

# Psychological Issues of Disabilities and Existing Treatments

Weiying Wang

Shanghai Pinghe School, Shanghai, China

Wangweiying22@shphschool.com

**Abstract.** This study comprehensively examines and synthesizes the latest research findings on the mental well-being of individuals with disabilities. It delves into the psychological intricacies exhibited by this demographic, explores the factors that shape their mental health, and identifies the underlying causes that contribute to their unique challenges. Furthermore, this research goes beyond merely summarizing existing knowledge; it critically assesses the prevailing psychological treatment modalities available for individuals with disabilities. By comparing and contrasting these approaches, it sheds light on their limitations and provides valuable insights into how they can be improved. In addition to these insights, this study offers practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the overall mental health support for people with disabilities. By addressing the gaps in current treatments and highlighting areas for improvement, it aims to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for this underserved population.

**Keywords:** Psychology, treatment, disabilities.

## 1. Introduction

This study aims to expand upon this critical issue by exploring the psychological challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and the available therapeutic interventions. Despite ongoing developments in the provision of mental health care for this population, numerous scholars have suggested various potential avenues for improvement. The term "disability" encompasses a wide spectrum of conditions, each with its unique characteristics and implications for mental health. Common psychological traits observed in individuals with disabilities include profound feelings of loneliness, diminished self-esteem, pervasive social insecurity, heightened sensitivity, a proclivity towards suspicion, fluctuating self-esteem, a propensity to adopt a complaint-centric mentality, emotional instability, a yearning for attention and care, and an inclination towards stubbornness. It is important to note that different types of disabilities often correspond to distinct psychological profiles. For instance, individuals with physical disabilities may exhibit heightened introversion and resilience, while those with severe intellectual disabilities may predominantly rely on instinctive behaviors. Moreover, research suggests that societal factors play a significant role in shaping the mental health of individuals with disabilities. These factors may include anxiety related to employment prospects, challenges in forming and sustaining interpersonal relationships, societal stigmatization and exclusion, familial and societal pressures, transportation-related isolation leading to loneliness, unstable self-perception leading to self-doubt and suspicion, and various forms of societal pressure. These factors, when compounded, can lead to a heightened sense of helplessness among individuals with disabilities. In light of these complexities, it is evident that a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological challenges faced by individuals with disabilities is needed. Furthermore, tailored interventions and support systems are essential to address their unique mental health needs effectively. Additional research is imperative to refine our comprehension of these issues and develop targeted strategies to enhance the mental well-being of individuals with disabilities. While psychotherapy remains a vital component of care, there is a pressing need for a multidisciplinary approach that extends beyond the therapeutic realm to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for this marginalized population.

## 2. Common Psychological Issues in People with Disabilities

In contemporary society, technological advances have greatly enhanced the ability of persons with disabilities to integrate into mainstream life. However, it is also crucial to explore in depth the intricacies of their psychological experiences. Within the context of disability, a range of psychological characteristics and challenges emerge that warrant nuanced exploration. Among the psychological issues prevalent among people with disabilities, loneliness is a prominent feature. This pervasive sense of isolation can be attributed to both social barriers and the inherent challenges associated with disability. In addition, low self-esteem and social insecurity are frequently reported, often stemming from a sense of inadequacy or stigma. These individuals may experience apathy or discrimination, leading to increased sensitivity and suspicion of others. Paradoxically, high self-esteem can also manifest itself, often as a coping mechanism or defense against social prejudice. A noteworthy psychological trait is a complaining mindset, which may be due to their need to constantly overcome obstacles and assert their rights. Emotional instability is another characteristic, as persons with disabilities face tremendous stress. Empathy, a heightened awareness of the suffering of others and a desire for attention and care are not uncommon, perhaps reflecting a deeper understanding of human vulnerability. In addition, stubbornness may also be an adaptive response to challenges faced by persons with disabilities, demonstrating resilience and determination in the face of adversity [1-4]. It is important to emphasize that, depending on the type of disability, the psychological characteristics exhibited can vary greatly. Physical disabilities, visual disabilities, hearing disabilities, mental disabilities, intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities all produce different psychological characteristics [5]. For example, persons with physical disabilities may exhibit greater closedness and stubbornness, which may stem from their need for independence and self-reliance. Individuals with severe intellectual disabilities may rely on instinctive responses due to limitations in their cognitive processing abilities. In contrast, blind or deaf individuals may exhibit a tendency to focus primarily on surface phenomena due to their reliance on other sensory modalities. In addition, people with physical disabilities may develop distorted perceptions characterized by vivid illusions, which may be a psychological mechanism to compensate for their physical limitations. We must recognize that although there is a large body of research on the psychological characteristics of people with disabilities, there are still significant gaps in the systematic and in-depth investigation of specific disabilities. Existing data, information, resources and research findings are often incomplete and lack comprehensive analysis. There is also a distinct lack of disaggregation of the different levels of disability and their corresponding impact on mental health. In addition, there is limited comparison and reflection between persons with disabilities and the able-bodied, which hinders a comprehensive understanding of the psychological situation of this marginalized population. Exploring the psychological issues of people with disabilities is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires ongoing research and a more comprehensive approach. The interplay of disability type, individual differences, and social factors highlights the need for nuanced, inclusive research on their mental health, with the ultimate goal of creating a more equitable and supportive environment for this often-neglected population.

