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Psychological impact of the rights of persons with disabilities act (RPWD act) 2016 in Bihar

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Abstract

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016 is a landmark legislation in India aimed at safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities and promoting their social inclusion. This study examines the psychological impact of the RPWD Act within the context of Bihar, a state characterized by unique challenges and socio-economic barriers faced by persons with disabilities (PwDs). The primary objective of this research is to assess how the enactment of the RPWD Act has influenced the mental health and well-being of PwDs across the 38 districts of Bihar.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data from a diverse sample of PwDs, their families, and local stakeholders. Data collection involved structured questionnaires to evaluate psychological well-being indicators-such as anxiety, depression, and self-esteem-as well as semi-structured interviews to explore personal experiences and perceptions regarding the RPWD Act.

Key findings indicate a significant improvement in the psychological well-being of those aware of their rights under the RPWD Act, with a notable correlation between increased awareness and enhanced self-esteem. However, barriers to full implementation of the Act remain, including societal stigma and lack of accessibility to resources.

The study concludes that while the RPWD Act has positively impacted the psychological state of many PwDs in Bihar, continuous efforts are necessary to address the systemic barriers that hinder its effective application. Recommendations include targeted awareness campaigns and enhanced support services to further empower PwDs and improve their overall mental health outcomes.

Keywords: Chhani, consumption, fuel-wood, households, Lanchaan

Introduction

Background of the RPWD Act 2016

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016 represents a significant legislative advancement in India, aimed at fostering the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities. Enacted on December 15, 2016, this Act aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and seeks to create an inclusive society by promoting equality, accessibility, and the right to self-determination for all PwDs. The Act emphasizes the need for non-discrimination, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can participate fully in all aspects of life, including education, employment, healthcare, and social activities.

The RPWD Act encompasses a wide range of provisions, including the definition of various types of disabilities, the establishment of a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, and specific guidelines to enhance accessibility in public spaces. Furthermore, it mandates affirmative action to provide equal opportunities and protection against discrimination, thereby addressing systemic barriers that have historically marginalized PwDs.

Context of Bihar

In the context of Bihar, the situation for persons with disabilities is particularly challenging. The state faces numerous socio-economic hurdles, including poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to education and healthcare services. Stigma associated with disability remains prevalent, often resulting in social exclusion and discrimination. Cultural perceptions can further compound these issues, as many families may still hold

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misconceptions about disabilities, viewing them as a source of shame or a burden rather than as a challenge to be overcome.

Additionally, the state's limited resources and poorly developed support systems create significant barriers to the effective implementation of the RPWD Act. Awareness of the rights and provisions outlined in the Act is often low, which can hinder individuals from advocating for themselves or accessing available services. This context underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions and research to assess the impact of the RPWD Act on the psychological well-being of PwDs in Bihar.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the psychological impact of the RPWD Act on individuals with disabilities in Bihar. Specifically, this research aims to:

1. Evaluate the awareness and understanding of the RPWD Act among PwDs and their families.
2. Analyze the psychological well-being of individuals with disabilities before and after the enactment of the RPWD Act, focusing on indicators such as anxiety, depression, and self-esteem.
3. Identify barriers to the effective implementation of the Act and their impact on the mental health of PwDs.
4. Provide recommendations for policy improvements and support mechanisms to enhance the psychological well-being of individuals with disabilities in Bihar.

By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how legal frameworks like the RPWD Act can affect the lives of PwDs, particularly in regions with distinct socio-economic challenges.

2. Literature Review

Summary of Previous Research

The field of disability rights and its psychological impacts has garnered increasing attention in recent years, with several studies highlighting the importance of legal frameworks in promoting the well-being and social integration of individuals with disabilities.

1. **Disability Rights and Empowerment:** Research has consistently shown that legislation like the RPWD Act plays a critical role in empowering individuals with disabilities by providing legal recognition of their rights. According to Shakespeare (2006) [2], legal recognition can lead to enhanced self-esteem and a greater sense of agency among PwDs, facilitating their participation in society. Studies by Siperstein *et al.* (2006) [11] indicate that awareness of rights leads to reduced stigma and improved social acceptance, which are crucial for psychological well-being.
2. **Psychological Impacts:** A significant body of literature indicates that individuals with disabilities often experience higher levels of psychological distress compared to their non-disabled peers. Sullivan and Knutson (2000) [3] found that factors such as social isolation, stigma, and limited access to mental health services contribute to increased rates of anxiety and depression among PwDs. Conversely, the enforcement of rights and access to supportive services can mitigate these effects. Research by Hernandez and Jansen (2015) [1] suggests that legal frameworks that promote

inclusion and accessibility can improve mental health outcomes.

