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AWARENESS OF FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS IN RURAL AREAS: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Functional impairment is one of the complicated mechanisms which reflect an association between the different aspects of a person's body parts and features of the community of knowledge, behavior and intervention. Around 10 % of people around the world are estimated as functional impairment. The aim of this study is to explore the level of understanding and awareness about the functional limitations and their observations in the common people as well as to uncover the provision of medical facilitations for functionally impaired people in rural areas.

Method: This study was conducted in Larkana and Mirpurkhas districts of Sindh, Pakistan. It was carried out from August 2013 to December 2013. It was a cross sectional survey study in which around 102 participants were recruited. A self formulated questionnaire was implemented to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding physical limitations.

Results: Results Indicates 71.6% respondents have knowledge regarding to functional limitations or impairments whereas 42.2% views it a settlement to one's sins from Almighty super power. The second aspect of this study in which we wanted to disclose the factors of medical negligence and improper facilitations in which we found out that 85.3% people recommended that government should take serious actions to open more Rehabilitation centers.

Conclusion: This study helped us to generate recommendations to make people aware about the increasing ratio of functional disabilities and to highlight the root causes. On the basis of this study we also introduced the concept of community based rehabilitation services as well.

Keywords: Impairment, Rehabilitation, Disability, Facilitation, Psychiatric Limitations, Sensory Integration.

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INTRODUCTION

The word impairment encloses most of the aspects such as functional limitations, activities of daily living, community based activities etc [1]. Limitation of activities is the result of an impairment which could be due to be physical, psychological, sensory integration, behavioral, developmental and combination of all these characteristics. The frequency of patients with these features and functional limitations is approximately around 500 million which is estimated in survey studies by qualified and skillful researchers. National data of Pakistan shows that around 2.5 % (3.28 million) people with physical impairments live in Pakistan (according to population census organization, 1998) [2]. It is also found out that in a large number of countries at least one individual out of 10 is physically impaired and minimum 25 % of any population is badly influenced by the physical impairment [3]. In an age where physical movement has come to a new elevation in terms of its significance to promote physical health, there are numerous inquiries about the affects on the lives of individuals with physical limitations remained unanswered [4].

Another painful aspect of that functional impairment is the psychological setback for the suffering person and the allied people as well. The children with physical limitations are profoundly suffering from serious psychological issues such as including low self-esteem, fear of rejection from society as compared to their colleagues [5]. This is core rationale for the development of this research study, by the help of which we found out the different root causes for the increasing frequency of functionally compromised people. In another study it was also explored that the personal contact with functional impaired people are occasionally connected with greater distress for persons without impairment of disabilities such as their family members [5,6]. This is another aspect which we explored in this study. For the prevention of depression there are different regimes founded predominantly effective such as interpersonal psychotherapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy [7].

The word "disability" is a little disputed as we researched out in a detail literature review that working with people with physical, cognitive, developmental, and psychiatric limitations are not disabled. On the other side the universal idea used in practice as well as the unique role played by social workers in interagency relationship are argued [7]. Another factor which is very important from social point of view is the participation of physically impaired patient in student life. Due to the increasing number of risk factors the potentials of student involvement declines [8]. To encourage the participation of physically compromised students at school level, the occupational therapists must consider the convergence of child, with environmental and vital factors despite of concentration on individual features [9].

The protocol of rehabilitation has been change over the last 10 years and we can observe different important development in rehabilitation. The important change

which has been taken place is from an impairment-based treatment to functional activity based interventions. For example rehabilitation management directing towards fitness recovery, physical functional movement and contribution for children and youth with functional impairment [10,11]. It is a very harsh reality that rehabilitation has been grown so fast in world that we can see the increase in research methodology to ensure the feasibility, reliability, validity, and responsiveness of fitness and physical activity [12]. On the other hand we in Pakistan (Sindh) still are struggling in the basic necessities of disability management or rehabilitation services.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at Larkana and Mirpurkhas districts of Sindh, Pakistan. This study was carried out from August 2013 to December 2013. This quantitative study was conducted on 102 participants who were selected through survey questionnaire (survey data collection) technique. The questionnaires were developed in local language (Sindhi and Urdu). The participants included were teachers, housewives, self-employed and unemployed persons, and students. Informed consents forms were also given to participants. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding disability and functional impairment in rural areas. Data was analyzed through SPSS 16.0 version to estimate frequency designs. Bar charts showing an association between the significant awareness regarding knowledge, attitude and practice were also formulated.

