

# Factors Impacting Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities in Nepal

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## Abstract

This study was undertaken to analyze the factors impacting employment opportunities and outcomes of People with disabilities (PWDs). Also, to measure the satisfaction level of employed PWDs on their current work. The study has collected the required information and data from 200 PWDs using a purposive sampling method. Logistics regression analysis was carried out to analyze the factors impacting employment opportunities and outcomes of PWDs. Likert scale analysis was carried out to measure the satisfaction level of employed PWDs with their current work. The study found that the age at which disability onset, marital status, family size, years of schooling, severity, and access to assistive devices had a significant association with employment of PWDs. Fewer employed PWDs (7.7%) had permanent work status. However, most of the employed PWDs were satisfied with their current work. The family support and level of education of PWDs were the major predictors of employment. The study recommends providing counselling services to the families of PWDs along with sensitizing concerned stakeholders to improve the well-being and participation of PWDs.

**Keywords:** People with disabilities (PWDs), Severity of disabilities, Employment, Job Satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

Disability is an interaction of health conditions and environmental situations that hinders the social, economic, and political participation of an individual. It creates barriers to the full participation of individuals in society. However, disabilities are complex phenomena, and how it affect individuals may differ depending on various factors such as the nature and severity of disabilities, level of family and social support, government policy, availability of assistive technology, infrastructure of the country, and so on.

In developing countries like Nepal, the concept of disability is still rooted in superstition, i.e., disability is the result of past life sin (Thapaliya, 2016), and bad karma either from past or present life (R. Aryal & B. Aryal, 2022). Culture and religious practices rooted in superstitions have worsened the life of PWDs by excluding them from education, sending PWDs for begging in the alms and on some occasions, even taking their life (Omiegbe, 2023). Thus, in society where the concept of disability is rooted in superstition, PWDs are discriminated, and they are not even considered potential members of workforce.

Social exclusion of PWDs has created fewer work opportunities for them. There is a prevalence of lower employment rate among PWDs even in developed nations. In 2019, 42 % of PWDs were employed across 32 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, and shares ranges from less than 30 % in Greece, Korea, Spain, and Ireland, to 54% in Canada, and 58 % in Switzerland (OECD, 2022). Similarly, International Labour Organization (2020) has shown that one in three PWDs is employed, and PWDs are two times less likely to be employed in comparison to people without disability. However, employment are important to PWDs for poverty alleviation, overcoming social isolation, and increasing their participation in community, and political activities (Schur, 2002). Despite the importance of employment for socio-economic inclusion and living a meaningful and respectable life, there persist fewer work opportunities for PWDs.

The National Population and Housing Census - 2021 has shown that 6,47,744 people have some sort of disability in Nepal. Out of which 54.2 % were males and 45.8 % were females (National Statistics Office [NSO], 2023). With the aims of promoting employment and securing the rights of PWDs, the Government of Nepal have reserved disability quota for civil services jobs and signed the convention on the rights of Persons with

disabilities. Likewise, the country has adopted the Incheon strategy launched by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with the goal of realizing the rights of persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region (ESCAP, 2012).

Similarly, Government of Nepal enacted “Protection and Welfare of the Disabled Persons Act-1982 A.D.” in 2039 B.S. which aims to protect and promote the welfare of PWDs. However, this welfare-based act was later replaced by right based act, “Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act - 2017 A. D. (2074 B. S.)” which promotes and protects the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of PWDs. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act - 2017 A. D. has prohibited any discrimination based on disabilities. In addition, it has made provision for concession loans for PWDs for doing their occupation or business. It has also made provision to provide loans at a special concessional rate to any enterprise that has been established with the objective of providing employment or training to persons with disabilities or that provides employment to persons with disabilities in a number that exceeds the prescribed number. Further, it also requires the government of Nepal to provide tax exemptions or concessions and exemptions while importing equipment required for the safety of the workplace or importing raw materials that are required for the safety of persons with disabilities at the workplace. However, information regarding the social, economic, political and other aspect of society concerning PWDs is largely unknown. So, this study intended to fill that knowledge gap to some extent, especially about the economic aspects of PWDs in Nepal. Thus, the main objective of the study includes:

- 1) To analyze the factors impacting employment opportunities and outcomes of PWDs in the Nepalese context.
- 2) To understand the satisfaction level of employed PWDs

