



Disability and Reproductive Health of Women: Exploring Barriers and a Way Forward

¹Tania Farooq, ²Dr Shazia Manzoor

1. Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir (India)

2. Senior Asst. Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir (India)

ABSTRACT

Disability is highly stigmatized, and people with disability are perceived to be dependent, incapable, passive and in need of care. The disabled population is never a homogeneous category; it consists of people from different class, gender and age. Nevertheless, disability impacts everyone in a different way. Disabled persons face discrimination in every society, but women with disabilities get discriminated to a greater extent. The dual oppression of ableism and sexism undoubtedly puts a disabled woman in an extremely marginalized position. Gender and disability are social constructions, so the conceptions of disability are highly contextual and subjective. Gender in itself is a vulnerable category in the discourse of disability studies. The accessibility of disabled males to various services is more, even the chances of marriage and choosing a life partner is considerably high than their female counter parts. Women with disabilities remain largely unheard of, and are often invisible from the social map of society. They undergo a multitude of problems, and some of the important areas remain their reproductive health needs, reproductive rights and related experiences. The reproductive health needs of disabled women have not received much attention because of the pre conceived notions that they are not sexually active, don't have reproductive needs, and are not capable of bearing and rearing children. They face various issues and challenges in accessing services related to their reproductive health needs. The challenges can range from physical, attitudinal, communicational barriers, to lack of awareness from the health care professionals, or the barriers created by the society itself.

Less attention has been paid to the reproductive health concerns of disabled women. Therefore, this paper will bring an overview of disabled women's reproductive health and explore the related problems faced by them. It will try to ascertain the role played by State and non State agencies. A possible intervention and a way forward will be given so as to create an enabling environment for them.

Key Words: *Disability, Reproductive Health, Gender.*