## 3. Causes of Psychological Problems of People with Disabilities

The etiologies and influences that lead to psychological problems among persons with disabilities are multifaceted and require comprehensive research in a contemporary academic context. Understanding the complexity of these factors is critical to meeting the unique mental health needs of this population and promoting a more inclusive society. Lan et al., have articulated a range of root causes of the psychological challenges faced by people with disabilities [1]. One prominent issue is the generalized anxiety associated with employment difficulties [2]. Barriers to employment are multifaceted and often present significant challenges for persons with disabilities, leading to increased stress and insecurity about their financial future. Marriage can also cause distress, as social stereotypes and misconceptions can lead to difficulties for persons with disabilities in establishing

and maintaining relationships. Many people hold preconceived notions about disability, which can lead to feelings of exclusion and rejection. Family pressures can exacerbate the problem, as family expectations and concerns can add to an individual's psychological burden. In addition, the wider social environment plays an important role in the mental health of disabled people. Discrimination, lack of attention and ubiquitous stereotypes can exacerbate their feelings of stigmatization. Lack of appropriate guidance during formative years can hinder personal development and limit an individual's self-concept and self-esteem. Economic factors often exacerbate employment and health insurance challenges, leading to financial stress and instability. Lack of transportation exacerbates isolation for individuals with disabilities. Lack of transportation and mobility can lead to isolation and further marginalization. Individuals may experience self-denial and doubt stemming from an unstable self-perception influenced by societal attitudes and the constant negotiation of one's identity in a world that often underestimates one's abilities. Notably, persons with disabilities are often compared to able-bodied individuals, which may exacerbate their feelings of helplessness. This constant comparison reinforces social norms and standards that do not necessarily apply to people with disabilities, adding to their psychological stress. Shi, Kaiming (2014) provides additional insights into potential influencing factors, including the competitive nature of contemporary society, which puts more pressure on people with disabilities. Discrimination and lack of attention further exacerbate their sense of marginalization. Negative stereotypes and misconceptions perpetuate social exclusion. Lack of proper guidance during their formative years can hinder their personal growth and emotional well-being. Economic difficulties, often exacerbated by challenges in employment and healthcare, compound the complexity of factors affecting their mental health. Li and Li emphasize that the lack of healthcare professionals and healthcare services in certain areas can lead to psychological anxiety and various difficulties [5]. This healthcare gap exacerbates the psychological challenges faced by people with disabilities and limits their access to necessary support and care. The confluence of these factors creates a very challenging psychological environment for persons with disabilities. The cumulative effect of these stresses can lead to a reduced sense of daily well-being, increased dissatisfaction with life, lack of self-confidence, and lack of emotional and social support. As a result, psychological problems are exacerbated in this population, which highlights the urgent need for a holistic approach to meeting their mental health needs. The psychological challenges faced by persons with disabilities are intricate and multifaceted, shaped by a complex interplay of social, economic and personal factors. Recognizing the diversity and depth of these challenges is critical to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for persons with disabilities. Addressing these issues requires not only targeted interventions, but also broader societal shifts in attitudes and policies to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all.

