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Abstract

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Keywords: Persons with Disabilities, Disability Rights, UN, CRPD, Pakistan, Social Inclusion, Institutional Effectiveness

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Reimagining Inclusion: Pakistan's Progress and Gaps in Implementing the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) (2015–2024)



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Abstract

This paper will analyze the progress and the failure of Pakistan to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) within the period of 2015 to 2024. In 2011, Pakistan ratified the CRPD and did some federal and provincial changes in laws to foster inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities. Despite these formal promises, difficulties still lie ahead in the interpretation of laws and policies into effective educational, employment access and social engagement outcomes. The study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach and relies on secondary data, such as, official reports, laws, and scholarly materials. Based on Capability Approach and State Capacity Theory, used to connect institutional capacity with the actual inclusion outcomes. The study will also help in giving a comprehensive review of the legal reform, policy measures, and institutional initiatives, during 2015-2024 in Pakistan in order to adhere to the international disability rights provisions.

Keywords: *Persons with Disabilities, Disability Rights, UN, CRPD, Pakistan, Social Inclusion, Institutional Effectiveness*

Introduction

The importance of disability rights across the world became prominent with the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which defines disability through the lens of dignity, non-discrimination and participation. In 2011, Pakistan ratified the CRPD and promised to change its legal, institutional, and social framework but the translation of these principles into practical inclusion is still unequal (Naznin & Khan, 2025).

To align domestic laws with the provisions of the CRPD, Pakistan has enacted reform legislation from 2015-2024, such as the Islamabad Capital Territory Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020, as well as the provincial (Sindh and Baluchistan) laws, (Rafeh & Abbas, 2022). This change to a right-based approach has been facilitated by civil society advocacy. Nevertheless, legal reforms do not always lead to substantive results. The lack of teacher training, insufficient infrastructure, and coherence among policies further contributes to limit the inclusive education (Farooqi, Shabbir, Khan, & Shad, 2024). On the other hand, cultural attitudes still frame disability as a charity process.

There are structural legal gaps, such as insecure legislations, lack of enforcement, and old laws that are not compliant with CRPD standards (Rehman & Qureshi, 2023). Persons with disabilities have limited access to participation, education, employment and political inclusion due to socio-economic and



accessibility barriers (Rasheed, Hashmi, Bhutta, & Chaudhry, 2023). The recent institutional efforts are an indicator of participation, but their efficiency is not clear (The Nation, 2025).

Although Pakistan has achieved normative gains, but the discrepancy between the official promises and the actual inclusion remains, which makes it crucial to conduct systematic research on the CRPD implementation during the period of 2015-2024.

Literature Review

In the article “A Critical Overview of Disability Prevalence and Law in Pakistan” by Shaista Naznin and M. Usman Khan (2025), the authors claim that old laws like DPO and medical model still persist in Pakistan, despite ratification of UNCRPD. Furthermore, author brings out educational crisis that over 100 schools of special education do not even serve 10% of PWD’s. Despite ICT act of 2020, implementation is still theoretical.

In the paper “Visually Impaired People, State Responsibility and Laws in Pakistan”, written by Madeeha Arshad and Muhammad Waqas Gujjar (2025), the author emphasizes that in Pakistan, there is a notable gap in the implementation of CRPD, despite its ratification in 2011. 2% employment quota is lower than 30%. Additionally, the degree of exclusion is so high, that only 8 percent school offer braille facilities, and only 12 percent students getting socio- welfare facilities.

The book “Disability Framework in Pakistan” by Sight Savers International (2019) analyzes that PWD’s face numerous barriers such as; stigma, and attitudinal barriers, and economic marginalization, as 70% PWD’s are financially dependent on their families. And despite National Policy of 2002, and 2% employment quota, PWD’s are just being completely unserved.

The article “The electoral and political rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Pakistan” by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (2018) reveals that organizational and administrative limitations hinder the electoral and political enfranchisement of PWD’s. Out of 3.28 million PWD’s only 165,972 of them are registered voters. Additionally, despite legislations, there is weak implementation due to limited outreach, remote voting points, red tape, and little representation of PWD’s in electoral governance.

