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Body image and sexuality: personal perspectives of physically disabled women in Pakistan
Disability is regarded as a system like gender and race in which human bodies are often socially constructed as 'different' and excluded from the mainstream social activities on the basis of socio-cultural interpretations given to their impairment (Wendell, 1989; Begum, 1992; Thomas, 2004; Garland-Thomson, 2005). This structure of exclusion closely associates to the generation of unfavorable self-perception and intricacies in social interactions with people with visible or invisible bodily differences (Rumsey & Harcourt, 2004). Among physically impaired women the idea of not having an ideal body causes problems for their self-identification (Wendell, 1989; Begum, 1992). They are stigmatized as asexual, unable to marry or unfit for motherhood and fragile for sexual activity (Begum, 1992; Deloach, 1994; Nosek, 1995; Garland-Thomson, 2005).

Moreover, the disable women's sexual needs are considered to be nonexistent and inferior than that of able bodied women or men and overlooked in scientific literature (Greengross, 1976: 110 as cited by Begum, 1992). This issue has not yet been widely researched from feminist perspectives, nor has it been discussed intensively in gender theories (Wendell, 1989; Garland-Thomson 2005). To persuade the feminist scholarship of the importance to integrate diverse life experiences of disabled women (belonging to different cultures and backgrounds) it should be highlighted that certain concepts such as gender roles, self-image, sexuality and socialization have to be applied for disabled women for a better understanding of the intersection of disability and gender (Begum, 1992; Garland-Thomson, 2002). In addition to this, we have to focus on research that aims to explain the psychological aspects of self-perception related to body images and experiences in different cultural contexts.

Depending upon the above stated discussion, this dissertation project focuses on the social and the visual construction of disability in Pakistani society from the perspective of physically disabled women. What perception physically disabled women females develop for their body images in response to their experiences of the social world and how does the body appearance consciousness interacts in shaping their self-concept as a potential partner for marital relationships? Moreover, the research aims to explore how much certain characteristics such as education (at university level) intervene to resist the set attitudes towards bodily differences. In this research primary data will be conducted. The study population will consist of physically disabled women enrolled in graduate programs at the university level. In Pakistan it is a general trend that at the completion of masters level education, parents get more concerned about the marriage of their female children. Moreover, at this age, women are also starting paying more attention to bodily appearance and invest more in bodily appearance enhancement procedures and practices to get married. At this particular stage of life, it is important to investigate what perspectives disabled women have about their bodies and how they think of themselves in regard to possible marital relationship in response to their experience of the social world.

The philosophical foundation of the proposed research question rests on the social constructivism and interpretative methods. The qualitative approach is used to explore the social realities in an inductive way through the interaction with social actors. It is applicable to reconstruct the daily life subjective experiences to understand the patterns of the social realities and to know how human action is affected in reaction to their interaction with the social worlds (Neuman, 1997, p. 67-73). To understand the phenomenon of physical disability in young, educated women, public

and private sector universities will be approached to interact with the research participants. The public and the private universities are quite different from each other in terms of fee structure and other associated expenses like hostel fee and medical facility. Students from the middle income group mostly prefer public sector universities as they could easily manage the study expenses. Whereas students from better income groups, mostly enroll in private universities. Based on the fact that women from different socio-economic backgrounds and life experiences will be accessed by selecting the universities of both (public /private) sectors.

Following the principles of participant recruitment for qualitative research (mentioned by Hennink, Hutter, Bailey, 2011, p. 84) this study requires a small number of research participants (about 20-30 interviewees) with specific characteristics for the in-depth explanation of the issue. The stories of the participants with particular characteristics and experiences will add to a greater understanding of the phenomenon. They will be approached by using non-random methods, known as purposive recruitment. An interview guide focuses on the purpose and objectives of the research, will be developed to conduct in-depth interviews on the women's biographies. During the field work, all the issues related to rapport building and ethics of the research will be taken into consideration. Once the data will be transcribed, the codes (inductive and deductive) will be generated for the purpose of analysis. Furthermore, on the basis of the generated codes, descriptions of the data will be given to develop the explanation of the phenomenon by exploring its context, meaning and the nature of the variations.

The study will fill in the research gaps in feminist and gender studies as well as in disability studies by exploring the dynamics of bodily and sexuality issues of disabled women within the social-cultural context of a Muslim country in the global south. The Pakistani society is somewhat traditional. It is considered shameful for women to talk about sexuality or discuss their bodily and sexual experiences. The parents hesitate to have a discussion on sexuality with their children before they get married (Hennink, Rana, & Iqbal, 2006). When it's coming to disability, in general, particularly women's disabilities are considered to be a highly personal matter and family affair (Begum, 1992). In this situation, when less support mechanism for women exists to deal with emotional and sexual aspects of their lives, the study will be helpful to investigate how physically disabled women develop their self-identity and how they are accepted in society. Although, disabled persons have been part of a national and international policy framework since 1981, these policies are focused on their financial and educational needs in Pakistani. Therefore, the results of the study can lead to develop a policy framework or the revision of existing policy frameworks to address the emotional and sexual aspects of the lives of disabled women.

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