

Employment of Hearing Impaired: A construct of concerns, complacencies and compromises

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Abstract

One of the indicators of a growing economy is equal work opportunities for all citizens. Acceptance of the principle of equity by the citizens and tough efforts by a Government to empower not so privileged communities whilst creating employment avenues for them would ensure wide spread and balanced growth of the economy. Sadly, this does not seem to be the case in India. The hearing impaired community of India do not get as many and as good work opportunities as any other normal citizen would get. There is an underlying belief that the problems faced by the hearing impaired while at work are due to psychological, health and organizational barriers. This is far from being true. On the contrary, it is the very belief present in the minds of the people which becomes an impediment for these people to get jobs that they are capable of. The paper uses a systematic review process to find out the challenges faced by the hearing impaired while at work and the reason for them being absorbed in only blue collar jobs. The study finds that industry lacks knowledge in handling hearing impaired and hence there is a dearth of support which subsequently affects their work efficiency and overall work satisfaction. There sultant theoretical construct explains the underlying aspects of the phenomenon and proposes solutions to this arduous predicament.

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I. Introduction

As per WHO fact sheet 466 million people have disabling hearing loss .It is estimated that by 2050 over 900 million people will have a disabling hearing loss.– or one in every ten people –The decadal change in population of persons with disabilities from 2001 census (Bank, 2007) to 2011 census (T C A, 2016) is 22.38%.As per Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2016 (Justice, 2016) , Hearing impairment is defined as

(a) "deaf" means persons having 70 DB hearing loss in speech frequencies in both ears;

(b) "hard of hearing" means person having 60 DB to 70 DB hearing loss in speech frequencies in both ears;

As part of 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, 'Decent Work for all' has been a prime tool for sustainable development (Islay Mactaggart L. M., 2018).Work and career are important parts of most people's lives. However, people with disabilities often experience barriers to employment, reflected in higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, and lesser job mobility (Dammeyer, Crowe, & Marscha,

2019). Studies have shown that hearing impaired persons tend to choose blue collar jobs.(Lamichhanea & Tomoo, 2014) In Kathmandu 49 % hearing impaired persons work in blue collar job profiles. A similar trend has been observed in previous studies spanning more than three decades which state that deaf and hard of hearing people are consistently underrepresented in professional jobs (Capella, Michele E., 2003).There is a need to find out reasons that lead them in getting employment in unorganized sector.

Search Terms

The free text terms used are mentioned in Table 1

Sr No	Category	Search terms
1	Deaf Employment	Hearing impairment and employment, Employment of hearing impaired in India, employment of hearing impaired people in developing countries, Unorganized sector and hearing impairedness.

Search strategy

For a systematic search of relevant articles Google Scholar and Elsevier databases were used.

II. Method

This study revolves around the challenges faced by deaf people in the work environment and the current scenario of their employment. Gough's (2007) model of systematic review has been used to review the literature.

Review Questions

1. What are the challenges faced by Hearing Impaired people in the work environment?
2. What are the reasons for Hearing Impaired people being absorbed in blue collar jobs?

Study selection process

Google scholar had relevant articles regarding our research questions. The timeframe for the study was 2000-2019. The inclusion and exclusion criteria is listed below:-

Feature	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Type of publication	Peer reviewed journals, free-text journals, websites, reports	Magazines , newspapers, blogs, conference abstracts
Language of publication	English	All other languages
Participant samples for Unemployment causes	Deaf people	All other persons
Type of methodology	Systematic review	-

Screening of studies

For the screening process, the relevant time period and the title of the articles was taken as a criteria. Later the abstracts of the selected articles were read. From a pool of 135 articles and 2 grey data sources 121 articles and was

chosen for the study after removing duplicates.74 articles were chosen after reading titles and abstract. Then, 31 articles that met the inclusion criteria were chosen for the study.

III. Discussions and Evidence

Research Question No 1 'What are the challenges faced by hearing impaired people in work environment?'

The challenges faced by the hearing impaired people in the work environment are listed below:-

- **Psychological barriers**

It can be commonly found that people who are differently abled believe that they are disabled/not ableist (Jammaers, Zandoni, & Hardonk, 2016) and hence feel distressed while working. In context of India, deaf people working in coffee retail chains are called as "Silent brew masters". Contradictory to what media has portrayed about them being satisfied with jobs, the interviews reveal that they are anxious about their career (Friedner, 2013). Therefore, they are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Lamichhane & Okubo, 2014). Job satisfaction and job performance is directly linked with levels of communication in the organisation. It has been found out that deaf people feel socially isolated if they don't understand what others communicate or if others don't understand what they want to communicate. Even though countries like Malaysia offers skill training to deaf workers for getting employment still they feel insecure due to communication disability (Grimby & Ringdahl, 2000). Self-efficacy refers to the belief that one can succeed if people with similar characteristics too have achieved milestones (Bandura 1986). (Weisel & Cinamon, 2005) There is absence of deaf working in prestigious job roles which leads to low self-efficacy. Feelings of low self-esteem lead to a belief that promotion is not possible.