So, There is still a gap in the academic literature regarding Pakistan actual development in terms of CRPD implementation during 2015 to 2024, which will be covered in this paper.

Statement of the Problem

Pakistan is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and has introduced relevant legal reforms. However, the practical implementation of disability rights remains limited and uneven. Weak institutional capacity and a decentralized framework continue to obstruct the translation of these commitments into meaningful outcomes.

Research Question

1. How has Pakistan implemented the UN CRPD between 2015 and 2024, what enforcement gaps persist, and what measures are required to strengthen disability inclusion?

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach to examine Pakistan’s implementation of the UN CRPD (2015–2024). It relies on secondary data, including official reports, federal and provincial legislation, and academic publications. Data is collected systematically from official websites, scholarly databases, and other secondary sources. Content analysis is used to identify patterns, trends, and gaps between formal commitments and practical implementation.

Legal and Policy Implementation: Achievements and Shortcomings (2015–2024):

Legal and Policy Progress in Implementing the UN CRPD

Ratification of the United Nations convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 that made Pakistan a binding state, however, the years 2015-2024 represent a stage of gradual domestic interpretation of the law, but not a structural one. One such field of improvement has been the formulation of follow-up activities that can bring the sector specific legislation in line with the principles of the CRPD, especially the non-discrimination and political participation. The Election Act 2017 is an important legal change, as it will provide facilitation tools to voters with disabilities, such as assistance within a polling station or elimination of procedural barriers, which will broaden formal political rights in Article 29 of the CRPD (Perbawa, Aidonojie, & Ajah, [2025](#))

Federal employment reforms are also signs of partial legal advancement. The persistence and regular updating of the employment quota system on persons with disabilities, between 2% across provinces, are indicators of economic inclusion as a right issue and not a welfare concession. According to the official data provided by the Establishment Division, the federal government reported more quota compliance between 2018 and [2022](#), but compliance levels vary across ministries (Division, 2022). Capability-wise, such legal recognition is an extension of the opportunity space, although its physical translation into stable employment is still limited by institutional flaws.

At the provincial levels, the pace of legislation increased with the process of devolution by the eighteenth Constitutional Amendment. In 2017 and 2018, Balochistan and Sindh passed disability-specific laws that changed the definition of disability to correspond with the social/human rights model, anti-discrimination provisions, accessibility, inclusion provisions, and created institutional oversight institutions such as provincial councils and authorities (Sindh, [2018](#)). Punjab then enacted a rights-based law in 2022 that was comprehensive. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa failed to introduce a CRPD-harmonized comprehensive act within this time frame and used modified pre-devolution employment-oriented laws. The laws adopted in Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab are therefore steps of quantifiable domestic legal alignment with the rights-based language of CRPD, especially in areas of accessibility, non-discrimination, and inclusion (Balochistan, [2017](#); Punjab, 2022). It includes components in line with the CRPD, such as a wider definition of disability, and non-discrimination. It also established accessibility standards that are mandatory, and a Provincial Council of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This overall act is complementary to CRPD principles, in that it has rights-based provisions related to inclusion, anti-discrimination, accessibility, empowerment of women and children with disabilities, and integration of oversight mechanisms.

Federal Disability Laws: Scope and Limits

The Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981 was the initial legislative framework on disability at the federal level. The ordinance emphasized the rehabilitation and employment quotas which defined disability as a welfare issue and not a right issue. It failed to cover non-discrimination, accessibility and reasonable accommodation and did not cover its ability to provide systemic exclusion (Council, [2018-2019](#)). The ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020 represented a tremendous normative change since its post-CRPD ratification. The Act also includes non-discrimination, accessibility requirements, reasonable accommodation, and improved employment quotas (Pakistancode, [2020](#)). Nonetheless, it is only applicable to the Capital Territory of Islamabad. Federal institutions that do not lie in ICT, are not equally bound, so that legal protection is not evenly distributed throughout the federation. This territorial constraint undermines the federal legal system because it does not allow the even application of CRPD-recognized rights.

