

Chapter 101

Attitudes of Society Towards People With Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Problems and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

Social acceptance and inclusion of people with neuro-developmental disorders is challenging. Though each human being is unique, the world population can be segregated into two groups: neuro-typical and neuro-diverse people who have conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, ADHD, and several others. The neuro-typical population claims to be accepting of the neuro-diverse population, but some case studies show that it may sadly not be true. Life can be bewildering and confusing for a person with disabilities. Dealing with so many aspects can be daunting and frustrating for them and their families. Social attitude is a significant factor as the Pwd navigates the harsh world of discrimination and social abandonment and faces barriers where support, guidance, and services are required. Many go through painful journeys and come out stronger and wiser, but bitter as well. Others have had better support. This chapter is a collection of experiences of some Pwd and their families and a list of solutions to the different challenges they encounter.

INTRODUCTION

The census of 2011 states that around 2.68 cr people in India have one or another kind of disability, which is roughly around 2.21% of the population. Being a developing country, there is not much available in terms of services for diagnosis, treatment, care, education or rehabilitation for Pwds. According to a report, the country needs around 13,000 psychiatrists to achieve a ratio of 1: 8000 to 10,000 psychiatrist patient ratio. However, currently, the figure is 3,500 which puts the ratio at 1 psychiatrist per 2 lakh people. Similarly, for clinical psychologists, the need is 20,000, but only 1000 psychologists

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are available. Psychiatric Social Workers are only 900 where the requirement is 35000, and Psychiatric nurses are only 1500, where the need is 30,000. In all, the mental health workforce in India stands at around 7000 where the need is for 55,000 professionals (Adjorlu, Høeg, Mangano, & Serafin, 2017). The attitudes of the general public in India towards those with disability range from apathy, ignorance, pity and sympathy, to charity and benevolence. However, there is a huge lacking in the spirit of equality and inclusivity in its true sense. The Pwd Act 2016 does help to bring about some justice with regards to education opportunities and employment, but this is just a small beginning towards bridging the gap between the neuro-diverse population and the neuro-typicals (Bone et al., 2016). At the end, the disability rights activists still have to scream to be heard..... They are just demanding what is rightfully theirs, and are not mere recipients of doles and charity. As is rightly said by the WHO, 'Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society, in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers'.

BACKGROUND

An attitude can be defined as an internal affective orientation that explains the actions of a person. Attitudes have many components namely: cognitive (consciously held belief or opinion); affective (emotional tone or feeling), evaluative (positive or negative); and conative (disposition for action). Neuro developmental disorders are a group of conditions with onset in the development period. The disorders typically manifest early in development, often before the child enters grade school and are characterized by developmental deficits that produce impairments of personal, social, academic, or occupational functioning (Bosl, Tierney, Tager-Flusberg, & Nelson, 2011). The range of developmental deficits varies from very specific limitations of learning or control of executive functions to global impairments of social skills or intelligence. The neurodevelopmental disorders frequently co-occur; for example, individual with autism spectrum disorder often have intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder), and many children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) also have a specific learning disorder.

Bringing up children with Neuro Developmental Disorders in India (Ali & Bhaskar, 2016) is an extremely challenging task. It is definitely an uphill task, especially for parents, it is so because the Indian society lacks a positive approach towards individuals with disability. People with NDD are viewed as abnormal and labeled as insane by their colleagues and peers. Although not everyone in society has a biased perception of them, many people have covert sympathy and kind-hearted approach towards people with NDD. Some people develop fear for such people as they had no prior exposure towards such people & they simply do not fit with the view they have of people they would like to interact with socially. Children with NDD are very prone to bullying and fighting by their classmates and this becomes a routine part of their childhood for they appear odd among others in level of intelligence & social skills.

Schools and other institutions plainly refuse to accept them as they don't want to take the responsibility of the people who are not likely to get well anytime soon and they see them as a disturbance (Chaddad, Desrosiers, Hassan, & Tanougast, 2017) to their school and the educational environment for other children. Another reason is that most schools lack the necessary infrastructure such as ramps and toilets, as well as training, knowledge, awareness or resources to adopt inclusivity. Most schools do not employ special educators. Also instances have been seen where a child with NDD is not able to adjust

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