

# Employment Status of Adult Intellectual Disability Persons in Bangladesh

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**ABSTRACT—** *The present study was to explore the employment status of adult intellectually disabled persons in Bangladesh. To assess present employment situation of the intellectually disabled persons, a questionnaire was used on sample of 147 adult intellectually disabled subjects. Out of total 147 cases 95 were male and 52 were female participants and 69 were living in urban areas and 78 were living in rural areas. Mild and moderate intellectually disabled participants were selected for this study, Questionnaire was designed specially for this research. The data were analyzed by employing chi-square test. The result revealed that most of the parents expect their adult intellectually disabled persons will work independently or in a sheltered work environment. It is also seen that large majorities of the parents of both urban and rural areas feel the necessity of some employment of their intellectually disabled adult for their financial support and better mental condition. They don't want to see their intellectually disabled adult as a burden of the family.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18 (AAIDD, 2011).

Only two decades ago the intellectually disabled persons of Bangladesh had shorter life span. But now their span of life has increased and many of them have started experiencing aging process like people of normal intelligence (Sufi, 1997). Earlier, the families did not consider the employment of the intellectually disabled persons seriously. Intellectually disabled persons may not become expert in all trades or works like general people. Yet if they are given the opportunity, they can participate in many income-generating activities.

Currently access to job and employment both in public and private sector organizations in Bangladesh are not available for persons with intellectually disabled. Potential employers don't have confidence on the capabilities of people with intellectually disabled to carry out the required task or the job. Lack of understanding in this regard among the employers is a big hurdle for persons with intellectually disabled. On the other hand without getting proper opportunity, the disabled persons cannot improve their professional skills and competence required for a specific job. Many employers consider employment of a intellectually disabled person may impair the decency and decorum of their organizations (Sufi, 1997).

A number of barriers contribute to the low employment rate of people with intellectually disabled in Bangladesh. They may not receive vocational training and work experience while in school. Being segregated in special education programs, they may not learn about career options, and they have no experiences to develop appropriate social skills required for successful employment and may not be encouraged to look forward to work. After leaving school or becoming dropout in school, many adults with intellectually disabled find there are no services in their communities to assist them in obtaining and maintaining employment. Parents may have low expectations for their sons and daughters with intellectually disabled. They may worry that their son or daughter to lose entitlements which provide a monthly income and health coverage. Transportation to work place is often a problem for people with intellectually disabled. Public transportation is not universally available. Finally, they may have difficulty in finding work when the unemployment rate is high in the community (Sufi, 1997).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Blanck (2003) run survey that, employers in Oklahoma were generally positive about the contributions and abilities of their employees with intellectually disabled. Almost all (96%) reported they were very satisfied with their employee's work attendance. More than three fourths (78%) were satisfied with the employee's dedication to work, and 95 % said that employees with intellectually disabled do not have higher turnover rates than employees without disabilities

performing similar jobs. Finally, more than half of the employers were very satisfied with the worker’s productivity (59%) and initiative (58%).

Temple University Developmental Disabilities Center (2010) indicates that only 7 to 23 % of adults with intellectually disabled are employed full-time. While an additional small percentage (9-20%) are employed part-time, most are either unemployed or not in the labor force. The National Consumer Survey of adults with intellectually disabled reported 81% is not working.

The purpose of this study is to find out the parental expectations regarding employment status of their adult intellectual disability persons.

### 3. METHOD

**Participants:** The participants of this study consisted of 147 adult intellectual disability persons belonging to different urban and rural areas in Bangladesh. They were between the ages of 20 and 35 years old. Out of total 147 cases 95 were male and 52 were female participants and 69 were living in urban areas and 78 were living in rural areas. Mild and moderate intellectually disabled persons were selected in this study. The entire samples were purposively selected. This research was conducted from 2010 to 2012.