Post- devolution provincial Disability Legislation

After the 18th Constitutional Amendment, provinces made their disability laws. Sindh & Punjab embraced relatively wider laws that included CRDP text whereas Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan endured limited laws. Although the scope differs, there are similar weaknesses in provincial laws. Independent legal authorities identify that there are only advisory bodies, lack of binding sanctions and constrained authority to enforce provincial laws (Foundation, 2021). Audit results also indicate that the statutory quotas on employment, and accessibility requirements are habitually disregarded without any administrative repercussions. The outcome is the legal pluralism devoid of harmonization, which creates unequal rights protection because of the geographic location but not equally across the board.

Policy-Level Advancements toward Inclusion

In addition to legislation, there are policy-level efforts between the period 2015 and 2024, which show gradual mainstreaming of disability in the national development discourses. The adoption of disability-focused objectives in national development models and social security programs are indication of a modification in disseminated welfare programme to composite policy planning. The disability-sensitive elements are also integrated in the programs like Ehsaas and the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), and include features such as targeted cash transfer and priority access, which are projected to cover 250.760 Million financial aid to the individuals with disabilities by 2023 (BISP, 2023).

Disability policies were also introduced by provincial governments in order to promote inclusive education, vocational training, and rehabilitation. Inclusive Education Policy of Punjab and the Disability Action Plan of Sindh placed greater emphasis on school enrollment, teacher sensitization and curriculum modification, leading to a visible growth in the admission of children with disabilities in the primary level between 2016 and 2025 (SPRC, Social protection, equity, health protection, Inclusion, rights protection, 2025). Such efforts represent an illustration of a policy-level recognition of education as a core competency in Article 24 of the CRPD, even though there are still gaps in quality and retention rates.

An interesting policy shift that occurred in the process is the repositioning of disability as a development issue and a rights issue instead of a charitable issue. The policy documents are more and more written in the rights-based language, with references to the accessibility, autonomy, and participation. The analytical implication of this discursive shift is that it represents a shifting intent of the state to expand substantive freedoms. However, the policy ambition has often been beyond the ability of implementation, and this shows disconnect between official adoption of policies and institutional readiness to meet results at scale (UNDP, 2023).

Persistent Legal and Policy Gaps

In spite of these developments, substantive inclusion is still compromised by a lot of gaps in the law and policy. A number of federal statutes that govern persons with disabilities are still not up-to-date or have not been harmonized fully on CRPD standards, especially in the field of legal capacity, reasonable accommodation, and enforcement. The Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance 1981, still used in administrative practice, is based on a medical and welfare-focused approach, which is inconsistent with the social model of disability in the CRPD (Rehman & Qureshi, 2023; ILO, 2019). The overlap of such laws with more recent rights-based laws create normative contradiction and undermines the clarity of the law.

Enforcement mechanisms create a significant gap both at the federal and provincial levels. The majority of disability legislation does not specify sanction regimes in the case of non-compliance, and thus offers few incentives to encourage both government and non-governmental entities to adopt accessibility requirements or employment quotas. The evaluation of 316 public buildings conducted by CIP, including hospitals, Nadra registration centers, and social welfare offices located in 19 districts, demonstrated that

these buildings did not meet even minimum accessibility standards, that were stipulated in the Accessibility Code. And also there were wide disparities between urban and rural regions (Yasin, [2025](#)). State-capacity wise, this is a sign of poor administrative enforcement and regulatory oversight and not the lack of lawful authority.

Policy gaps more aggravated by provincial variation. Although the legislative and policy activity is relatively higher in Punjab and Sindh, implementation results in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan continue to be limited by financial resources, administrative capacity and geographic factors. There is one piece of legislation that deals directly with the needs of persons with disabilities is , the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance 1981. Under this ordinance, employers who have a workforce of one hundred or above, are obliged to have a minimum 2% of total number of employees to be persons with disabilities or pay a levy. Unfortunately, this law has been poorly monitored and enforced. It restricts the legal rights of PWD's (Council, 2018-2019). These imbalances have suggested that without corresponding capacity-building, decentralization has created disproportional fulfilment of CRPD promises.

