

Mental Health Inequalities and Social Discrimination

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Foundations of Mental Health Inequality

[Inequalities in mental health](#) refer to the variations in the quality of psychological health and mental care for various individuals and populations. Medics and psychologists define mental health as the well-being as well as the absence of clinically defined and diagnosed mental illness. Individual and group differences in mental health conditions and care are influenced by both social and economic conditions. On the topic of mental [health inequalities](#), deviance and discrimination keep resurfacing. Therefore, This essay will focus on deviance and discrimination and expound on the Equality Act and its roles.

Deviance, Labeling, and Mental Illness

Regarding sociology, deviance is termed as behavior or action that violates and goes against the social norms, including formally formulated rules such as crime, and the informal violations of social practices such as rejection of mores and folkways. In the purview of psychiatrists, criminologists, sociologists, and psychologists, they should study how such norms are formed, how they change over time, and how they are enforced. Norms refer to the rules and expectations that conventionally guide society's members. When we talk of deviance, this relates only to the absence and lack of conformity to these expectations. Social norms vary from one culture to the other. For instance, an act seen as usual in one community could be seen as a deviation from the social standards in another society (Crossman, 2017)

According to medics, one of the approaches put forward terms mental illness as a form of deviant character or behavior. Another approach claims that on basic premises, mental diseases are diseases or pathology in the psychiatric or psychological sense and are not pertinent to the conformity deviance theory put forward which only accounts for the interactions taking place in a social system. In sociology and mental health, another issue is psychological amplification. This is explained as the unintended outcome or result of the social policies or moral panics that are formed with the aim of preventing or reducing deviance and deviant character. Deviancy amplification spiral or the amplification of deviance is an exaggerated cycle of reporting on a specified antisocial character (Crossman, 2017).

Mental health and deviance often go together. While it is true that not all deviants are regarded to be mentally sick, most mentally ill individuals are always considered to be deviant because mental

sickness is not recognized as usual. Therefore, for sociologists to study deviance, they need to study mental illness and health. The three primary theoretical sociological frameworks often regard psychological sickness differently. However, they all take into consideration the social systems in which there are the definition, identification, and treatment of mental illness. It is believed by functionalists that through the recognition of mental illness, a community encourages values in the confirmation of the behavior. According to symbolic interactions, the mentally sick individuals are not ill but are victims of the public reactions and perspectives to their response (Crossman, 2017).

Social Class, Race, Gender, and Unequal Diagnosis

Ultimately, labeling theorists together with conflict theorists claim that the individuals in a community with the least resources have the highest potential to be labeled as mentally unstable. Racial minorities, women, and the poor, for example, suffer high rates of psychological illness as compared to groups with higher economic and social status. Additionally, studies have persistently indicated that middle, as well as upper-class individuals, have higher chances of receiving some psychotherapy for their psychological disorders. Unfortunate individuals and minorities have higher chances of only obtaining physical rehabilitation and medication instead of psychotherapy. There are two possible descriptions put forward by sociologists for the relationship between mental disorders and social status.

One of the explanations states that it is the stress associated with being in a racial minority, being in a low-income category, or being a female in a sexist community that leads to higher chances of developing mental disorders since the harsher social surroundings endanger mental health. Consequently, some sociologists argue that a similar character which is branded as mentally sick for some populations can be tolerated in other communities and so therefore not referred to as such. For example, in an instance where a homeless woman exhibits a crazy and deranged character, society is likely to consider her mentally sick while if a wealthy woman displays similar behavior, she is expected to be seen as merely charming or eccentric. According to studies, women are also at higher risk of mental disorders in comparison to men. Sociologists believe that this results from the duties that women are compelled to take part in the community. Unhappy marriages, poverty, stress in bringing up children, both physical and sexual harassment as well as taking a lot of time doing house chores all result in higher chances of mental sickness in women (Foundation, 2017).

Discrimination and Discrimination by Association

Discrimination is another aspect of mental health. Individuals suffering from mental health concerns claim that their difficulties get worse and eventual recovery is more laborious and challenging due to the social stigma linked to mental disorders as well as the discrimination they face. Mental disorders are common. It is estimated that about one in ten children suffers from mental health challenges. Various forms of discrimination mentally challenged people face. One of the ways of discrimination is

direct discrimination. This is a situation in which a person is treated worse than any other individual due to their disabilities. One has to indicate that there exists a relationship between their limitations and the way in which they have been treated, and this can be challenging. However, one does not always have to provide an example of a specific non-disabled individual who has been treated better than them in instances where it is clear from the situation that their disabilities were the reasons why they were treated as they were (Illness, 2017).

Another form of discrimination is by association. In this type of discrimination, a person is treated worse due to their connections or relationships with individuals suffering from disabilities, even though they are not disabled themselves. Mentally ill people can also be discriminated against by perception. This occurs in instances where a person is treated poorly because people, the community, or an organization think you are disabled while, on the contrary, you are not. There is also discrimination as a result of disability. In this form of discrimination, a person is treated worse as a result of something that occurs due to their disabilities rather than because of their limitations. In such instances, unlike indirect discrimination, one does not have to compare themselves with others. There is also indirect discrimination where an individual or organization has arrangements or practices which appear to treat each person equally and in a non-discriminatory manner. However, such mechanisms or methods may put the disabled in a disadvantaged situation as compared to those who do not share their disabilities. In instances of indirect discrimination, the awareness of your disability to the people or the organization does not matter. This is because they are required to have made prior considerations of the disabled or mentally ill people in planning their practices or arrangements. However, it is not indirect discrimination when the person or the organization can justify their mechanisms or methods (Foundation, 2017).

Harassment, Victimization, and Social Protection

Mentally ill people also face harassment. This is unwanted behavior that tends to violate a person's dignity or leads to an environment that is degrading, intimidating, humiliating, or offensive and which is aimed at the individual just because of their disabilities. The mentally ill are also victimized. This is a situation where the community, employer, or organization puts a sick mental person at risk or disadvantage after merely trying or making allegations of discrimination or after offering support to an individual who has made discrimination allegations (Foundation, 2017).

Upon realizing how vulnerable mentally ill people are in society due to their disabilities, there was the formulation of the Equality Act. The primary objective of the act is to safeguard the well-being of mentally ill people, prevent discrimination and harassment, and ensure they are equally treated. It prevents the unfair treatment of the disabled as well as the mentally challenged. The act also offers explanations of what a disability is. If an individual matches the description, they stand a chance to be protected from harassment, discrimination, and victimization. According to the act, one has the right to have changes made in their job by their employers due to their disabilities. Such changes are termed reasonable adjustments. The policy also protects the disabled and the mentally ill from

discrimination in the career fields. It safeguards them when applying for various jobs. It also protects them when using services, including a person trying to acquire education, obtain housing, or any other form of assistance. The mentally ill are also protected by the act in their careers where they are likely to be victimized or discriminated against (Illness, 2017).

From the precedent, it is clear that most of the inequalities that mentally ill people face are a result of discrimination, harassment, and victimization. Such acts can be prevented by offering equal chances to such people and taking into consideration their disabilities when making plans and arrangements and participating in various practices. By abiding by the Equality Act, individuals, employers, the community, and organizations can come up with measures that account for the mentally ill.

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