This research is useful not only for providing insights into the extent to which factors impact the employment of PWDs in the Nepalese context but also for understanding the effectiveness of existing policies and programs aimed at promoting the employment of PWDs. It will also help the three tiers (Central, Federal, and Local) of governments to formulate the relevant policies that promote the employment of PWDs.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1 Participants*

The participants for the study were selected using purposive sampling methods based on the types and severity of disabilities. The participants had to meet following inclusion criteria: (i) must be at least 18 years old and not above 59 years, (ii) must be the resident of Nepal (iii) must have government issued disability card. The total of 200 PWDs were selected with the help of various disabilities related organizations, namely, National federation of the disabled-Nepal, Nepal Association of Blind, Disabled rehabilitation centre-Nepal, Bodhisattvas In Action (BIA), and others.

### *2.2 Data Collection and Analysis*

The data were collected using field survey employing face-to-face interviews method. The face-to-face interview were conducted with selected PWDs using a structured questionnaire and interviews were taken at the location that respondents feel most comfortable. Following the collection of data from respondents, they were organised in excel sheets and computer software ‘R’ was used for data analysis. The data analysis involved both descriptive and explanatory analysis. Descriptive analysis was carried out to describe the individual and disabilities related features of PWDs, and explanatory analysis was carried out to find out the effect of disabilities, age of disability onset, and other variables on the employment status of PWDs. For determining the satisfaction level of employed PWDs, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire (Range from, 1-Highly dissatisfied, 2- Dissatisfied, 3- Neutral, 4- Satisfied, and 5- Highly satisfied) was adopted.

### *2.3 Operational Variable Definition*

Definition of operational variables describes the way in which key concepts of the research are observed and measured. Some of the key concepts and the way it is measured is defined below:

- 1) Age of disability onset: It is the age at which individuals experience long term disabilities.
- 2) Employed: All PWDs who were earning income through working with someone else or through the medium of self-employment were regarded as employed.
- 3) Gender: It is biological features of the individuals either male or female.
- 4) Physical impairment: It includes PWDs with mobility impairment, who have lost their limbs, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, loss of mobility in any part of the body, spinal cord disorder, and polio.
- 5) Sensory impairment: It includes PWDs with hearing impairment, vision impairment and speech impairment.

6) Severity of disabilities: It is based on the level of impact disabilities have on performing daily activities and engaging in social activities. It is divided into four categories, namely, mild disabilities, moderate disabilities, severe disabilities, and profound disabilities:

- Mild disabilities: In Nepal, people with mild disabilities are issued white disability cards. In research, those PWDs who hold white disability cards are categorized as having mild disabilities.
- Moderate disabilities: In Nepal, People with moderate disabilities are issued yellow disabilities cards. In research, those PWDs who hold yellow disabilities cards are categorized as having moderate disabilities.
- Severe disabilities: In Nepal, People with severe disabilities are issued blue disabilities cards. In research, those PWDs who hold blue disabilities cards are categorized as having severe disabilities.
- Profound disabilities: In Nepal, People with profound disabilities are issued red disabilities cards. In research, those PWDs who hold red disabilities cards are categorized as having profound disabilities.

2.4 Model Specification

Logistic regression is used when the dependent variable is a categorical variable with or without some orders. The dependent variable of the study, employment is binary in nature i.e., either the PWDs were employed or unemployed. Thus, logistic regression analysis was used to investigate the effect of disability and other variables (age, age of disability onset, education, family size, marital status, availability of assistive devices) on employment. The model for the study is as follows:

$$\ln\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1 Age + \beta_2 Ado + \beta_3 Gnd + \beta_4 Mar + \beta_5 Typ + \beta_6 Sev + \beta_7 Ass + \beta_8 Fms + \beta_9 Yrs + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where,

- |                                     |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| p: Probability of having employment | Age: Age of PWDs                |
| Ado: Age of disability onset        | Gnd: Gender of PWDs             |
| Mar: Marital status of PWDs         | Typ: Type of disabilities       |
| Sev: Severity of disabilities       | Ass: Access to assistive device |
| Fms: Family size of PWDs            | Yrs: Years of schooling         |

