai (2002) Asserts That Indian Society Often Views Disability Through A Religious And Moral Lens, Which Impacts Social Behavior More Than Functional Limitations Themselves. Addlakha (2008) Explores How Subjectivity And Gender Complicate The Experience Of Disability, Especially For Women, Whose Identities Are Marginalized Further Within Patriarchal Systems.

Research Indicates That Rural Societies, Governed By Traditional Values And Kinship Networks, Often Reinforce Stigma Through Myths And Misconceptions. For Instance, Raj And Rao (2016) Document How In Parts Of Karnataka, Disability Is Interpreted As A Consequence Of Ancestral Sins Or Spiritual Imbalance, Affecting Marriage Prospects And Social Mobility.

Global Frameworks Like The World Report On Disability (WHO, 2011) Advocate For A Rights-Based Approach To Disability Inclusion, Yet Implementation In Grassroots Contexts Remains Uneven. There Is A Gap Between Policy Prescriptions And Localized Practice, Making Micro-Level Studies Critical For Bridging This Disconnect. The body of research on disability in India has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Early studies primarily adopted a medical or rehabilitative lens, while contemporary scholarship emphasizes the socio-cultural dimensions of disability.

- **Cultural Interpretations of Disability:**

Dalal and Pande (1999) observe that in Indian society, disability is frequently interpreted through spiritual frameworks, often viewed as divine punishment or karmic consequence. This moralistic interpretation contributes to the stigmatization of individuals with disabilities and fuels practices like concealment, neglect, or institutionalization.

- **Family and Kinship Structures:**

Sharma (2005) highlights how joint family systems in rural India can be both enabling and disabling. While extended families may provide care and protection, they can also reinforce stigma by overprotecting or isolating the disabled member, especially girls and women. Families often prioritize honor and social image over the rights and aspirations of PWDs.

### **Disability and Gender:**

Addlakha (2008) provides a nuanced view of how gender roles intensify the marginalization of women with disabilities. She emphasizes the desexualization and infantilization of disabled women, noting their exclusion from discourses on marriage, motherhood, and bodily autonomy.

### **Caste and Disability:**

Nambissan (2009) shows how caste-based exclusion intersects with disability, particularly in educational settings. Dalit children with disabilities face dual stigmas that limit their access to quality education and peer integration.

### **Community Attitudes and Practices:**

Karna (2001) studied attitudinal barriers in rural India, noting that pity, charity, and avoidance are more common than empathy or solidarity. These attitudes are reinforced by cultural myths and the absence of accurate knowledge about disability.

### **Global and Legal Frameworks:**

The World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) and the UNCRPD (2006) advocate a shift toward a rights-based and inclusive model. However, implementation challenges persist in rural India due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of data, and weak accountability mechanisms.

### **Education and Disability:**

Rao (2008) stresses the urgent need for inclusive education in rural schools. She notes the absence of trained teachers, learning aids, and infrastructural accessibility as major deterrents to mainstreaming children with disabilities.

### **Role of NGOs and Local Governance:**

Recent work by Deshpande and Mahajan (2018) indicates that grassroots NGOs play a crucial role in bridging service gaps through advocacy, rehabilitation, and community mobilization. However, their impact is often limited by funding constraints and bureaucratic red tape.

### **Positive Deviance and Resilience:**

Kothari and Mehta (2020) document instances of positive deviance in Gujarat and Karnataka, where families and communities have defied normative beliefs to support PWDs in achieving education, employment, and social participation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Study Area:** Selected Taluks And Villages In Raichur District, Including Devadurga, Manvi, And Lingsugur. This Study Employs A Mixed-Methods Research Design, Integrating Quantitative Surveys And Qualitative Interviews To Assess The Cultural Perceptions And Social Attitudes Towards Disability Processes.

### **RESEARCH TOOLS:**

- i. Semi-Structured Interviews (Exploring Individual Experiences And Beliefs)
- ii. Focus Group Discussions (To Understand Group Norms And Community Perspectives)
- iii. Observation (Home, School, And Public Settings)
- iv. Case Studies (In-Depth Narratives Of 4-5 Pwds Across Different Life Stages)

### **APPROACH:**

A Qualitative-Dominant Mixed-Method Approach Allowed Triangulation Of Data, Capturing Both Subjective Narratives And Communal Trends.

