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EXPLORING SKILLS THAT CAN BE IMPARTED TO PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED YOUTH FOR SELF- RELIANCE

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ABSTRACT

In every individual, there exists a rich interplay of strengths and weaknesses, a truth that extends to specially-abled individuals as well. As a society, our role becomes pivotal in championing the strengths of these individuals rather than fixating on their limitations. Embracing them as equals, not objects of sympathy, and affording them equal opportunities are foundational steps. Engaging with them in a manner that fosters a sense of belonging and offering avenues of empowerment are essential elements to enable their pursuit of fulfilling lives. The present study aims to determine the need for skill training for specially-abled youth and to assess their quality of life. This study was conducted at Rambhadracharya Divyang University, Chitrakoot. A total of 150 specially-abled youth were selected and a systematic survey and experimental method was adopted to collect the information regarding respondent's personal profile, disabilities, problems, and present needs. A questionnaire was prepared in the form of Google Form. The survey covered various aspects of textiles and apparel designing-related skills, including fabric identification, cutting, sewing, embroidery, printing, and embellishment techniques, comparing the respondents' current skills with the desired ones for the skill training. The study revealed that the quality of life of specially-abled individuals is influenced by factors like family dynamics, living conditions, family occupation, social skills, education, and personal potential. The disparity between current and required skills highlighted the necessity for professional development, aiming to enhance the overall quality of life. To address these needs effectively and sustainably, the study proposed an individual- and ecosystem-cantered approach.

Keywords: Specially-Abled, Skill Training, Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Specially-abled individuals encompass a wide range, from physical barriers to societal prejudices. Addressing these hurdles is not just a matter of convenience but a moral imperative. By dismantling these obstacles, we unlock the potential of numerous individuals who possess a wealth of talents, skills, and perspectives that

can significantly contribute to our society. It's essential to create an environment that fosters inclusivity, support, and equal opportunities for all, ensuring that everyone can contribute their unique gifts to the world. Johnstone et al. (2019).

According to Division for Inclusive Social Development (2018): There are over 650 million people with disabilities in the world, which is almost 10 percent of the world's population. People with severe or moderate disabilities constitute a certain percent of the population in less developed regions of the world and 7 percent in more developed regions. In India out of the 121 Cr population, 2.68 Cr persons are 'specially-abled' which is 2.21 percent of the total population.

According to Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)*:* "Person with a disability means a person with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, which hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others." Disability reflects the interaction between features of a person's body and the society in which he or she lives. types of disabilities are-

- **Physical:** Complete/partial loss of a physical function (e.g., walking, motor skills) or part of the body (e.g., amputation)
- **Learning**: Cognitive deficits affecting academic performance.
- **Developmental**: A type of disorder that occurs during the child's developmental period and results in difficulties in personal, social, academic, or occupational performance.
- **Sensory disorders**: when any of the senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and consciousness are affected.

When we think about disability, the focus is often on the illness rather than the person suffering from it. "Operational, vocational, environmental, social, health, and human rights issues are just a few of the numerous challenges that persons with special needs face**"**. Abdulraqeb et al. (2023). From this moment on, it becomes the main reference point for needs and solutions that can satisfy them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012) likely highlights the importance of inclusive employment strategies for persons with disabilities as a means to unlock their potential and harness the demographic advantage for sustainable development. This underscores the urgency and significance of policies and initiatives that foster an inclusive workforce, enabling every individual, irrespective of their abilities, to contribute to and benefit from the nation's progress. "Employment stands as a crucial pillar for the independence and autonomy of individuals with disabilities. Securing access to decent work is not only a fundamental human right but also holds significant economic benefits, as highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (2015)

People with disabilities need skills to engage in livelihood activities. But they start with several disadvantages. Their families and communities may assume that they are unable to engage in such activities. They often lack access to basic education, making them unqualified to join skills training courses. These disadvantages frequently result in a lack of skills, as well as low confidence, expectations, and achievement. Khasnabis et al. (2010). Meeting vocational training needs more efficiently, collectively, and sustainably supports a person- and ecosystem-cantered approach that helps individuals achieve quality of life.