Table 1. Variable Description

Variable Names	Description	Categories / Range	Reference Category
<b>Dependent Variable</b>			
Employment	Employment status of PWDs	Unemployed Employed	Unemployed
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
Age	Age of PWDs	Range: 18-59	
Ado	Age of disability occurrence in PWDs	Range: 0-59	
Gnd	Gender of PWDs	Female Male	Female
Mar	Marital status of PWDs	Married Single	Single
Typ	Type of disability	Physical impairment Sensory impairment	Physical impairment
Sev	Severity of disability	Mild Moderate Severe Profound	Mild
Ass	Access of assistive device	No Yes	No
Fms	Family size of PWDs	Range: 0 - 6	
Yrs	Years of schooling attended by PWDs	Range: 0 -18	

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Demographic Features of PWDs

The overview of demographic features of PWDs is presented in table 2, along with corresponding P-value showing the significance level of the relationship between these demographic features and employment.

Table 2. Demographic Feature of PWDs

	Employed (N=104)	Unemployed (N=96)	Overall (N=200)	P-value
1) Age				0.397
Mean (SD)	35.1 (10.8)	33.8 (10.7)	34.5 (10.7)	
2) Gender				0.109
Female	30 (43.5 %)	39 (56.5 %)	69 (100 %)	
Male	74 (56.5 %)	57 (43.5 %)	131 (100 %)	
3) Marital Status				0.001
Married	53 (74.6 %)	18 (25.4 %)	71 (100 %)	
Single	51 (39.5 %)	78 (60.5 %)	129 (100 %)	
4) Housing situation				0.001
Rented	51 (49.0%)	28 (29.2%)	79 (39.5%)	
Rented-free	24 (23.1%)	61 (63.5%)	85 (42.5%)	
Self	29 (27.9%)	7 (7.3%)	36 (18.0%)	
5) Family size				0.01
Mean (SD)	3 (1.4)	2 (1.7)	2.5 (1.6)	
6) Religion				0.309
Buddhism	4 (3.8%)	5 (5.2%)	9 (4.5%)	
Christian	1 (1.0%)	3 (3.1%)	4 (2.0%)	
Hinduism	93 (89.4%)	87 (90.6%)	180 (90.0%)	
Islam	2 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.0%)	
Kirant	4 (3.8%)	1 (1.0%)	5 (2.5%)	
7) Ethnicity				0.876
BCT	50 (48.1%)	48 (50.0%)	98 (49.0%)	
Dalit	6 (5.8%)	4 (4.2%)	10 (5.0%)	
Janjati	44 (42.3%)	39 (40.6%)	83 (41.5%)	
Others	4 (3.8%)	5 (5.2%)	9 (4.5%)	
8) Economic Class				0.317
Middle	58 (55.8%)	58 (60.4%)	116 (58.0%)	
Poor	43 (41.3%)	32 (33.3%)	75 (37.5%)	
Upper	3 (2.9%)	6 (6.3%)	9 (4.5%)	
9) Year of schooling				0.031
Mean (SD)	8.53 (5.81)	6.73 (5.93)	7.67 (5.92)	
10) Type of disabilities				0.24
Physical Impairment	51(47.7 %)	56 (52.3%)	107 (100 %)	
Sensory Impairment	53 (57 %)	40 (43%)	93 (100 %)	
11) Severity of disabilities				0.001
Mild	31 (88.6 %)	4 (11.4 %)	35 (100 %)	
Moderate	27 (52.9 %)	24 (47.1 %)	51 (100 %)	
Severe	37 (56.1 %)	29 (43.9 %)	66 (100 %)	
Profound	9 (18.8 %)	39 (81.2 %)	48 (24.0%)	
12) Age of disability onset				0.034
Mean (SD)	12.6 (12.7)	8.72 (12.8)	10.7 (12.8)	

13) Assistive device				0.254
No	37 (35.6%)	26 (27.1%)	63 (31.5%)	
Yes	67 (64.4%)	70 (72.9%)	137 (68.5%)	
14) Nature of work				
No work	-	96 (100%)	96 (48%)	
Daily wage	9 (8.7%)	-	9 (4.5%)	
Part-time	7 (6.7%)	-	7 (3.5%)	
Temporary	80 (76.9%)	-	80 (40%)	
Permanent	8 (7.7%)	-	8 (4%)	

Source: Field Survey, 2022

In this study, it was found that 104 participants (52%) were employed, and 96 participants (48%) were unemployed. The average age of all respondents was 34.5 years. There was higher prevalence of disabilities among the males compared to females. Similarly, employment rate among males with disabilities (56.5 %) was higher than females with disabilities (43.5 %).