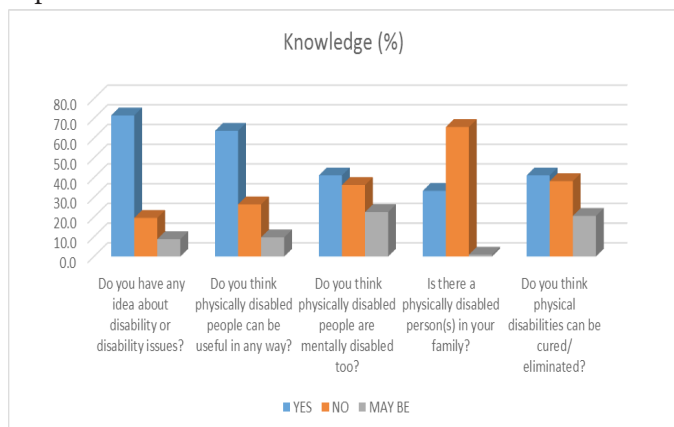
RESULTS

The result of the study indicates that (71.6%) of respondents were aware about functional impairments. However (63.7%) respondents thought that disability is more physical as compare to mental. However (41.2%) no significant difference was found on the perception of people attitude towards a view that it is Allah's repayment to one's sins. On the other hand (77.5%) respondent's views that disable persons have significant issues in one's life while (91.2%) respondents find the effectiveness of Rehabilitation centers. However (85.3%) respondents recommend that government should take immediate action to open Rehabilitation centers in rural areas for betterment of disable.

Table 1: showing the level of knowledge regarding impairment

Knowledge (%)	Yes	No	May be
Do you have any idea about disability or disability issues?	71.6	19.6	8.8
Do you think physically disabled people can be useful in any way?	63.7	26.5	9.8
Do you think physically disabled people are mentally disabled too?	41.2	36.3	22.5
Is there a physically disabled person(s) in your family?	33.3	65.7	1.0
Do you think physical disabilities can be cured/ eliminated?	41.2	38.2	20.6

Graph 01: The following graphical representation indicates the level of knowledge regarding functional impairment in rural areas and we explored that people living in the rural areas have sufficient knowledge about the functional impairment.

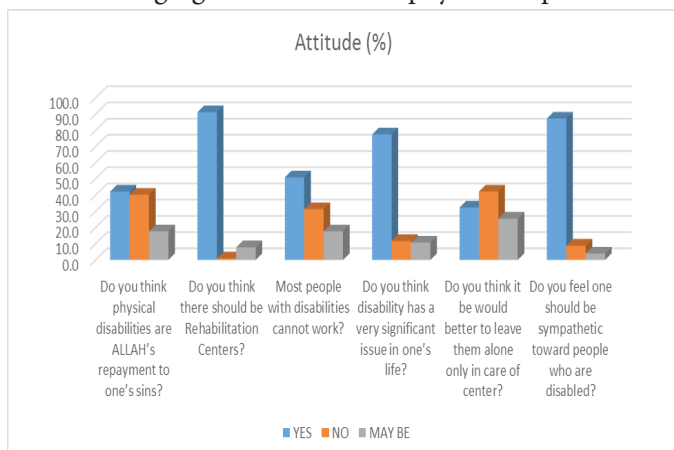


Graph 01: Indicating the sufficient knowledge about the functional impairment

Table 2: Showing the attitude of people towards physically compromised and disables persons

Attitude (%)	YES	NO	MAY BE
Do you think physical disabilities are Allah's repayment to one's sins?	42.2	40.2	17.6
Do you think there should be Rehabilitation Centers?	91.2	1.0	7.8
Most people with disabilities cannot work?	51.0	31.4	17.6
Do you think disability has a very significant issue in one's life?	77.5	11.8	10.8
Do you think it be would better to leave them alone only in care of center?	32.4	42.2	25.5
Do you feel one should be sympathetic toward people who are disabled?	87.3	8.8	3.9

Graph no 02: The following graph demonstrates the attitude of people towards physically compromised and disables persons. We find that majority of peoples have negative and discouraging attitude towards physical impairments.