**Materials:** (i) Questionnaire, (ii) Check list, (iii) Family Characteristics

i) **Questionnaire:** To assess the present employment situation of intellectually disabled persons, a questionnaire was used. This questionnaire was designed specially for this study. There were 10 questions related to the employment condition of the intellectually disabled persons. The questionnaire includes both closed and open-ended questions. Closed ended questions consist of dichotomous (yes/no) and multiple answers. Domain surveyed included: employment (e.g., types of paid and unpaid work experiences, employment quota system, self-sufficiency, etc.), vocational training (e.g., supportive employment services sheltered workshop, etc.). This instrument is really a guided interview protocol.

ii) **Check list:** There are many items in the contents of this checklist. This checklist was designed as a five-point scale to assess five performance levels such as, “very good”, “good”, “average”, “poor” and “very poor”. Scoring of the checklist involves assigning a numerical value of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively to each response. The researcher read each item of the checklist and the guardians gave their opinion. In the present study the guardians responded on the basis of their own observation and rated the intellectually disabled person’s behavioral levels. The items included are related to sensory levels, eating, dressing, walking, playing, social interactions, education, aggression, emotion, memory, personality, motivation, etc. of the intellectually disabled persons.

iii) **Data sheet of family characteristics:** The family data sheet is used to obtain the demographic information of the family, shown in following Table

Table- I: Family characteristics

Variable	Urban (N=69)	Rural (N=78)
<b>Respondent</b>	%	%
Mother	68.12	51.28
Father	21.74	31.07
Siblings	7.25	3.88
Other relations	2.90	13.59
<b>Fathers Employment</b>		
Service	52.78	5.82
Agriculture	11.11	73.79
Business	33.33	9.71
Others	2.78	10.68
<b>Mothers employment</b>		
Employed	41.20	10.36
Unemployed	58.8	89.64
<b>Fathers level of education</b>		
Illiterate	00.00	62.14

Primary school	2.08	30.10
Secondary school	28.47	4.85
Graduate	46.53	1.49
Post graduate	22.92	0.97
<b>Mothers level of education</b>		
Illiterate	00	75.73
Primary school	12.5	15.53
Secondary school	63.19	8.74
Graduate	21.53	00.00
Post graduate	2.78	00.00
<b>Family yearly income (in thousand taka)</b>		
00-10	00.00	18.45
11-20	00.00	32.04
21-30	2.09	26.21
31-40	7.64	11.65
41-50	11.81	8.74
51-60	18.06	1.94
60+	60.40	0.97

#### 4. PROCEDURE

The data of this study was collected from intellectually disabled of the Rajshahi, Naogaon and Bogra who are affiliated with the SIVUS Institute. Some of the students of Rajshahi University, Psychology Department, Hatgangopara Degree College and Bandaikhara High School helped the researcher to visit the houses of the intellectually disabled persons and their family members in Rajshahi and Naogaon districts. In the rural areas, the Family Welfare Assistants (FWA), local school teachers, village physicians and the village leaders (Maatbars) helped the researchers to study the cases.

During interview with the parents/guardians of the intellectually disabled persons, the researchers first observed the intellectually disabled subjects, allowed the parents/guardians to express their own feelings about the subjects. All the information given by the researchers through questioning them again checked the parents/guardians in the questionnaire. Most of the parents/guardians mentioned many other things in addition to the selected items of the questionnaire. The researcher recorded all these comments in her notebook and also audio taped to assure accuracy of the information reported for after coding and to record any qualitative information provided by the parent during the interview.

#### 5. RESULTS

Results presented were primary descriptive, due to the small size and the density of the information obtained. Where appropriate, chi-square analyses were used to compare the employment status of adult intellectually disabled persons in urban and rural areas.

Some questions were asked to the parents/guardians to know the employment status of their intellectually disabled persons. Given answers were transferred in numerical figures. The data resulting from the study has been presented in the following tables.

**Table- 2:** Ability of the intellectually disabled persons to do something

Ability	Urban (N=69)		Rural (N=78)	
	N	%	N	%
Yes, the intellectually disabled person is capable to do some income generating activity	43	62.	59	75.
No, the intellectually disabled person is totally unable	26	37.	19	24.
		68		36
	$\chi^2=3.059, df=1, NS$			

**Table-3:** Present employment status

<i>Employment status</i>	<i>Urban (N=69)</i>		<i>Rural (N=78)</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Employed (paid work)	16	23.	25	32.
		19		05
Employed (unpaid work)	10	14.	17	21.
		49		79
No, not employed	43	62.	36	46.
		32		15
$\chi^2=3.874, df=2, p<0.20$				

It is seen from the above table, the percentage of the unpaid employed intellectually disabled persons are very low at present. Statistically, chi-square analysis revealed there are few differences between urban and rural present employment status of adult intellectually disabled persons.