Out of 200 participants, only 71 participants (35.5 %) were married, and 85 participants (42.5%) reside in the rent-free shelter. Table 2 also shows that PWDs who are residing in their own house or renting with their own family had a higher employment rate compared to PWDs residing free of cost in shelters.

The majority of individuals with disabilities in the study area were Hindu, comprising over 80% of the population, with Brahmin Chettri and Thakuri (BCT) and Janjati being the predominant ethnicities among PWDs in the study area.

Regarding the education status, the overall average years of schooling of the participants were low (7.7 years). Employed PWDs (8.53 years) had a higher average year of schooling than unemployed PWDs (6.73 years).

Among the people with physical impairment, 47.7 % were employed and among people with sensory impairment, 57 % were employed. In addition to that, the employment rates of People with mild disabilities, moderate disabilities, severe disabilities, and profound disabilities were 88.6 %, 52.9 %, 56.1 % and 18.8 % respectively. In regard to access to assistive devices, most of the PWDs have access to assistive devices (68.5%).

Similarly, most employed PWDs were employed in temporary work (76.9%) followed by daily wages (8.7%), permanent work (7.7%) and part time work (6.7%).

Finally, the P-value showed a significant relationship between employment and factors such as marital status, housing situation, family size, education, severity, and age of disability onset.

### 3.2 Employment Analysis of PWDS

The logistic regression analysis was carried out to determine factors that have significant effects on employment of PWDs and its result has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of Logistic Regression

Descriptions	Odds ratio	P-value
<b>Intercept</b>	0.67	0.72
<b>Age</b>	0.98	0.46
<b>Age of disability onset</b>	1.04	0.02
<b>Gender: Male</b>	1.73	0.15
<b>Marital status: Married</b>	3.07	0.008
<b>Type: Sensory Impairment</b>	1.15	0.73
<b>Severity: Moderate</b>	0.13	0.003
<b>Severity: Severe</b>	0.10	0.000
<b>Severity: Profound</b>	0.019	0.002
<b>Assistive device: Yes</b>	2.6	0.07
<b>Family size</b>	1.39	0.005
<b>Years of schooling</b>	1.067	0.06

**Dependent Variables: Employment status**

Sources: Author's Calculation

The factors such as age at disability onset, marital status, severity of disability, access to assistive devices, family size and years of schooling had a significant association with the employment status of PWDs.

For instance, holding other things constant, every one-year increase in age at which disability onset occurs increases the odds of having employment by the factor of 1.04 times. Likewise, keeping other things constant, Married PWDs have 3.07 times higher odds of being employed compared to single PWDs.

Similarly, keeping other factors constant, every one unit increase in family size increases the odds of employment by the factor of 1.39 times. Every one-year increase in years of schooling increases the odds of having employment by the factor of 1.067 times while keeping other factors constant.

Again, keeping other factors constant, the odds of employment for people with moderate disabilities is 0.13 times the odds of employment for people with mild disabilities. Similarly, odds of employment for people with severe disabilities are 0.10 times the odds of employment for people with mild disabilities while keeping other factors constant. Odds of employment for people with profound disabilities are 0.019 times the odds of employment for people with mild disabilities. Keeping other factors constant, PWDs with assistive devices have 2.6 times higher odds of employment compared to PWDs without assistive devices.

### 3.3 Job Satisfaction of PWDs

Based on the income, benefits other than income, and the role and responsibilities given to PWDs at work, the job satisfaction of employed PWDs has been measured using the Likert scale analysis and the result has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Job Satisfaction of PWDs

Items	Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Total
Income received from work	8 (7.7%)	17 (16.34 %)	7 (6.73 %)	71 (68.26 %)	1 (0.97 %)	104 (100 %)
Other benefits received from work	4 (3.84 %)	11 (10.58 %)	26 (25 %)	62 (59.61 %)	1 (0.97 %)	104 (100 %)
Role and responsibilities	5 (4.8 %)	9 (8.65 %)	13 (12.5%)	75 (72.11 %)	2 (1.94 %)	104 (100 %)

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The percentage of employed PWDs who were at least satisfied with the income, benefits other than income, and roles and responsibilities they have in their work were 69.23 %, 60.58 % and 74.05 % respectively. Even though the majority of PWDs engaged in insecure and low-quality work, a significant number of PWDs expressed overall satisfaction with their work. This might be attributed to the availability of limited job opportunities to them. Not only do they have to overcome physical and social barriers to get employment, but the struggles continue even after getting employment. Consequently, PWDs may find satisfaction merely in obtaining employment and being able to do it every day. While this reflects the commitment of PWDs to work, it also suggests a potential underestimation of their own capabilities.