- **Law**

Unbalanced policies are a major drawback to the hearing impaired employees in the labor market. The increased reservation for these employees as well as the need to hire a sign language interpreter is considered as expensive by the organization (Mactaggart et al., 2018). Phenomenological study conducted reveals that

some managers are unaware of workplace accommodation regards physical environment and mode of communication. Thus, the work environment is not conducive for these employees.

- **Health**

It is identified that people with disabilities are highly prone to physical and mental illness. Chances of depression, fatigue, diabetes and hypertension are high in case of people with disabilities. This in turn leads to increased number of sick leave and low workability. Therefore, user friendly infrastructure while paying attention to the environment noise level, communication channels and various other risk factors is also essential while hiring hearing impaired employees (Svinndal, Solheim, Rise, & Jensen, 2018). Favorable working and sensory conditions will improve the performance as well as reduce the amount of sick leave (Gudlavalleti et al., 2014) (Kramer, Kapteyn, & Houtgast, 2006).

- **Organizational Barriers**

Deaf people face a unique set of barriers in an organization. They require interpreters, Telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD), email facility for communication. But such support is not sometimes provided either because the organisation is small or does not want to invest for such services (Foster & MacLeod, 2003). Sometimes managers disregard promotion of deaf employees for the sake of avoiding full-time interpreters. Wherein certain deaf employees are provided with such services, it has its own limitations. In case of interpreter, there are times when he does not communicate properly due to jargons used, interpreter lag or behaves rudely. Sometimes, they struggle to get interpreter support. Some workers are comfortable using sign language but managers are unaware of their needs. They do not express their views as they fear termination or do not want to burden their managers. Hearing impaired employees are considered as a workload to the organization and are constantly underrepresented in their jobs. Even with respect to informal gatherings they are left out because

hearing employees do not understand that oral and aural communication is different for deaf employees (Schroedel & Geyer, 2000).

Research Question No 2 'What are the reasons for hearing impaired people being absorbed into unorganized sector?'

Various studies have explained the challenges faced by hearing impaired people in a work environment but very few studies provide reasons for them choosing blue collar jobs. Few reasons identified are:-

- **Low levels of education**

High level of education opens avenues for career development. It is found that these students do not continue mainstream education after their schooling. They either quit or join special schools which end them up in blue collar job (Willoughby, 2011). The low levels of education among hearing impaired lead them to choose blue collar jobs that do not require high education. Therefore, the employment rate is higher in blue collar jobs for hearing impaired. It is found that the parents of deaf people are less career optimistic which directly affects their education. Few studies indicate that better levels of education can help deaf people to have a secure job and remain independent. The specialized curriculum in the school is considered as a possible factor for the same which breaks the ideology of them being considered as "dependent and immature". More education results in autonomy and individualization (Karen I. Appelman, 2012).

- **Social stigma**

Social stigma with respect to work efficiency, skills and productivity leads them to choose jobs

that require fewer communication demands. It is found through few studies conducted in Nepal that the employment rate is high in case of blue collar jobs. This may be attributed to the situation in Nepal whereby some good restaurants welcome persons with hearing impairments as waiters or cooks as long as they are able to read and write (Lamichhane, 2012). Hearing people often do not understand deaf culture (Foster & MacLeod, 2003). Culture barriers and communication barriers are not same for different groups of hearing disability (Dammeyer, Crowe, Marschark, & Rosica, 2019). There is a need to learn and accept different cultures and respect the diversity which can break the societal misconceptions.

- **Ineffective policies**

Various countries have come up with different policies for education and employment of deaf people. In Spain socio-sanitary development programs catered to the employment prospects of deaf (Garramiola-Bilbao & Rodríguez-Álvarez, 2016). Malaysian government provides skill based training to hearing impaired people to improve their work prospects in the hospitality industry (Zahari, Norhayati, Jamaluddin, Radzi, & Othman, 2010). Many of them have secured jobs but organisations still stigmatize to hire them. There are various NGO's which help hearing impaired people to acquire skills. In context of India, many deaf people rely on vocational training provided by NGOs as formal education does not secure jobs. These NGOs have connections with corporates which help them get jobs after completion of course. They are trained mainly for lower socio-economic occupations particularly semi-skilled jobs.