**Table-4:** Present work experiences

<i>Type of work</i>	<i>Paid work (N=41)</i>		<i>Unpaid work (N=27)</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
In agricultural works of own family	8	19.	1	40.7
		51	1	4
In small shop attached to the house	1	26.	4	14.8
	1	82		1
As a cowboy in others family	5	12.	3	11.1
		20		1
As a part-time labor in fish-firm	3	7.3	2	7.42
		2		
Supporting hands in parental office/shop/business	9	21.	4	14.8
		95		1
As full-time worker in packing section of industries	2	4.8	0	00.0
		8		0
Sheltered workshop	3	7.3	3	11.1
		2		1
$\chi^2=3.707, df=6, NS$				

**Table-5:** Parents expectation toward work involvement of their intellectually disabled children

<i>Views</i>	<i>Urban (N=69)</i>		<i>Rural (N=78)</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Positive	53	76.81	59	75.6
				4
Negative	16	23.19	19	24.3
				6
$\chi^2=0.028, df=1, NS$				

It is seen that statistically, chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences between urban and rural parents expectation regarding their intellectually disabled children's involvement in work.

Questions of parental expectations regarding future arrangement of their adult intellectually disabled son and daughter, all the parents/guardians express they took some initiative to make their children self-sufficient or independent. 14.10% rural and 79.71% urban parents replied, “Yes, some initiatives were taken”. Whereas, 85.44% rural and 19.44% urban parents replied, “No, did nothing”. Statistically, chi-square analyses revealed highly significant difference between future arrangement of urban and rural parents,  $\chi^2=105$ ,  $df= 1$ ,  $P<0.01$ , thus indicate that majority of the urban parents took some initiative to make their children self-sufficient or independent.

All the parents were asked to mention the names of organizations they expect can create job opportunities. It is seen that 79.61% rural and 92.36% urban parents expect the Government; 59.22% rural and none of the urban parents expect the Union Parishad or local government; 69.90% rural and 50.55% urban parents expect the NGOs will create such opportunities. 22.33% rural and 4.86% urban respondents could not answer the question. The 16.50% rural and 44.44% urban parents, who said “Others” during interview, mentioned that family, friends, philanthropists, etc. could create job opportunities for the intellectually disabled persons in their own localities. The result is shown that statistically highly significant that is  $\chi^2=74.66$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $P<0.01$ .

## 6. DISCUSSION

The present study attempted to find out the employment status of adult intellectual disabled persons in Bangladesh. The result of the present study reveals that adult intellectually disabled children to do something differed significantly among rural and urban areas. It is seen (table-2) that large majority of the rural parents (75.64%) feel that the intellectually disabled persons can do some works and 62.32% urban parent express they are capable to do some work. On the other hands 24.36% rural and 37.69% urban parents express that intellectually disabled children are not capable to engage in economic activities, due to their disabilities such as, hyperactive, depressed, physically handicapped conditions etc. During interview it was understood that some parents are worried how the intellectually disabled persons should go to work places due to communication and transport problems. But they also want that it could be better for the intellectually disabled persons if they are engaged in home based economic activities. This result supports the previous study McNair and Rusch (2011) examined parent expectations for individual with mild or moderate intellectually disabled, 14 to 25 years of age. 48% imagined the young adult holding a in the community, with 29% working in sheltered workshop and 7% not working at all. 55% of the parents imagined the young adult living at home after his or her education was completed.