## 4. Discussion

The unemployment rate of PWDs in the study area was 48 %, which is 4.2 times higher than unemployment rate (11.4 %) in Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2019). This shows that PWDs are significantly lagging in terms of employment compared to the general population.

The employment rate among males with disabilities (56.5%) was found to be higher than females with disabilities (43.5%) during study. Gender-based discrimination may contribute to these disparities along with the challenges related to their disabilities. However, gender and employment didn't show a significant association. This contradicts previous studies carried out in China which show that there are statistically significant gender differences in employment (Wang & Li, 2018). The study result may contradict previous studies as they have used data from the early 20's, the period in which there was significant gender disparity in employment. However, time have changed, gender inequalities are shrinking, and various laws and programs have been developed to support gender equality and empower females. Consequently, educational status of females has significantly increased and noticeable shift in the societal perspective regarding the capabilities of females. Since the gender-based disparity in the general population is shrinking, its effect on the employment of PWDs might

also be shrinking.

The factors that have positive effect on the employment of PWDs were age of disability onset, marital status, family size, years of schooling and assistive devices. This indicates that factors that increase the education, skills, support, and accessibility had positive impact on the employment of PWDs. This result was similar to the previous studies which suggested that employment of PWDs were influenced by individual and household characteristics (Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2006) along with environmental factors (Morwane, Dada, & Bornman, 2021). Similarly, severity of disability and employment had negative relationship. The finding was similar to study carried out in New Zealand, where likelihood of employment sharply decreases as the severity of disability increases (Jensen, Sathiyandra, Rochford, Jones, Krishnan, & McLeod, 2005). Thus, to improve the employment of PWDs in Nepal, primary focus should be to increase family support which would lead to improvement in accessibility, education, and skills of PWDs.

The study also found that most of the employed PWDs were employed in temporary work, which were insecure and offered poor growth opportunities. This finding is similar to previous studies where PWDs reported a higher rate of temporary employment, part-time employment, job insecurity, income insecurity, gig work, wage theft, job lock and skill mismatch (Shahidi, Jetha, Kristman, Smith, & Gignac, 2023). Despite the poor quality of work, most of the PWDs showed overall satisfaction with their work.

The rules and regulations adopted by the Government of Nepal seem inadequate and the effectiveness of existing agreements, rules and regulations remains largely invisible. Thus, it's imperative to make rules and regulations that promote the participation of PWDs in society. Monitoring by both governments and civil society is essential for the effective implementation of laws, regulations and policies related to disabilities.

## 5. Conclusion

The study finds that the age at which disability onset, marital status, family size, years of schooling, severity, and access to assistive devices were predictors of employment of PWDs. Understanding the various factors that are affecting the employment situation of PWDs helps to formulate policies that are relevant and effective. Regardless of the types and severity of disabilities, most PWDs can work provided that social and environmental barriers are eliminated. However, as the severity of disabilities increases, PWDs are less likely to find employment opportunities. Thus, the workplace should be adaptable to different levels of severity of disabilities and it's crucial that the government's approach to offering employment opportunities should also consider the severity of disabilities. Government should provide adequate support and subsidies in manufacturing and importing various equipment and assistive devices required to make the workplace more accessible and adaptable. The education institutions and systems must be made accessible to PWDs. In developing countries like Nepal where disability friendly infrastructure and social environment are lacking, the support from the family members of PWDs becomes important to overcome barriers. Thus, counselling services should be provided to the family of PWDs along with sensitizing concerned stakeholders to dispel any misconception regarding disabilities, and to increase wellbeing and participation of PWDs in society. The government should also take necessary measures to incorporate disability-friendly measures while constructing infrastructure. This can be achieved most effectively by applying universal design principles.

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### **Authors contributions**

Prasanna Poudel, Ujjal Acharya and Yogesh Ranjit were responsible for the study design. Prasanna Poudel and Ujjal Acharya were responsible for data collection. Prasanna Poudel drafted the manuscript. Ujjal Acharya and Yogesh Ranjit revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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No additional data are available.

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