The solution to this problem is to understand the situation of the specially-abled and take measures to support them in terms of empowerment and livelihood opportunities and to guarantee them a dignified life Skill development is one of the ways that lead a specially-abled person to a decent job and ensures their independence in their future lives. "In India, the skills and potential of most people

living with disabilities remain untapped, underutilized, or underdeveloped. Vocational training is one of the potential determinants of employment among People with differently abled" Pillai & Shaji (2016)

A specially-abled person needs better access to primary education and vocational training that meets their needs, abilities, interests, and opportunities. Appropriate and effective vocational training promotes the skills of specially-abled person and enables them to participate in the labour market together with others. Every specially-abled person is different depending on the type and degree of disability. Therefore, the area of training that each person needs should be carefully selected.

Vocational education as the term itself denotes the students receiving this are specialized in a particular trade/ vocation and skills and therefore they have more chances of getting gainfully employed and a better place as compared to others. It makes an individual responsible and independent, traditional and lack of skill developing courses lack in this sphere. This education provides stable jobs as these are the jobs whose demand is never fulfilled. Mishra & Rani (2018)

The difference between current and required skills allows us to determine the need for professional development and to assess the quality of life of the selected respondents. To fulfill the needs more effectively, collectively, and sustainably, a person- and ecosystem-centered approach is crucial to help individuals achieve a quality of life. Quality of life is a patient-reported outcome that has broad meaning. A general understanding of good quality of life includes personal well-being, good health, and satisfaction with life.

The quality of life of a specially-abled person depends on many factors, such as the type of family, living conditions, occupation of their family, social skills, education, and the potential that they develop in life. Poor health conditions and impairments are one of the reasons for the limited activity of specially-abled persons and the poor financial situation of the entire family. Drozdz (2020).

In the present study, an initial assessment of the potential and interests of the specially-abled youth was carried out, which determines further action to be taken. It is often important to motivate and encourage the specially-abled to employ their potential and their abilities due to their apathy and demotivation. A specially-abled person needs special attention due to their different learning abilities, their state of health, or any physical disability. It is essential to put efforts into providing various opportunities to improve their quality of life and make them self-reliant.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Chitrakoot district, Uttar Pradesh, India. The area was selected purposively as in Chitrakoot (U.P) Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyang University is the first and the only university exclusively for the specially-abled youth in India and the world. A total of 150 respondents, of the age groups 19 to 29 years, were selected for the present study. A self-designed questionnaire was used for the assessment. The first section covered general information about the respondents, and the second section focused on the specific information related to their impairments, their quality of life, and competency-based thematic questions regarding existing knowledge of skill training. The data was tabulated and analysed statistically using simple percentages.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are summarized under the following heads-

- **The general profile of the respondents**- The data of the general profile of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents According to their Background Information (N=150)

Respondents	F	%
Gender		
Male	34	22.8
Female	116	77.2
Marital Status		
Unmarried	118	78.6
Married	32	21.4
Academic qualification		
Graduate	123	82
Postgraduate	27	18
Family occupation		
Farmer	100	67
Business	28	18.6
Private Service	12	8
Government Service	10	6.6
Family income monthly		
2000-5000	100	67
6000-10000	28	18.6
11000-15000	12	8
16000 & above	10	6.6

The data among the respondents indicates that the majority, 77.2 per cent, were women. It was noted that the largest proportion of respondents i.e., 78.6 per cent was unmarried. Regarding their educational status, the majority 82 per cent had undergraduate degrees, while 18 per cent had postgraduate qualifications. The highest proportion of respondents 70 per cent came from families whose primary occupation was farming. Additionally, the majority of respondents 70 per cent were classified under the low-income group. Concerning family structure, 67.9 per cent of the respondents were living in nuclear families.