The researcher has found many intellectually disabled persons are already engaged in work. But it is seen that (table-3) unpaid employed with intellectually disabled persons are very few at present both in urban and rural areas. It is seen that nearly 50% subjects received paid work and 40% subjects received unpaid work. This result is consistent with one previous result indicating that three fourths of sample received unpaid work experiences, with approximately half receiving pay for work (Bonneie, Kraemer and Blacher, 2000). Another researcher has indicated that paid work experience during school is associated with more successful vocational outcomes after existing school (Benz, Yovanoff and Doren, 1997).

The present study also indicated that most of the adult intellectually disabled persons are jobless and loiter in the neighborhood. Many parents expect that, if necessary steps are taken it may be possible to engage them in many easy jobs. Employment opportunity for the general population is yet very limited in Bangladesh. But there are many jobs that can be reserved for the intellectually disabled persons. The jobs that do not need enough mental ability are suitable for them. There can be a quota for the intellectually disabled persons in the packaging units, security guard sections, etc. in the public and private sector enterprises.

The researcher observed that in the rural areas the employment sectors related to agriculture, poultry, dairy, etc. have already engaged some intellectually disabled persons. From the table-4, delineates the types of paid and unpaid work experiences received. For paid work experiences the majority of the intellectually disabled persons worked in a small shop attached to the house and supporting hands in parental office/ shop/ business etc. Urban and rural both individuals engaged in this type of paid work. But most of the rural subjects work in agriculture sector both paid and unpaid work. But if some specialized vocational training can be given, the intellectually disabled persons can also become skilled carpenters, repair workers, helping hands in shops, tea makers, food grain processors, handicraft manufactures, etc.

In the present study it is seen that (table-5) large majority (76.81% urban and 75.64% rural) of the parents/ guardians mentioned that it is necessary for the intellectually disabled persons to remain involved in some works. Because financial support is necessary to survive, to feel better mental condition and physical condition, they will not become burden of family, society, country, finally they will be independent.

It is seen that large majority of the rural parents did not take any initiative to make the intellectually disabled children as independent. But some parents bought cows and there were given to them for taking care at home, some fruit trees were planted, female child learning how to boil and dry paddy etc., to make their children self-dependent. In urban areas many parents provide training in handicraft manufacturing, assist in family business and bought house, lands, etc. for their intellectually disabled children with the hope that when they become adults some income should come as rent is these lands, houses, etc. previous result has indicated that the majority of the parents (71.2%) would like to see their intellectually disabled children working either independently or in an individual supported work environment. Fewer parents reported sheltered workshops and day activity centers as ideal work environments; no parents reported remaining at home as being ideal. Realistically, however, many more parents imagined their adult c intellectually disabled children being employed in day activity centers and sheltered workshops (Bonneie, Kraemer, and Blacher, 2000).

Hill, Seyfarth, Banks, Wehman, and Orelove (2010) in their study on parents vocational aspirations for adult with severe intellectual disability, found that parents chose a day activity center as the preferred vocational placement. These parents did not envision their young adult performing the same tasks as persons with handicaps, and they only mildly endorsed the statement, “work should be a normal part of life”. The developmental level of the adult was strongly related to the vocational aspirations of the parents.

Researcher who have examined differences in the expectations of parents with and without disabilities have found that parents of children with disabilities have more concerns regarding vocational options, future residential environments, social networks, and needs for assistance (Whitney-Thomas and Hanley-maxwell, 2006).

However, it would be concluded from the present study that parental expectations of future work environment or employment status for their intellectually disabled persons are very positive. The rural people possess positive attitude to employ the adult intellectually disabled persons in easy works. Now the mild and moderately retarded adults, both male and female, are mostly engaged in agriculture oriented jobs in the rural areas. Majority of the parents expect that their intellectually disabled children can do some works, and it is necessary for them to remain involved in some works. Most of the parents take some initiative to make them self-sufficient or independent. If some vocational training can be given to them, the employment scope will definitely increase. On the other hand, the employment opportunities of the urban intellectually disabled persons are yet very low and needs some interventions from the government.

From a public policy and social development perspective, researcher suggests that more adequate provision of such supports through formal programs will help to improve the employment situation of people with intellectual disabilities.

Alternative programming such as that available under the Opportunities Fund could be made more fiscally robust to serve more people and to enable significant levels of ongoing employment support for people with challenging and complex needs.

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