#### **4. Existing and practiced psychotherapies for people with disabilities**

Existing and practiced psychotherapies for people with disabilities include a range of interventions aimed at improving their emotional and psychological well-being. Zhongqiu Zhang and Yinqiao Li authored a review in 2022 that investigated the impact of meditation training as a means of improving the emotional and psychological acceptance of people with disabilities. Findings from the review emphasized the generalized and targeted efficacy of meditation training in addressing disability-related psychological challenges, thus highlighting its potential for widespread application. Yao Wang's research in 2019 offers another promising avenue for improving the mental health of older adults with disabilities. By engaging social workers to assist them in dealing with practical issues in their lives, this approach can effectively alleviate psychological distress. In addition, it draws on the hierarchy theory, which suggests that improvements in material conditions can have a positive impact on psychological states. However, it must be recognized that the scope of this study is limited, focusing mainly on a specific group of elderly people. Further investigations and experiments are necessary to determine whether the findings have wider applicability. In a paper published in 2018, Guo Wenbin, Wang Ting, and their colleagues proposed a system of mental health interventions

tailored to people with disabilities. Their approach advocates combining positive psychology with indigenous therapeutic tools, suggesting that these interventions have the potential to become universally viable means of alleviating psychological problems in this population. The Focused Solutions Short-Term Therapy project proposed by Sun Shao Yang in 2016 specifically targets people with physical disabilities. Field studies conducted in support of this project have provided theoretical insights and empirical evidence confirming its efficacy. It is important to recognize that the widespread adoption and implementation of such a program requires a long and complex process. There is a need to keep exploring simplified approaches to accelerate their integration into mainstream therapeutic practice. It is important to emphasize that all of the above-mentioned therapies have shown positive results in addressing the psychological needs of persons with disabilities. The crucial role of state and social support cannot be overemphasized. Realizing the potential impact of these therapies requires sustained advocacy, research and outreach efforts. Among these interventions, meditation stands out as a highly viable therapy due to its universal applicability and proven efficacy. However, the meaningful integration of these therapies into the lives of persons with disabilities remains an ongoing endeavor that requires the sustained commitment of various stakeholders.

## **5. Existing general suggestions and programs to help the disabled treat their psychological problems**

Providing effective psychological support and treatment for persons with disabilities is a multifaceted challenge. Existing general recommendations and programs aimed at addressing the psychological problems faced by this population must be evaluated in the broader societal context. While some recommendations provide valuable insights, they need to be critically examined for their feasibility and potential for widespread implementation.

A noteworthy recommendation was a call for greater attention to persons with disabilities by all sectors of society, including the media [6]. This recommendation recognizes the importance of public awareness in reducing stigma and promoting inclusion. The idea of using the media to dispel misconceptions and reduce the psychological burden on persons with disabilities is well-intentioned. However, it may encounter practical challenges. The media is often profit-driven and may prioritize topics that appeal to a wider audience. Therefore, focusing on the mental health of persons with disabilities may not always be in their commercial interest. In addition, in an era of content personalization and information bubbles, making disability-related issues accessible to those who have not yet been exposed to them can be a daunting task.

**Establishment of Counseling Kiosks:** The proposal to establish counseling kiosks to disseminate mental health knowledge is a laudable effort to provide accessibility support [7]. However, the feasibility of this proposal may be constrained by financial and logistical factors. Providing ongoing psychological counseling services may require significant resources, and many persons with disabilities and their families may not have the financial means to access such services on a regular basis. In addition, the establishment and maintenance of counseling stations would require significant investment, and in some areas, the location of counseling stations may be limited. **Improving family education and support:** Strengthening family education to guide the personal growth and social adaptation of persons with disabilities is an important aspect of comprehensive support.