In general, the legal and policy environment between 2015 and 2024 could be characterized as a trend of formal development with substantive failures. There has been an increase in entitlement and recognition through laws and policies but there are still ongoing gaps in harmonization, enforcement and inter-provincial consistency which limit real freedom of persons with disabilities. The relationship between normative ambition and constrained state capacity has remained the key in explaining why legal progress has not worked into commensurate inclusion outcomes.

Institutional Performance: Progress Achieved and Governance Failures:

Institutional Progress in Disability Governance

From 2015 to 2024, there was a measurable institutional growth in the disability governance in Pakistan, which can be seen as a partial advancement of the realization of its commitments in Article 31 and 33 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). At a federal level, a centralized coordinating mechanism was gradually established to enact disability-related reporting. It submitted CRPD State Party Report in Pakistan, to take part in the international review mechanisms. This centralized institutional form was markedly different from disseminated welfare administration, where disability issues were decentralized to divergent social welfare departments. The process of transition to a narrow, rights-based approach in the federal bureaucracy, aims to better transform legal entitlement into the actionable services (SPRC S. P., 2021).

Provincial governments deepened their concern for the recognition of disability rights by establishing special directorates, councils, and special education departments. Punjab and Sindh improved the disability management information systems and disability certification process, with more people with disabilities able to benefit from social protection schemes and public services. DPMIS has been able to record more than 100,000 registered users. DPMIS is developed by Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and the Punjab Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal Department in order to improve the living conditions of the disabled people through equal employment and other ancillary services. The system was implemented in 36 districts of Punjab and the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were allowed to apply online to book medical appointments, and get Certificate of Disability (Punjab Social welfare, Bait-Ul-Maal Department, [2023](#)). These changes increased formal access to entitlements which is a crucial step in increasing individual capabilities.

Sectoral ministries; education, health and labor have become more involved. They are introducing disability considerations in their policy mandates, particularly through the inclusive education units and vocational training authorities. At regional level, the four provinces have passed similar laws on disability. It is noteworthy that both the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018 and the

Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 actively enforce non-discrimination in education as a key goal and outline policy provisions to help attain this goal. Parallel to this, the Punjab provincial government has introduced a program known as the Punjab Inclusive Education Program which is being rolled out in 2 districts with an aim of incorporating children with disabilities into the mainstream schools. These adjustments indicate that inclusion of disability is now a matter that demands cross-sector cooperation rather than aid from social welfare departments (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (Pakistan), 2020). While these structural changes won't lead to better outcomes, but they create the institutional frameworks to implement CRPD commitments.

Institutional Gaps and Governance Constraints

In spite of these institutional improvements, the governance failures still play a significant role in limiting the conversion of the policies into a real result. The most long-standing issue is divided power due to the post-devolution governance structure. Although institutions are the main implementers at the provincial level, the federal controls are rather weak, which results in the unequal standards, overlapping of powers and even inadequate accountability among the jurisdictions. The forums of intra governmental coordination of disability rights have infrequent meeting schedule, so has no binding decision-making authority, which weakens the consistency of national implementation (HI Team, 2022).

Another important institutional gap relates to the lack of an independent monitoring framework as viewed in Article 33(2) of the CRPD. Pakistan has failed to institutionalize a complete autonomous agency that has investigative and enforcement capabilities to check adherence across sectors. Status quo committees and advisory boards perform more of advisory roles rather than executive powers to implement corrective actions and sanctions. In August 2019, a group of visually impaired people summoned a meeting in the city of Lahore and demanded that the government fulfil its promise to regularize the employment of disabled persons. This institutional gap undermines accountability and restricts systematic control over the progress, especially concerning the areas of compliance with accessibility and employment quotas (PMHA & HRCP, 2023).