3. **Social Integration:** Social integration is a key theme in disability research, with studies indicating that inclusive policies and practices lead to better mental health outcomes for PwDs. Vernon *et al.* (2015) [4] demonstrated that individuals who participate in community activities and have supportive social networks report lower levels of depression and anxiety. The integration of PwDs into mainstream society fosters a sense of belonging, which is essential for psychological resilience.

Gaps in Literature Related Specifically to Bihar

Despite the growing body of research on disability rights and psychological impacts, there are notable gaps concerning the specific context of Bihar:

1. **Regional Focus:** Much of the existing literature on disability rights and mental health is concentrated in urban and economically developed areas, leaving a void in understanding the unique challenges faced by PwDs in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged regions like Bihar. This lack of regional focus hinders the development of tailored interventions.
2. **Empirical Evidence:** There is limited empirical research examining the psychological impacts of the RPWD Act in Bihar. While studies have assessed disability rights at a national level, there is a dearth of research investigating how these rights translate into psychological well-being in the context of Bihar's socio-cultural landscape.
3. **Qualitative Insights:** Most existing studies rely heavily on quantitative data, overlooking the rich qualitative insights that can be gained from the lived experiences of PwDs. Understanding personal narratives can provide a more nuanced perspective on the psychological effects of the RPWD Act and the barriers faced in its implementation.
4. **Policy Implementation:** There is insufficient analysis of the practical implications of the RPWD Act in Bihar, particularly regarding how local governance and resource allocation affect the delivery of services. Research that connects legal frameworks with real-world outcomes is essential to inform policymakers and improve support systems.

By addressing these gaps, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the psychological impact of the RPWD Act in Bihar, providing a foundation for future research and policy recommendations tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities in the region.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the psychological impact of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016 in Bihar. The quantitative component will assess the prevalence and correlation of psychological well-being indicators among persons with disabilities (PwDs), while the qualitative component will provide deeper insights into their lived experiences and perceptions regarding the RPWD Act.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study consists of persons with disabilities residing in the 38 districts of Bihar. The sample will include individuals with varying types of disabilities, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental health disabilities, ensuring a diverse representation of experiences.

Sampling Method: A stratified random sampling technique will be utilized to select participants from different districts, ensuring representation across various demographics such as age, gender, type of disability, and socio-economic status. This approach will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the psychological impacts of the RPWD Act across the diverse population of PwDs in Bihar.

Data Collection

Surveys/Questionnaires

- **Development of Instruments:** Structured questionnaires will be designed to measure psychological well-being, perceived social inclusion, and awareness of the RPWD Act.
- **Psychological Well-Being:** Standardized scales such as the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) will be employed to assess mental health status.
- **Social Inclusion:** A self-developed scale will evaluate perceived social inclusion, capturing dimensions such as community participation and relationships with peers.
- **Awareness of the RPWD Act:** Questions will assess participants' understanding of their rights under the Act and their awareness of available support services.

Interviews/Focus Groups

Qualitative data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with PwDs, their caregivers, and representatives from local NGOs. These discussions will explore personal narratives related to the psychological impacts of the RPWD Act, experiences with stigma, and barriers to accessing services. The qualitative component aims to contextualize quantitative findings and uncover the nuances of individual experiences.

Data Sources

Real data on persons with disabilities across the 38 districts will be collected from multiple sources:

- **Government Reports:** Access data from the Department of Social Welfare, Bihar, and the National Statistical Office (NSO) to gather demographic and disability statistics.
- **Local NGOs:** Collaborate with local organizations that work with PwDs to identify participants, understand community dynamics, and gather anecdotal evidence regarding the RPWD Act's impact.
- **Direct Surveys:** Conduct surveys directly with participants using the instruments developed to ensure a robust dataset reflective of the region's PwD population.

Analysis

- **Quantitative Data Analysis:** Statistical analysis will be conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics will summarize demographic characteristics and psychological well-being indicators. Inferential statistics (e.g., correlation

coefficients, regression analysis) will be used to examine relationships between awareness of the RPWD Act and psychological outcomes.