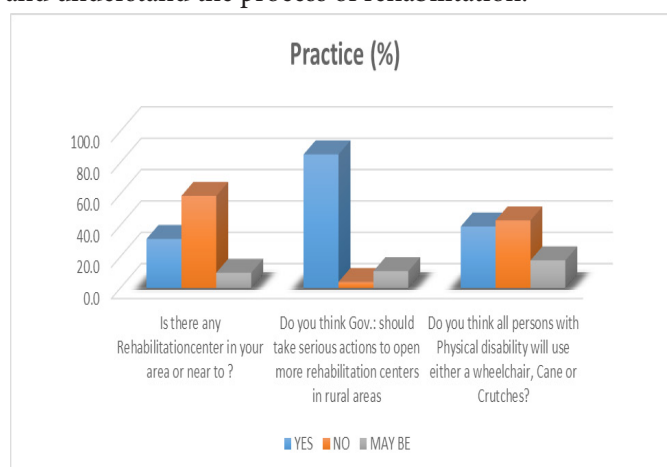


Graph 02: Indicating negative and discouraging attitude of people towards physical impairments

Table 3: Showing the knowledge of the process and facilitation of rehabilitation services

Practice (%)	YES	NO	MAY BE
Is there any Rehabilitation center in your area or near to?	31.4	58.8	9.8
Do you think Gov.: should take serious actions to open more rehabilitation centers in rural areas	85.3	3.9	10.8
Do you think all persons with Physical disability will use either a wheelchair, Cane or Crutches?	39.2	43.1	17.6

Graph 03: Graphical representation 03 shows that people have got the knowledge of the process and facilitation of rehabilitation services. People living in rural areas have lack of facilities of rehabilitation centers that they know and understand the process of rehabilitation.



Graph 03: Indicating the lack of rehabilitation facilities

DISCUSSION

In every ten people one has got a disability symbolizing 650 million people universally¹³. Similarly in Pakistan, people who are living in rural Sindh has to suffer from different challenges especially people with disabilities or functional impairment in getting education, vocational trainings and rehabilitation facilities. The results of our study shows that majority of people have knowledge about disability and they know the issues which disable people face. Moreover higher percentage of people realizes that disable people work better in a society because they know that disability is a significant issue in one's life. This study also highlights the positive responses regarding the opening of rehabilitation centers in rural Sindh. Majority of people agreed that government should take serious actions for the opening of these rehabilitation services for physically compromised people.

This survey study clearly proposes the need of public awareness and especial steps to be taken by the government. A lot of different survey studies have been conducted in rural areas which also reflect the acute need of these vital health services. This study is primarily concerned with the functionally impaired people and psychological or emotional involvement of allied family members as well. These factors can be addressed by the provision of

mental and physical health provision to the physically compromised people [14]. Honey *et al*, 2010, conducted a study on same parameters of stress and anxiety secondary to the functional impairment also showed depression, anger or frustration which was suffering from any physical or functional impairment[15]. Another factor which we explored during this survey study is the poor socioeconomic status of the people of rural Sindh, which is one of the causes for the increasing number of physical impairment. A similar study conducted by G. Frey C. *et al*; 2008, also reflects the same reason for the development of physical complications in which we found the evidences highlighting the socio-economic features [16]. Through this survey study we found out that functional impairment is both a reason and an effect of poverty. Poor or financially compromised people are more commonly suffering from disabilities because of the circumstances in which they exist and due to limited opportunities for medical and rehabilitation services[17,18]. The vital impressions or recommendations for the implementation of certain measures for the betterment of rehabilitation facilities in rural areas are to:

- Develop the awareness campaign to the families and common people to make well aware about the complications of physical impairment.
- Develop financial support programme as poor socio economic factor is important for the long term follow up rehabilitation. World Health Organization 2008, also recommended for the provision of social protection for the people with disabilities.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for physical impairment or disability rehabilitation facilities at government level, which is a dilemma.

CONCLUSION

This study recommends the possibility of introducing community based rehabilitation services. It is also necessary to spread awareness about people with physical impairment or disabilities. These services are particularly required in rural areas which are deficient in the facilities most needed by the population and government should consider some serious actions for the provision of rehabilitation services.

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