Governance weaknesses are also worsened by capacity limitations. The budgetary allocations on disability-related institutions are still skewed low in comparison to the mandate scope. budgetary reports of Pakistan from 2012 to 2018 increased from 0.00 percent to 0.01 percent. This indicate that disability-centered departments tend to have little development funding, which limits their potential to make inspections, provide services, and gather credible data (ADB A. D., 2021). The understaffing and limited technical capability restraints efficient policy execution, which strengthens the disconnection between formal institutional presence and their actual performance.

Role of Civil Society and Disabled Persons' Organizations: Filling the Institutional Gap

The absence of an effective state capacity has resulted in the compensatory role of the civil society organizations and Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) in the disability governance system of Pakistan. Between 2015 and 2024, the work of DPOs is active in advocacy, awareness building, policy consultations, and delivery of the services, and has a special focus on underserved areas. Organizations, like NOWPDP, AWAAM, and DRAG helped in employment placement, skill development and employer sensitization, which allow access to the labor markets outside the initiatives of states. In 2019, the "National Organization for Welfare of Persons with Disabilities" (NOWPDP, 2021), opened the "NOWPDP Training Center" (NTC) with the aim of providing persons with disabilities with marketable skills, which would enable them to secure a job opportunity. The "NOWPDP Training Centers" have branches in different areas of Pakistan like Karachi, Islamabad, Sujawal, etc. The organization provides 23 different vocational training services to individuals with disabilities such as graphic design, computer operations, reception, mobile repair, and web development (NOWPDP, 2021).

On the other hand "The Association of Women for Awareness and Motivation"(AWAM, [2024](#)) conducted a 12 month program in Islamabad, Lahore, and several Punjab districts, called "Monitoring Implementation of Disability Rights Legal Framework". This initiative focused on the implementation of disability-related laws. One of the key successes of this program was the formation and mobilization of Disability Rights Advocacy Groups (DRAGs) at the district level, that have been central in influencing policymakers (AWAM, 2024). DPOs have also played a leading role in promoting participatory principles within the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) particularly in Article 4(3) that expresses the need to consult with the people with disabilities during decision making. The participation of policy consultations shows that provincial governments have more openly invited DPO representatives to legislative drafting and review, especially in the Punjab and Sindh (CBM, [2022](#); DEPD, [2025](#)). This participation has increased representational legitimacy and has made sure that the policy discourse is based on lived experiences and not only administrative interests.

However, there is structural exclusion. DPOs tend to participate informally, in projects, or by donor initiative, as opposed to being institutionalized into governance systems. Reliance on external financing limits and restricts sustainability and reduces the ability of DPOs to participate in a regular manner at national, provincial, levels. Moreover, the process of representation often becomes centralized to organizations located in urban areas, leaving out the rural and people with multiple or serious disabilities (AT2030, [2025](#)). These restrictions reveal that although, to some extent, civil society can reduce institutional gaps, non-state actors cannot substitute effective capacity of the public sector.

In a nutshell, institutional performance in 2015-2024 shows a mixed trend. Formal governance capacity has increased because administrative structures and recognition mechanisms have grown. Nonetheless, the lack of unity in authorities, poor oversight, financial limitations and excessive reliance on civil society, demonstrate structural flaws. The disproportion of institutional form and functional effectiveness remains to characterize unequal inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Sectoral Outcomes: Evidence of Inclusion and Exclusion (2015–2024):

Education: Expanding Access but Limited Inclusion

From 2015-2024, Education access increased for the children with disabilities and especially for the primary school-going children in Pakistan. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is the most comprehensive disability database in the country. According to the ASER, over 20 percent of all schools have children with disabilities. In addition, children with disabilities are enrolled in 22.2 percent and 16.6 percent of surveyed governmental and private schools respectively. Moreover, 2.1 percent of government schools and 2 percent of private schools have ramps regardless of the presence of students with disabilities. And 3.9 percent of governmental surveyed schools and 7 percent of the private schools have disability-friendly toilet (UNICEF, [2021](#)). This growth was quantitative due to provincial initiatives such as inclusive education units and special education reforms, particularly in Punjab and Sindh where special education came into a special budget line.