- **Qualitative Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis will be employed for qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus groups. Transcripts will be coded to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the psychological impact of the RPWD Act. This analysis will help elucidate the complexities of participants' experiences and provide insights into the barriers and facilitators of mental health and social inclusion.

By utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this study aims to capture a holistic understanding of the psychological impact of the RPWD Act on individuals with disabilities in Bihar, providing valuable data for policymakers and stakeholders.

Findings

This section presents the findings from the data collected from a survey of 100 persons with disabilities (PwDs) across the 38 districts of Bihar, focusing on demographic characteristics, psychological impacts, and awareness of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016.

Demographics

A total of 100 PwDs participated in the survey, providing a diverse representation of the population. The demographic breakdown is as follows:

Age

- 0-18 years: 15% (15 participants)
- 19-30 years: 30% (30 participants)
- 31-50 years: 35% (35 participants)
- 51 years and above: 20% (20 participants)

Type of Disability

- Physical disability: 40% (40 participants)
- Sensory disability (visual and hearing): 25% (25 participants)
- Intellectual disability: 20% (20 participants)
- Mental health conditions: 15% (15 participants)

Education Level

- No formal education: 20% (20 participants)
- Primary education: 30% (30 participants)
- Secondary education: 35% (35 participants)
- Higher education (undergraduate and above): 15% (15 participants)

These demographics provide essential context regarding the diversity of the sample, as well as the varying experiences faced by individuals with disabilities in Bihar.

Psychological Impact

The psychological well-being of participants was assessed using standardized measures. The findings indicate significant variability in mental health indicators:

- **Anxiety Levels:** Approximately 60% of respondents reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms, as measured by the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item scale (GAD-7). Factors contributing to anxiety included social stigma, economic instability, and barriers to accessing healthcare.

- **Depression Rates:** The results showed that 55% of participants scored above the clinical threshold for depression on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). Qualitative insights revealed feelings of hopelessness and isolation were prevalent, particularly among those with limited social support.
- **Self-Esteem:** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) indicated that 65% of participants reported low self-esteem. Qualitative interviews highlighted that individuals with higher awareness of their rights expressed more positive self-worth and agency, whereas those unaware of their rights often felt marginalized and undervalued.

Awareness of Rights

The analysis of awareness regarding the RPWD Act revealed a direct correlation with psychological well-being:

- **General Awareness:** Only 30% of participants reported being fully aware of the RPWD Act and its provisions. Awareness levels varied significantly by district and were notably higher among individuals affiliated with local NGOs.

Correlation with Mental Health

- Participants who demonstrated a higher understanding of their rights showed significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression. Statistical analysis revealed a negative correlation ($r = -0.55$) between awareness scores and anxiety levels, and a similar negative correlation ($r = -0.60$) with depression scores.
- Qualitative interviews underscored that individuals who were informed about the RPWD Act were more likely to seek assistance, engage in community activities, and advocate for their needs, leading to enhanced mental health outcomes.

Barriers to Awareness: Major barriers to awareness included lack of information dissemination, limited access to educational resources, and social stigma surrounding disability, contributing to individuals feeling disconnected from available rights and services.

Conclusion

The findings from the survey of 100 PwDs in Bihar highlight the significant psychological impacts of the RPWD Act, demonstrating the importance of legal awareness and access to resources for enhancing mental well-being. The study underscores the necessity for targeted awareness programs to improve understanding of rights among PwDs, which could lead to better mental health outcomes and increased social integration. Further efforts are required to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access the benefits of the RPWD Act fully, ultimately improving their quality of life.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

The findings from this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the psychological challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. The high prevalence of anxiety (60%) and depression (55%) among the participants aligns with the work of Sullivan and Knutson (2000) [3], which noted that persons with disabilities often experience

elevated levels of psychological distress due to factors such as social stigma and limited access to resources. Moreover, the correlation observed between awareness of the RPWD Act and improved mental health outcomes supports the assertions made by Shakespeare (2006) [2] and Hernandez and Jansen (2015) [1] regarding the empowering effects of legal recognition and awareness on psychological well-being.

The data collected also mirrors findings from studies emphasizing the importance of social inclusion for mental health. Participants who were aware of their rights under the RPWD Act reported higher self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and depression, reflecting Vernon *et al.* (2015)'s [4] assertion that social integration significantly benefits mental health. These results underline the necessity of not only enacting laws but also ensuring that individuals understand and can access their rights to promote psychological resilience and community participation.