IV. Findings and Suggestions

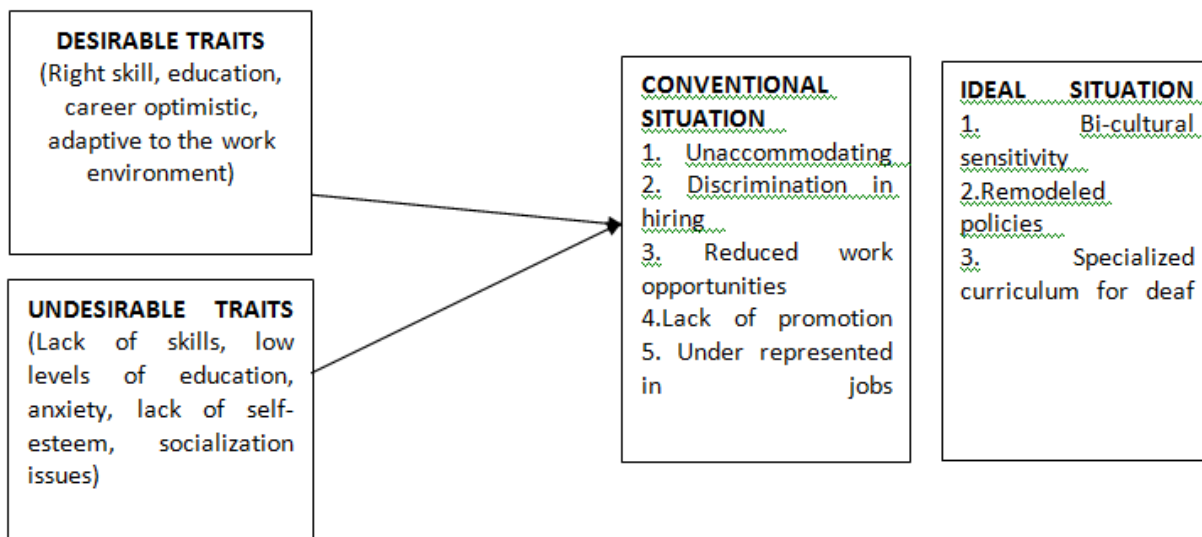


Figure 1

The model implies that an individual can either possess desirable traits or undesirable traits for employment. With good levels of education and right skills he is career optimistic and willing to adapt to work environment. He is flexible to use various communication support while working and believes his deafness as an ability. But some deaf people have undesirable traits. Due to ineffective education system they end with low qualification. Added with low skills they lack self-esteem while working. The organisation's social groups do not accept them. However, both these sets of individuals (with desirable traits and undesirable traits) end up in the same conventional setup. This conventional organisation discriminates them during work and promotion. They are not provided with support services as mandated by law (Stokar & Orwat, 2018). The management and social groups stigmatize them and underestimate their working abilities. This further leads to a sense of isolation as well as various health problems. Education is just a cliché reason as it is noted that a person with high levels of education when working also faces challenges mentioned above. Few possible mechanisms through which we can improve the current situations are -

1. Need for Bi-cultural sensitivity

Bi-cultural sensitivity revolves around, a concept where people learn and accept different cultures and respect the diversity (Extension, 2019). People need to understand deaf culture and not just train them for help sake but utilize the best of their skills to value added job. This will only come when they are culture sensitive and do not sympathize. Most of the hearing population sympathize with them which is not a solution. Instead they should understand that they have unique set of skills which needs to be understood.

2. Remodeling the existing policies-

The current policies are framed for the sake of providing a source of income rather than considering their intellect or skills. Hence, they are pushed into mainly blue collar jobs which require less communication. These jobs do not require the employers to adhere to various laws and regulations like having a sign language interpreter, user friendly work accommodations which is considered as expensive by most of the organizations. Therefore, the policies should be reframed appropriately.

3. Specialized curriculum for deaf in schools –

The current curriculum for deaf is not very effective. Most of them do not attain high levels of education or technical training which is important for certain jobs. A specialized curriculum which includes promotion of self-

determination, access to general education, improving their skills, sharing of information with parents and parent's involvement in the educational planning for the child, collaboration with other relevant professional groups and appropriate trained educators can be implemented also in India (Karen I. Appelman, 2012). This can open further opportunities and improve the employment conditions.

V. Conclusion

For any nation's growth it is important for all individuals to contribute to the best of his efforts. But somewhere deaf community has not been able to put its cent percent in the economic development. The society, government and the organisation fail to understand deaf as abled in their own ways. This creates a mirage affecting their productivity and job satisfaction. What is needed is to understand deaf culture by being bi-cultural sensitive. Since long, education has been identified as a sole reason for underutilized potential of the deaf, however, in reality it is the lack of understanding of the deaf culture which has led to such a situation. Government needs to remodel its policies and the educational system should be framed to be deaf inclusive.

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