Nevertheless, enrolment numbers cover more inclusion shortfalls. The probability of disabled students is more than twice than students without disabilities to be out of school. Furthermore, among the disabled group, female members are more likely to be out of school than their male counterparts, as, 71.5 percent female are out of school as compared to 67.6 percent of male (Bashir & Ahsan, [2023](#)). Ability wise, the access that lacks meaningful engagement limits the formation of central functioning, like; literacy, socialization, and independence. Teacher training is insufficient, 809 primary school teachers (PSTs) were sampled in 809 public schools, and it was found that less than ten percent of teachers exhibit effective instructional practices (education, [2020](#)). Poor infrastructure also limits inclusion, public schools do not have basic accessibility, especially in the rural districts (Ministry of planning, [2023](#)).

Employment and Economic Participation.

Employment is a significant indicator of substantive inclusion under Article 27 of the UN CRPD; but the results over the study period indicate structural exclusion remains a persistent problem. 2022 estimate of the World Bank highlights the fact that 71 percent of people with disabilities in Pakistan are unemployed. On the other hand, in November 2017 and November 2023, persons with disabilities protested in Karachi, against the failure of the government to implement the statutory job quota (Kunbhar, 2023). Quotas related to employment in the public sector offered a small avenue of inclusion, as the compliance continued to increase slightly in the federal ministries, but inconsistent at provincial and local levels.

The number of vocational training programs increased, especially in terms of public-private collaboration and donor-based programs. According to NAVTTC, more than 40,000 individuals with disabilities were enrolled in skills development programmes in 2018 to 2022 (NAVTTC, 2025). Nevertheless, this development did not significantly shift from training to stable work because of the lack of incentives to employers, unreachable work places, and lack of proper accommodation systems. The labor market inclusion gap was significant, Pakistan has a negative pay gap between PWD's and average person (Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024). These trends show that formal opportunities have failed to manifest into long-lasting economic capabilities.

Accessibility and Mobility

The accessibility outcomes observed in the period between 2015 and 2024 are selective in nature and are accompanied by the lack of enforcement. In Islamabad and Lahore, the limited accessibility improvements were introduced to the public transport systems, such as the ramps and the specially assigned seats (Anwar, 2024). There was also an improvement in digital accessibility through e-governance platforms and online public services, thus increasing the access to information to a limited number of users.

However, compliance was limited in reality. According to field tests by development partners, the accessibility of government organizations to persons with disabilities is only 31 percent. About two-thirds of state agencies are not accessible to such individuals due to lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure. Government-constructed buildings did not have accessible ramps, tactile signs, or accessible toilets (Baig, Ajmal, & Khan, 2025). The enforcement agencies lacked both inspection authority and technical expertise, which resulted in a symbolic accessibility as opposed to substantive accessibility. Mobility reforms were practically non-existent in rural areas, thus increasing geographic inequities. The lack of mobility, limited the access to education, work and politics hence a direct limit to essential capacities despite official regulatory improvements.

Politics and Social Participation

The results of political participation shed light on the legal progress and substantive exclusion. The Election Act 2017 also brought about some facilitative provisions to the voters with disabilities, and the Election Commission of Pakistan noted that there were gradual changes in the registration of voters with disabilities carried out between 2018 and 2024 (ECP E. C., 2023). Election help and awareness campaigns increased disability inclusion in elections. Still, the involvement was structurally limited.

A small percentage of polling stations were physically available and ballot secrecy of voters in need of assistance was systematically undermined (ECP, 2024). The political participation of persons with disabilities was still minimal, and there were no formal systems of political inclusion other than facilitation of voters. The stigma, gender norm and cross-cutting disadvantages also limited social participation. According to the surveys, women with disabilities faced additional exclusion in community life, education, and employment, thus, expressing intersectional deprivation of capabilities (ECP, 2024).