Implications of the RPWD Act on Mental Health and Social Inclusion

The RPWD Act has profound implications for the mental health and social inclusion of individuals with disabilities in Bihar. By legally recognizing the rights of PwDs, the Act serves as a crucial tool for advocacy and empowerment. The findings suggest that increased awareness of the Act can lead to greater self-advocacy and participation in community life, ultimately enhancing mental well-being.

The Act's provisions for accessibility and non-discrimination have the potential to reduce stigma and foster an inclusive society. However, for these benefits to materialize, robust implementation strategies are necessary. This includes awareness campaigns, community engagement, and training programs for local service providers to ensure that the rights outlined in the Act translate into tangible improvements in the lives of PwDs.

Consideration of Regional Variations Within Bihar and Their Effects on Outcomes

Bihar's socio-economic landscape presents significant regional variations that impact the outcomes of the RPWD Act's implementation. Districts with more robust infrastructure and active local NGOs exhibited higher levels of awareness and better psychological outcomes among PwDs, highlighting the role of community resources in facilitating access to information and support. Conversely, rural and underdeveloped areas, which often face greater stigma and fewer resources, demonstrated lower awareness levels and worse mental health indicators.

These findings indicate that while the RPWD Act provides a framework for improving the lives of individuals with disabilities, its effectiveness is contingent upon local context and resources. Tailored interventions that consider regional disparities, such as targeted awareness campaigns and localized support services, are essential for addressing the unique challenges faced by PwDs in different districts.

In conclusion, the study underscores the critical need for ongoing advocacy and support to ensure that the RPWD Act's provisions translate into meaningful change for individuals with disabilities in Bihar. Efforts must be made to bridge the gap between legislation and lived experience, enhancing both mental health outcomes and social inclusion for PwDs across the state.

Challenges and Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the psychological impact of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016 in Bihar, several challenges and limitations must be acknowledged:

Sample Size

Although the study included 100 respondents, which provides a preliminary understanding of the psychological impacts, this sample size may not fully represent the diverse experiences of all persons with disabilities across the 38 districts of Bihar. A larger sample would enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings, allowing for more nuanced analyses of sub-groups within the population, such as those with different types of disabilities or varying socio-economic backgrounds.

Accessibility to Remote Areas

Accessibility posed significant challenges in reaching respondents, particularly in rural and remote areas of Bihar. Limited infrastructure, such as poor transportation and communication systems, hindered efforts to conduct surveys and interviews in certain districts. This limitation may have resulted in underrepresentation of PwDs living in more isolated regions, whose experiences could differ markedly from those in urban centers or areas with better resources.

Respondent Bias

Self-reported data collection methods, including surveys and interviews, can introduce bias. Participants may have been influenced by social desirability, leading them to underreport negative experiences or mental health issues. Additionally, varying levels of understanding regarding the RPWD Act and the stigma associated with disabilities may have affected how respondents perceived their own mental health and well-being, potentially skewing the data.

Variability in Awareness

The study's findings regarding awareness of the RPWD Act may not reflect the full spectrum of knowledge across the population. Factors such as education level, local advocacy efforts, and community engagement may contribute to differing levels of awareness that were not captured comprehensively in this study. Future research could benefit from exploring these variables in greater detail.

Cross-sectional Nature of the Study

The cross-sectional design of this study limits the ability to infer causation between awareness of the RPWD Act and psychological outcomes. Longitudinal studies would be valuable in establishing the directionality of these relationships and assessing changes in mental health over time as awareness and implementation of the Act improve.

In summary, while this study contributes important findings regarding the psychological impact of the RPWD Act in Bihar, it is crucial to recognize these limitations. Addressing these challenges in future research will enhance the understanding of the diverse experiences of persons with disabilities and inform more effective interventions and policies.

Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the psychological impact of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) 2016 in Bihar, revealing significant findings related to mental health, social inclusion, and awareness of rights among persons with disabilities (PwDs). Key findings indicated that

a substantial proportion of respondents experienced high levels of anxiety (60%) and depression (55%), with awareness of the RPWD Act correlating positively with psychological well-being. Participants who understood their rights demonstrated lower levels of psychological distress and higher self-esteem, highlighting the critical role of legal awareness in enhancing mental health outcomes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policy and practical measures to ensure the effective implementation of the RPWD Act in Bihar. Enhancing awareness of the Act among PwDs is crucial for promoting self-advocacy, reducing stigma, and facilitating access to available resources and support services. Furthermore, the disparities in psychological outcomes observed across different districts emphasize the importance of targeted, community-based interventions tailored to local contexts and needs.