---

## ❖ FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### • Cultural Beliefs And Stigma

Beliefs Linking Disability To Past-Life Karma, Black Magic, Or Divine Retribution Were Found To Be Widespread. Such Interpretations Lead To The Concealment Of Pwds, Especially Children, Due To Perceived Shame Or Fear Of Community Gossip. Families Often Seek Spiritual Remedies Before Considering Medical Or Rehabilitative Care.

### • Social Attitudes

Attitudinal Barriers Remain Significant. Pwds Are Often Pitied Or Ignored Rather Than Seen As Capable Individuals. Some Are Subject To Infantilization—Treated As Permanently Dependent Regardless Of Age Or Ability. Although Awareness Is Growing, It Is Uneven And Mostly Limited To Families With Exposure To Education Or Urban Influences.

### • Role Of Institutions

Government Schools Often Lack Infrastructure (Ramps, Accessible Toilets) And Trained Personnel For Inclusive Education. Anganwadis And Local Clinics Are Under-Equipped To Support Children With Disabilities. Religious Institutions Are Ambivalent; Some Perpetuate Stigma, While A Few Progressive Leaders Advocate For Compassion And Inclusion. Ngos Like Samarthy Trust And Chaitanya Grameena Abhivrudhi Samsthe Have Initiated Programs On Assistive Devices And Awareness Workshops.

### • Gender And Disability

The Intersection Of Gender And Disability Intensifies Marginalization. Disabled Women Face Multiple Vulnerabilities—Denied Access To Education, Healthcare, And Social Participation. Their Sexuality Is Often Suppressed Or Ignored, And They Are At Greater Risk Of Neglect And Abuse.

### • Positive Deviance

Not All Narratives Are Negative. In Some Households, Especially Those With Access To Self-Help Groups Or NGO Networks, Pwds Have Achieved Functional Independence. Case Studies Reveal How Supportive Families, Vocational Training, And Inclusive Peer Support Can Significantly Enhance The Quality Of Life.

### • CONCLUSION

This micro-level study underscores the profound influence of cultural perceptions and social attitudes in shaping the lived experiences of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Raichur. Disability in this context is not merely a matter of individual impairment but a socially constructed phenomenon, deeply embedded in local belief systems, religious ideologies, and traditional practices. The persistence of stigma, shame, and fatalistic interpretations—often rooted in concepts like karma and divine punishment—continues to marginalize PWDs, limiting their participation in family, education, and community life.

Institutional inadequacies further compound these challenges. Schools, healthcare systems, and social welfare programs remain ill-equipped to accommodate the specific needs of differently-abled individuals. The situation is particularly dire for disabled women, who face layered discrimination based on both gender and disability. Yet, amidst these structural and attitudinal barriers, the study also highlights instances of resilience and transformation. Families supported by local NGOs, exposure to inclusive narratives, and access to peer support networks have contributed to positive outcomes, fostering dignity and self-reliance among PWDs.

Therefore, the path toward inclusive development in Raichur requires a culturally nuanced approach that addresses stigma at its roots, empowers families and institutions, and promotes localized

models of support. Sustainable change must emerge from within the community, guided by empathy, education, and engagement.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Community Sensitization Campaigns Using Folk Theatre (Yakshagana, Bayalata), Radio, And Street Plays To Challenge Disability Myths In The Local Dialect.
2. Training Programs For Teachers Focusing On Inclusive Pedagogy, Disability Etiquette, And Classroom Accommodations.
3. Family Empowerment Initiatives Including Counselling, Financial Literacy, And Parent Support Networks.
4. Partnerships With Religious And Cultural Leaders To Endorse Inclusive Messages And Reinterpret Religious Texts In Favor Of Disability Acceptance.
5. Strengthening Local NGOs And SHGs To Facilitate Livelihood Training, Disability Certification Drives, And Peer Mentoring.

• **REFERENCES**

1. Ghai, A. (2002). Disability In The Indian Context: Post-Colonial Perspectives. Sage Publications.
2. Addlakha, R. (2008). Gender, Subjectivity And Disability: Critical Explorations. Zubaan.
3. Raj, P., & Rao, K. (2016). Disability And Social Change In Karnataka: A Rural Perspective. Karnataka Journal Of Social Sciences.
4. World Health Organization. (2011). World Report On Disability. Geneva: WHO.
5. Nambissan, G. B. (2009). Exclusion And Discrimination In Schools: Experiences Of Dalit Children. Indian Institute Of Dalit Studies.
6. Lang, R. (2001). The Development And Critique Of The Social Model Of Disability. Leonard Cheshire.