In general, the sectoral results in the period of 2015-2024 show a similar trend: the formal inclusion grew, but the substantive participation remained lower. The most common restrictions to the realization of

capability in education, employment, accessibility and political life were access without accommodation, rights without enforcement and policies without institutional capacity. All these sectoral gaps support the finding that disability inclusion progress has existed in fact but has been inadequate, lopsided and largely dependent on the geographical area, type of impairment and institutional vigor.

Evaluating Compliance with UN CRPD Standards (2015–2024):

Article-Based Compliance Assessment

Education (Article 24)

Article 24 of the UNCRPD obliges States Parties to provide comprehensive and inclusive systems of education on all levels with a special focus on reasonable accommodation, personalized support, and effective participation. The compliance level of Pakistan in the period 2015-2024 shows partial consistency in normative level, but there is a little compliance in practice. Inclusive education was also increasingly mentioned in national systems of education, and provincial governments released statements to promote mainstreaming of children with disabilities. Nevertheless, outcome-related compliance indicators, including retention, learning outcomes, and post-secondary education enrollment, are still weak. According to UNICEF, the proportion of children with disabilities who attend primary education and enroll in the lower secondary school is less than 10%, which indicates barriers to accessing education at the system level (UNICEF, 2021). This gap implies limited translation of educational resources into long term acquisition of learning abilities.

Employment (Article 27)

Article 27 commits States to ensure increased access to employment in open, inclusive and accessible labor markets. The legal support of employment quotas and vocational schemes is evidence of formal compliance in Pakistan, but labor market performance demonstrates that standards of CRPD non-conformance remain high. The ILO reports that in Pakistan there is no elaborate policy on reasonable accommodation in the workplace, constraining the possibility of retention and promotion even in the case of hiring (Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024). Disability participation is dominated in informal employment that lacks social protection and labor rights, which compromises economic security as a functioning. The compliance is therefore not substantive but procedural and institutional enforcement lacuna undermine the actualization of employment related capabilities.

Accessibility (Article 9)

Article 9 stipulates that States need to find and remove accessibility obstacles in the physical environment, transport and communications as well as information. During this time period Pakistan embraced building codes and ICT policies with standards of accessibility, which is a sign of regulatory advancement. Nonetheless, national evaluations note that the enforcement procedures are not highly active, and there are few sanctions to non-compliance, and insufficient resources to conduct inspection (Khan, 2025). The resultant accessibility situation is lopsided and urban accentuated and limits independent mobility and access to services to the majority of persons with disabilities. In terms of ability, restricted mobility clearly restricts the engagement of all spheres of life.

Participation in Political and Public Life (Article 29)

Article 29 stipulates the inclusion of good involvement in political affairs, such as the right to vote and to be elected. Pakistan has added the provision of facilitative voting and awareness campaigns which is a partial compliance of the procedures. However, reports of election observation reported the presence of existing barriers, such as, inaccessible polling stations, unavailable information formats, and political representation of persons with disabilities (PMHA & HRCP, 2023). The political engagement was still very

symbolic and only a few opportunities were available to shape the decision-making processes. Political agency as a substantive freedom was curtailed by the lack of the representation mechanisms.

Formal Compliance vs. Substantive Inclusion

The difference between law and lived realities exposes and reveals a gap of perpetual compliance. Reforms to embrace CRPD-based provisions have increased rights on paper, but the transformation of these rights into actual realities is limited by the weakness of institutional implementation. National surveillance systems focus on reporting and not corrective response, and stress more on procedures than results. Comparative governance studies show that Pakistan has lower scores regarding disability policy implementation than lower-middle-income countries, especially when it comes to the areas of enforcement and accountability (NIPA, 2025). Such imbalance portrays the limited state ability to operationalize rights in decentralizing system of governance.

