

DEVELOPING METHODOLOGY FOR ACCESSIBILITY RESEARCH IN RURAL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

From the current and past research practices there is enough evidence to understand that disablement process is not just a cause of individual physical limitations but is a consequence of complex interactions between physical, social and institutional parameters within the environment, we live in. However, these research studies are mostly limited to the urban settings of the developed nations which are contextually quite different from the rural settings of the developing nations. While the incidence rate of disabled population is quite high in the rural areas, the domain of disabling environmental experiences in rural settings still remains highly under researched. As a result, it lacks clear methodological directions to pursue research studies leading to some possible ways of improving access to the performance of Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) in their ground contexts. This paper sheds light on methodological directions for accessibility research in rural environments as employed by the author in his doctoral research titled Enabling environments for the Mobility impaired in the rural areas. It discusses the various steps involved in the methodology of this exploratory research and highlights the scope of further refinements.

- Purpose of Study** The study was conducted to develop an understanding about the issues involved in the performance of Activities of Daily Living by the mobility impaired in the rural areas. It was a part of the doctoral research submitted by the author at IIT Roorkee on the topic Enabling Environments for the Mobility Impaired in the Rural Areas
- Methodology** This research study employed a survey based methodology leading to the development of a visual documentation process and independent tools to measure disabling experiences.
- Results** Development of a methodology for researching accessibility issues in the rural context is one of the significant outcomes of this study in addition to the understanding of interrelationships between personal and environmental parameters in play during functioning of ADLs.

Conclusions

The study concludes that very little work has been done in the area of promoting accessible environments for the mobility impaired in the rural environments especially in the developing nations. The methodology so evolved in this study could be further employed to other disability groups too in order to get a holistic grip on resolving accessibility issues in rural environments.

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