- **The specific information of respondents**

Table 2

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents Based on Specific Information Related to their Physical Limitations (N=150)

physical limitations	F	%
Physical impairment (Cerebral palsy)	62	41.5
Mental retarded	3	2
Visual impairment	23	15.3
Hearing impairment	31	20.6
Multiple learning disorder	11	7.3

Other (Autism, Epilepsy, Genetic Disorders, Speech and Language Disorders)	20	13.3
Age at diagnosed with disability-	**F**	**%**
Birth to 1years	98	65.6
1 to 3 years	30	20
3 to 5 years	14	9.1
Later	8	5.5
Symptoms identified by	**F**	**%**
Doctor	61	40.7
Delayed milestone	58	38.9
Family members	31	20.4
Cause of disability	**F**	**%**
Prenatal	75	50.2
Natal	19	12.8
Postnatal	31	20.6
Other	25	16.4

Table reveals the data collected regarding respondent's physical limitations, the largest proportion of 41.5 per cent of participants reported being physically impaired, specifically with Cerebral Palsy (CP), while the second-largest group 20.6 per cent identified as hearing impaired. Moreover, a significant majority 65.6 per cent of the respondents reported being diagnosed with their disability at birth or within their first year of life. This early diagnosis is attributed to the ability to recognize fundamental developmental signs in children during their initial stages of growth. The symptoms of the identified disabilities are detailed in Table with the most prevalent symptom being the delayed achievement of developmental milestones, accounting for 38.9 per cent. The leading cause of disability, affecting 50.2 per cent of respondents, occurred during the prenatal period.

Figure 1

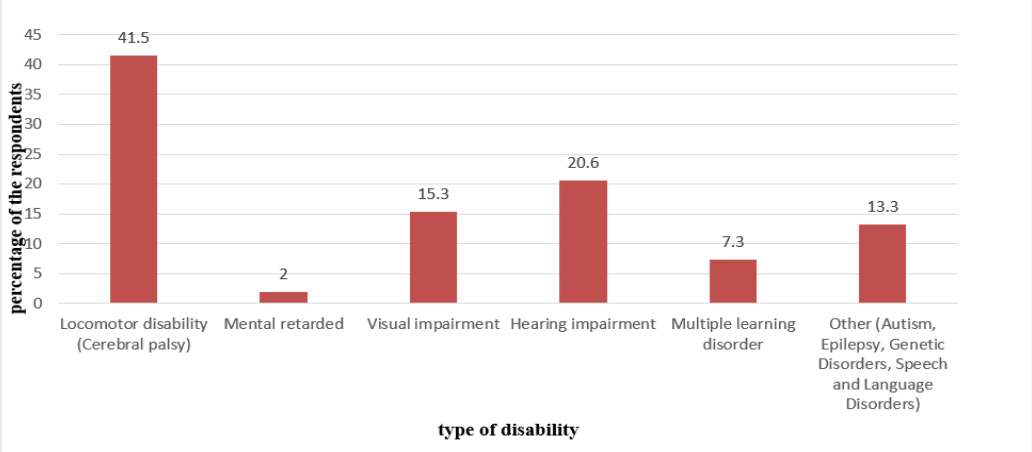

Figure 1 Distribution of Respondents According to Type of Disability

Table 3

Table 3 Distribution of Respondents Based on Specific Information Related to their Disabilities (N = 150)

Stage of disability	F	%
Complete disability	52	34.9
Severe disability	19	12.8

Moderate disability	53	35.1
Mild disability	26	17.2
Movements affected	**F**	**%**
Yes	71	47.40%
No	79	52.60%
If yes, they are (N = 71)	**F**	**%**
Walking	52	36.9
Bending	4	2.8
Household activities	8	5.6
Every day activities	28	19.8
Writing	8	5.6
depend on others or assistive devices -	**F**	**%**
Yes	96	64.2
No	54	35.8

The table displays data indicating that none of the respondents were engaged in income-generating activities. Additionally, the data shows that 44.2 per cent of the additional expenditure due to disability was allocated to aids and appliances for the respondents, while 32.6 per cent was dedicated to medical treatment. The majority of respondents 74 per cent, had their expenses managed by their parents. A substantial portion of the 79.6 per cent of respondents was accessing education through government facilities available to them. The data indicates that 50 per cent of the respondents received healthcare benefits from government social security schemes, while 14.6 per cent obtained aids and appliances through these schemes.