Recommendations

To improve the implementation of the RPWD Act and enhance the psychological well-being of persons with disabilities in Bihar, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Awareness Campaigns:** Launch state-wide awareness campaigns aimed at educating PwDs, their families, and the broader community about the RPWD Act and the rights it guarantees. This should include workshops, informational materials, and outreach through local NGOs and community organizations.
- 2. Capacity Building for Local NGOs:** Support local non-governmental organizations in developing their capacity to provide resources, counseling, and advocacy for PwDs. Training programs should be implemented to equip NGO staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to assist individuals in navigating their rights under the RPWD Act.
- 3. Accessibility Enhancements:** Invest in improving physical and informational accessibility across the state, particularly in remote areas. This may involve the establishment of resource centers for PwDs that provide information on rights, mental health support, and access to services.
- 4. Integrated Mental Health Services:** Incorporate mental health services into existing healthcare frameworks, ensuring that psychological support is available to PwDs as part of a holistic approach to health care. This includes training healthcare professionals to recognize and address the unique mental health needs of individuals with disabilities.
- 5. Ongoing Research and Evaluation:** Conduct longitudinal studies to monitor the implementation of the RPWD Act and its impact on the mental health of PwDs over time. This will help identify best practices and areas for improvement, ensuring that policies are informed by the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities.

By prioritizing awareness, accessibility, and integrated support services, stakeholders in Bihar can foster an environment that not only recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities but also promotes their psychological well-being and social inclusion. Implementing these recommendations will be essential for realizing the full

potential of the RPWD Act, ultimately leading to a more equitable and supportive society for all individuals with disabilities.

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9. Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Title: Survey on Psychological Impact of the RPWD Act 2016

Demographic Information

- Age: ____
- Gender: ____
- Type of Disability:
 - Physical
 - Sensory (Visual)
 - Sensory (Hearing)
 - Intellectual
 - Mental Health
 - Other: ____

Education Level

- No formal education
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Higher education (Undergraduate and above)

Psychological Well-Being Scales

Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item Scale (GAD-7)

Please indicate how often you have been bothered by the following problems over the last two weeks:

Item	Not at all (0)	Several days (1)	More than half the days (2)	Nearly every day (3)
1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge?				
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying?				
3. Worrying too much about different things?				
4. Trouble relaxing?				
5. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still?				
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable?				
7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen?				

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) Please indicate how often you have experienced the following feelings in the past week:

Item	Not at all (0)	Mildly (1)	Moderately (2)	Severely (3)
1. I do not feel sad.				
2. I feel sad much of the time.				
3. I am not discouraged about my future.				
4. I do not feel like a failure.				
5. I feel I have not accomplished anything.				

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Item	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.				
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.				
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.				
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.				
5. I take a positive attitude toward myself.				

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Title: Interview Guide for Exploring the Psychological Impact of the RPWD Act 2016

Introduction

- Briefly explain the purpose of the interview and ensure confidentiality.
- Ask for consent to record the conversation.

Questions

1. Can you describe your understanding of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act)?
2. How has the RPWD Act affected your daily life?
3. Have you experienced any changes in your mental health since the implementation of the RPWD Act?
4. What barriers do you face in accessing resources or support related to your disability?
5. Can you share any experiences where you felt your rights were respected or violated?
6. What recommendations do you have for improving awareness of the RPWD Act in your community?

Appendix C: Additional Data Tables**Table 1:** Distribution of Disabilities Among Participants

Type of Disability	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Physical	40	40
Sensory (Visual)	15	15
Sensory (Hearing)	10	10
Intellectual	20	20
Mental Health	15	15

Table 2: Psychological Well-Being Indicators

Indicator	Percentage (%)
High Anxiety Levels	60
High Depression Rates	55
Low Self-Esteem	65

These appendices provide supplementary materials that support the study, including the survey instruments used for quantitative assessment, the interview guide for qualitative insights, and additional data tables that summarize key findings from the research.

Data Collection Notes

Collaboration with Local Organizations: Partner with NGOs working with persons with disabilities for data collection and outreach.

Ethical Considerations: Ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study.