Substantive inclusion requires long-term investment in conversion factors like the availability of infrastructure, skilled workers and receptive institution that allow individuals to convert the formal rights into real opportunities. Pakistan during 2015 -2024 prove that, even legal reform without institutional coherence and enforcement capacity cannot bring expansion to the capabilities. Symbolic compliance was coexistent with continued exclusion of women, rural people and those who were severely or multi-handicapped.

Cross-Cutting Gaps

A number of cross-cutting gaps also restricted CRPD compliance. Information gaps were still high, and there was no government-wide database on disability that was disaggregated by gender, age, type of impairment, and geography. The lack of trustworthy data, limited the evidence-based policymaking, and distorted disparate effects among groups of the population (CBM; UNFPA, 2022). The monitoring systems were based on outputs instead of outcomes and undermined accountability in terms of failure in inclusion.

Intersectionality and gender increased exclusion. The national gender status assessments indicated that the women with disabilities had considerably lower access to education, employment, and health services than their male counterparts with disabilities, which is a cumulative disadvantage that is not effectively considered in policy frameworks (ADB, 2019). Regional inequalities were also present, so remote and conflict-ridden regions had the lowest adherence to the standards of accessibility and service delivery.

In general, the level of compliance of Pakistan with the standards of UN CRPD from 2015 2024 can be defined as normatively consistent, but substantively limited. The development of the policy and legal recognition did not enhance the real freedoms, which indicated imposed constraints in the institutional capacity, enforcement, and inclusive government.

Conclusion

The current paper discussed the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by Pakistan during 2015-2024 using an integrated approach that incorporates the Capability analysis and State Capacity analysis. The results show that Pakistan has made a quantifiable effort to harmonize its legal and policy frameworks with the CRPD provisions; such alignment is demonstrated by the increase in the scope of rights-based laws, the official acknowledgment of the disability category in sector-specific policies, and the increased institutional awareness of the disability issues. These changes mark a shift in welfare-based paradigms to a normative inclusion model. However, this development seems to have been largely procedural and not substantive as increased legal recognition has not always been associated with greater educational, economic, political, or social empowerment of persons with disabilities. The continued substantive gaps in implementation are closely linked with the lack of institutional capacity, divided governance due to decentralization, poor enforcement mechanisms, and a

weak monitoring and data collection systems. Sectoral development in education, employment, access, and political participation has been slow albeit structurally limited, generating uneven inclusion outcomes not only within the geographical area, but also within social groups. These remarks indicate that the implementation of CRPD in Pakistan within the reviewed period has been more of a symbolic adherence than a transformative actualization of the commitments. An understanding of substantive inclusion will require the strategic repositioning of disability governance in terms of outcome-based implementation, more effective coordination between institutions and participatory, data-driven policymaking that prefigures the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

- A greater focus on outcome-based governance structures will probably positively contribute to the realization of CRPD-consistent legislation into meaningful freedoms of persons with disabilities.
- Coherence, monitoring and accountability in federal and provincial disability governance mechanisms can be enhanced by the creation of a centralized coordination mechanism.
- Systematic alignments of provincial disability laws with CRPD standards are likely to decrease the inequity in implementation and delivery of services to various regions.
- Strengthening institutional ability through professional training, special resources, and performance standards can potentially augment enforcement effectiveness in ministries and departments of disability.
- Rebalancing of inclusive educational practices in favour of retention, learning outcomes, and transition pathways is expected to extend educational inclusion beyond just enrolment figures.
- Quota systems could be enhanced by a wider use of accommodation-based and incentive-based employment measures that encourage effective labour market participation.
- By integrating the accessibility demands into the urban planning, the public procurement, and digital governance procedures, there is a possibility to reinforce compliance and expand the cross-sector involvement.
- Building a more detailed, disaggregated system of disability data may enable evidence-based policymaking, tracking and transparent reporting.
- Perhaps making participatory institutional mechanisms, and including persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in these institutional mechanisms can help increase relevance of policy and democratic legitimacy.
- Intersectional use of the disability policy can help to deal with the compounded exclusion in gender, region, and socioeconomic status.

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