Increased help and support from close family members, coworkers, and peers can have a significant impact on the mental health of persons with disabilities [4]. However, changing entrenched societal attitudes and behaviors can be challenging. Persuading individuals to act contrary to their own beliefs and prejudices is a complex and gradual process. In addition, external factors beyond the control of persons with disabilities, such as discrimination in the workplace, are difficult to address through educational measures alone.

**Institutional strengthening and policy measures:** Strengthening institutions for the protection of persons with disabilities and improving policies to ensure a minimum quality of life for persons with

disabilities are practical and necessary approaches [4]. This includes taking measures to increase educational and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, which can have a direct impact on their overall well-being. Government involvement and policy reform play a pivotal role in ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Establishment of support teams and rationalization of beliefs: The recommendation to establish support teams aimed at facilitating progress in treatment and challenging irrational beliefs about oneself, one's family and one's environment reflects a clinical psychological support approach. While such interventions may be beneficial, their feasibility and accessibility may be limited. The costs associated with ongoing treatment sessions may be prohibitive for many families, and the distribution of specialized support teams may be uneven [4].

In conclusion, while the above recommendations and plans are theoretically sound and well-intentioned, their feasibility and practicality deserve consideration. The implementation of comprehensive measures to address the psychological challenges faced by persons with disabilities requires the concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders, including the government, healthcare providers, educators and the wider community [8, 9]. Policymakers should prioritize measures to enhance educational and employment opportunities and improve institutional support for persons with disabilities. Additionally, efforts to combat stigma and misconceptions must be rooted in evidence-based strategies to achieve meaningful change. Ultimately, a multidimensional and collaborative approach is essential to creating a more inclusive and supportive society for people with disabilities where their mental health needs are recognized and met [10].

## 6. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, recent years have witnessed a surge in research and experimentation pertaining to the mental health of individuals with disabilities. This heightened attention to the vulnerabilities of this group is a positive development; however, it has also exposed the existence of numerous impractical and idealistic suggestions and programs. In order to ensure that progress is meaningful and sustainable, ongoing exploration, dissection, and categorization of psychological research on individuals with disabilities is imperative. The findings emerging from such research must maintain their validity and universality, standing as beacons of knowledge that guide our efforts to safeguard the mental well-being of vulnerable populations. The journey to fully protect the mental health of these groups is undeniably long and arduous. It is our fervent hope that future scholars and policies will adopt a realistic and pragmatic approach, grounded in practicality. Only by doing so can we aspire to foster a sense of harmony and inclusion between individuals with and without disabilities in society, striving for an early achievement of this vital goal.

## References

- [1] Lan Jijun, Hu Wenting, Zhao Hui, Lei Chunshang, Wu Jingxuan. A qualitative study of psychological development problems and influencing factors of people with disabilities. *A Journal of Modern Special Education*, 2015.
- [2] Shi K. M. *Psychological Characteristics of People with Disabilities and Countermeasures for Psychological Counseling*, 2014.
- [3] Zhang J. Y. *Talking about the importance of understanding the psychology of people with disabilities*. 2014.
- [4] Ji-Jun, L., & Tong-Tong, L. A study on the relationship among disability attitude, mental health and subjective wellbeing of persons with disabilities. *Disability Research*. 2018.
- [5] Li X. X., Li S. G. *Survey and Analysis of Psychosocial Problems of People with Disabilities in the Community*. 2012.
- [6] Sun, S. Y. *Exploring the Practice of "Focused Solution Short-Term Therapy" Intervention for Psychological Problems of Persons with Physical Disabilities--Taking Y Street, Nanshan District, Shenzhen City as an Example*. 2016.

- [7] Tong Y. R. Research on Social Work Intervention in Mental Health Problems of Mildly Physically Handicapped People--Taking D Street of N City as an Example. 2022.
- [8] Liu F. B., Zhang Z. Q., Li A. Q., Zhou S., Zhang. A Systematic Review of Positive Thinking Training to Improve Emotional and Psychological Acceptance of Persons with Disabilities. 2022.
- [9] Wang Y. A study on group work to alleviate the psychological problems of elderly people with disabilities. 2019.
- [10] Zhang C. C., Guo W. B., Wang T. Z. Experimental discussion on the establishment of mental health intervention system for people with disabilities. 2018.