

Disability: Stigmatisation.

NID Training Disability Diary

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Introduction

Stigma is generally described as the mark of shame and humiliation that is linked to a certain illness, situation, or feature. The community usually treats stigmatised people differently, often marginalising, neglecting,

abusing and exploiting them, making them feel ashamed of who they are.

Stigmatisation is usually based on stereotyping of individuals, and is often the result of fear of those who are 'different'. Even in our 'enlightened' age, people with disabilities (PWD) in some countries are stigmatised. The stigma is often the result of cultural or religious beliefs that PWD are bewitched, or that their families are being punished for sins of past generations. Negative attitudes are often the result of a lack of information and lack of understanding.

Discussion

In South Africa there are laws that are meant to protect the rights of PWD, and yet there are reports that they cannot move freely in society, and have difficulty being accepted into education institutions and finding employment. Employers seem to feel socially and intellectually distanced from PWD, who might be qualified and skilled to perform their work. One reason could be that a lack of information and understanding creates stereotypes, and inadequate confidence when dealing with PWD (Engelbrecht, Shaw, Van Niekerk, 2017).

The effects of negative attitudes and behaviour towards children and adults with disabilities can be far-reaching, leading to low self-esteem and reduced participation. When PWD feel harassed or even bullied because of their disability tend to change their routines, not leaving their homes, or even moving to new places. Women with disabilities face disadvantages because of their gender and disability, and those who have mental health conditions or intellectual impairments are regarded with suspicion and even fear, even in health care facilities (McKinney & Amosun, 2020).

It must be remembered that PWD are individuals. Each one has his or her own gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, ethnicity, and cultural heritage. In addition, not all PWD are equally disabled or disadvantaged. PWD experience wellness, participate in physical fitness and recreational activities like sport, dancing, cooking, among many others (McKinney & Amosun, 2020). All deserve dignity and respect, and a chance to participate in society.

Conclusion

Knowledge and attitudes are important and affect all areas of life. By raising awareness about disability, challenging undesirable attitudes, and educating the public, environments can be improved for PWD, and stigmatisation can be reduced, if not eliminated.

References

- Engelbrecht, M., Shaw, L. & Van Niekerk, L. (2017). A literature review on work transitioning of youth with disabilities into competitive employment. *African Journal of Disability* 6(0): a298. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v6i0.298>
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