Figure 2

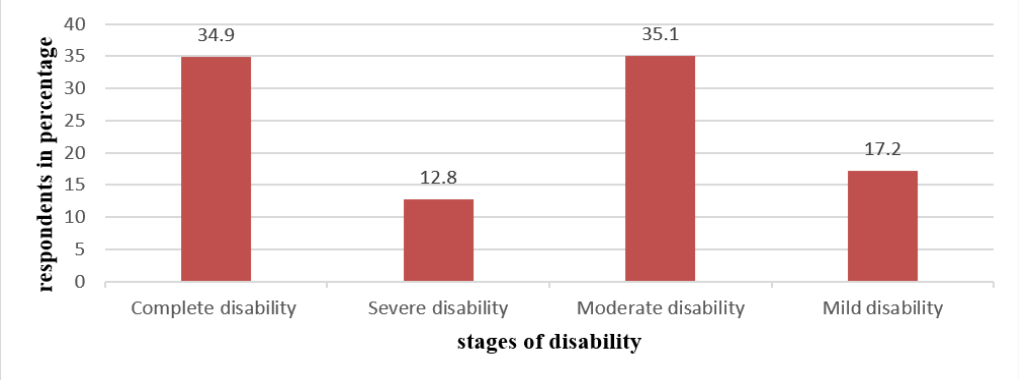

Figure 2 Distribution of Respondents According to Stage of Disability

Table 4

Table 4 Distribution of Respondents According to their Specific Information Related to their Basic Needs, Healthcare, and Social Support (N=150)

Income generating activity	**F**	**%**
Yes	-	-
No	150	100
Additional expenditure related to disability	**F**	**%**
Treatment	49	32.6
Therapies	24	16.3
Aids appliances	66	44.2

Other	11	7
Expenditure managed by-	**F**	**%**
Parents	112	74.5
Self-affording	-	-
Govt. Support	32	21.6
NGO	6	5.85
Gov. schemes and facilities available for the specially-abled in area	**F**	**%**
Education	120	79.6
Employment opportunities	9	6.1
Bank loan, microcredit, technical support,	9	6.1
Vocational training	6	4.1
Social security, capacity building	6	4.1
Accessed gov. social security scheme	**F**	**%**
Healthcare	75	50
Free ration	31	20.8
Free treatment	19	12.5
Housing	3	21
Aids and appliances	22	14.6

Table 5

Table 5 Distribution of Respondents Based on their Specific Information Related to Entrepreneurial Skill-Based Training Needs (N=150)

Aware of entrepreneurial skill-based training	**F**	**%**
Yes	82	54.7
No	68	45.3
Participated in any skill-based training program before		
Yes	9	5.7
No	141	94.3
Factors that motivate to join skill-based training		
To become self-reliant	105	69.8
To help my family financially	21	14
To increase creative capabilities and Capacities	3	2.3
To develop own entrepreneurial skills	14	9.3
To improve daily living skills	7	4.7
Skills you would like to learn during training		
Fashion Designing	23	15
Textiles Designing	8	5
Clothing and textile embellishment techniques	112	75
Local arts and crafts related to clothing and textiles	3	2
Traditional arts and crafts related to clothing and textiles	3	2
CAD designing software	1	1
The entrepreneurial intention of this training		
I like to start my own business	75	50
I like to become an entrepreneur	42	28
I like to do programs related to entrepreneurship.	18	12
I like to do something profitable	15	10

According to the data in Table 5 4.7 per cent of the respondents were aware of entrepreneurial skill-based training, but the majority of them 94.3 per cent, had

never participated in any entrepreneurial skill-based training programs. The data indicates that 69.8 per cent of respondents were motivated to join skill-based training to become self-reliant. A significant majority of the respondents, i.e., 75 per cent, expressed their preference for learning skills during training related to clothing and textile embellishment techniques. The data shows that 50 per cent, had entrepreneurial intentions for this training, aiming to start their businesses. Additionally, 28 per cent of the respondents expressed a desire to become entrepreneurs.

Table 6

Table 6 Distribution of Respondents Based on their Specific Information Related to their Existing Knowledge of Entrepreneurial Skill-Based Training, (N=150)

Aware of the basic techniques of clothing and textile construction & and embellishment techniques	F	%
Yes	69	46.3
No	81	53.7
If yes, they are (N=69)		
Stitching	30	43.3
Knitting	5	6.7
Crocheting	7	10
Embroidery	14	20
Dyeing & printing	2	3.3
All of these	2	3.3
Other	9	13.3
Use of basic dying or printing techniques		
Yes	5	3.3
No	145	97.7
Able to use basic computer skills		
Yes	99	66
No	51	34

According to the data presented in the Table, the survey revealed various levels of awareness among respondents regarding clothing and textile construction methods, as well as embellishment techniques. More than half of the respondents 53.7 per cent were not familiar with basic clothing and textile construction techniques. Among the remaining respondents, 43.3 per cent were aware of stitching techniques, while 20 per cent of the respondents had knowledgeable about embroidery techniques. Surprisingly, the data indicated that a significant percentage 97.7 per cent of respondents lacked knowledge of basic dying or printing techniques. Notably, a substantial majority 70 per cent of the respondents were not familiar with any local arts and crafts. On a positive note, the majority 66 per cent of respondents showed basic proficiency in computer skills, primarily involving internet usage and Microsoft Office applications.

Table 7

Table 7 Distributions of the Respondents According to their Preference for Skills they Want to Learn. (N=150)

Preferences for Skills to Learn During Training	F	%
Fashion Designing	23	15
Textiles Designing	8	5
Clothing and textile embellishment techniques	112	75

Local arts and crafts related to clothing and textiles	3	2
Traditional arts and crafts related to clothing and textiles	3	2
CAD designing software	1	1

The majority of respondents expressed interest in learning clothing and textile embellishment techniques, with 75 per cent participants selecting this option. Clothing and textile embellishment techniques encompass a wide range of skills, including but not limited to embroidery, beadwork, appliqué, fabric dyeing and printing, fabric painting, and surface embellishments.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study emphasizes the importance of addressing the skill training needs and overall quality of life for specially-abled youth, particularly in the context of skill-oriented training related to apparel, home furnishings, and handicraft making. The insights gained from this study revealed varying levels of awareness, motivation, and skill proficiency among the respondents. This demands the development of personalized training programs aimed at bridging these skill gaps, thereby empowering individuals with entrepreneurial aspirations.

Furthermore, the assessment of the quality of life for specially-abled youth has illuminated the multifaceted and subjective nature of this concept. It is evident from the data that continued support from both families and government initiatives is vital to enhance the quality of life for specially-abled youth and to cater to their unique needs. The significance of aids, appliances, and medical treatment in their overall well-being cannot be inflated.

Significantly, the data indicates a demand for skill training in clothing and textile embellishment techniques among the majority of respondents. These techniques encompass a wide array of skills, including embroidery, beadwork, appliqué, fabric dyeing and printing, fabric painting, and surface embellishments.

By addressing both their skill training needs and the broader aspects of their quality of life, we can foster self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and a higher standard of well-being for this precious segment of our society. It is through such initiatives that we can contribute to their enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, and self-confidence, ultimately facilitating their path to self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship, particularly for specially-abled youth seeking to build their competencies and start their enterprises.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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