The Shaping of Mental Resilience of Urban People with Disabilities - A Case Study of Hong Kong

Kangning Zhao[1, *]

[1] School of Art and Social Science, Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong, China

*Corresponding author: s1240666@live.hkmu.edu.hk

Abstract. People with disabilities have become a serious issue concerning public health in recent years, and people with disabilities are chronically stigmatized and might internalize attitudes and behaviors that they perceive from the majority, which can affect their day-to-day social participation, mental health, and well-being. Research has consistently found that greater resilience can mitigate the negative effects of stressors and has a positive impact on the psychological issues of stigmatized groups. This study investigates the effects of resilience on urban disability. Using tracing process technologies and taking Hong Kong as a case, findings from the study suggest that supportive policies and regulations are available and have several, but ill-conceived policymaking and undesirable implementation are typical existing issues. This review indicates that resilience can be enhanced by intensifying the disabled person's sense of self-control in both community participation and over their own lives in the case of the difficulty of making significant changes in every aspect of life in the short term. The important role that government plays is undoubtedly by presenting a solid and positive attitude to taking the lead role and facilitating the fundamental change in the majority's mind and laws by inspiring social enterprise and the public.

Keywords: resilience; disability; social support; urban.

1. Introduction

The number of individuals with disabilities is estimated to be over one billion, or roughly 15% of the global population, and it is rising as the population ages and the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases increases [1]. Focusing on this issue is crucial since disability is growing as a public health concern, particularly in light of the aging populations around the world. Discrimination against people with disabilities frequently includes discrimination based on their age, gender, and other factors [2], which is a violation of multiple fundamental rights.

With more than 1.4 billion people, China has a sizable population with disabilities [3]. However, the status of those who have physical limitations has occasionally been lacking or ambiguous. It indicates that Chinese society has decided to disregard these people's rights and to make scant efforts to incorporate them into the community. For those with disabilities, there are still few opportunities to participate in communal life in the fields of education, employment, recreation, and many others that are available to people without disabilities [4]. In a prior study, five distinct Beijing neighborhoods were selected at random and looked at. Blind lanes next to a major road were examined, and it was found that none of them were suitable for use by the blind, with 56 of them having interruptions and disappearances, 9 just having unclear directions, and the remaining 2 even having missing manholes covers [5]. Likewise, the majority of public spaces practically forbid the use of guiding dogs [6].

The area of research appears to be less focused on issues like structural stigmatization and phenomena like prejudice or discrimination towards people with disabilities in China. People with disabilities frequently choose to deny discrimination in China to uphold their legal rights. Due to the denial of discrimination by disabled persons, the focus is shifted from larger familial origins to micro-psychological causes rather than institutional, environmental, and social macro reasons. They believe that rather than being a public health problem, discrimination towards them is caused by their mental and physical fragility, which keeps them from gaining the respect and approval of others [7].

Research on the resilience of urban impairments, let alone on the mental health and well-being of people with disabilities, is limited in China. The hypothesis that more resilience could improve adaptive coping in people with disabilities is supported by research showing that resilience can lessen the negative impacts of common stressors [8]. This suggests that enhancing resilience may be an important focus for prevention and therapy.

The current study uses tracing process technologies and takes Hong Kong as a case study to investigate the resilience of urban disabilities. The first step is to conduct a literature review about the resilience and stigmatization of people with disabilities. Then, taking Hong Kong as a case study, to assess the living status of local people with disabilities as well as the social support they perceive, the next step is to examine the role of resilience in the process. The article concludes with some suggestions for future studies on the resiliency of persons with disabilities and professionals who work with them while facing these significant societal concerns.

Research indicates that resilience and stigmatization have associations with the mental health and well-being of people with disabilities, and there is also difficulty in making significant changes and differences in social disadvantage in the short term. The study is anticipated to have effects on social work practice by encouraging the creation of more efficient services to enhance the resilience of people with physical disabilities and suggests that practitioners use a contextual approach when developing services and programs to reduce stigma for individuals with physical disabilities by taking into account their experiences daily and perceptions of environmental inaccessibility.

2. Literature Review

The Greek word meaning "mark" is where the word "stigma" originates. According to Goffman's definition of stigma, it can be extremely disparaging and reduce entire people to devalued and tainted others [9]. Alternative or expanded definitions have changed significantly since Goffman. Thus, according to Herek, stigma is the collectively assigned negative regard, lower position, and relative helplessness on those who display a given trait or who fall into a certain group or category. The sources of stigma are separated from the physical characteristics and identities of those who are stigmatized and situated at the level of society [10]. Numerous fundamentally separate stigma-related processes, including structural stigma, stereotype and prejudice, and discrimination, are examples of how social stigma presents itself [11].

The stigmatization of people with disabilities has a long and ingrained history. Misconceptions about the origin of impairments frequently stem from historical cultural or religious beliefs that blamed them on the transgressions of ancestors, parents, and the disabled person themselves, as well as supernatural forces like demons or curses [12]. It is a widespread misconception that individuals who have disabilities are helpless and incapable of taking care of themselves or making their own decisions. Some people have even been accused of being responsible for their disabilities or utilizing them to obtain unfair benefits. People with disabilities experience internalization of stigma and discrimination, also referred to as "self-stigma," in addition to being socially excluded and experiencing it daily. People with impairments may have negative sentiments about their circumstances and feel ashamed or embarrassed about them. It has been connected to decreased life satisfaction and higher levels of psychological discomfort [13].

The majority of the literature claims that in the 1940s, psychology and psychiatry gave rise to the study of resilience. It initially took shape as a result of efforts to comprehend the causes and progression of psychopathology. Resilience, according to the most basic definitions, is the capacity to "bounce back" or resume regular behavior after being under stress. Resilient individuals may feel less prone to experience depression or anxiety, even when they are affected by negative or stressful situations [14].

Some research indicates that the constituent of resilience is founded on the gradual interplay between personal attributes and social and cultural circumstances [15]. The many studies on the variables affecting resilience, however, have been quite narrowly focused and span from genetic,

psychological, and biological variables to social, environmental, and so forth. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend resilience to develop strategies for the prevention and treatment of common mental disorders.

People with disabilities may encounter rude and hostile behavior in their daily lives and risk stigmatization. According to earlier research, resilience may be a key factor in shielding stigmatized people from mental health issues like depressive symptoms. Resilience decreases or mitigates the negative impacts of risk exposure, according to the protective model of resilience, which can also be conceived of as having an interaction or moderator impact.

One research among HIV-positive people [16] found that resilience appears to have a protective, moderating function in the link between their internalized stigma and actual perceived HIV stigma in the community, according to one study among HIV-positive individuals [16]. This study suggested that resilience might have a moderating or stress-relieving effect to overcome the stigma experienced by persons with impairments.

3. Support for the Disabled: An Empirical Study Based on Hong Kong

Hong Kong has over 7.2 million people due to the results of the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) as of mid-year 2022. The results of a sphere of influence survey of those with disabilities and persistent disorders were also made public by C&SD to forecast the total population and prevalence of various disorders in 2021. According to the findings, 534,200 people, or 5.1% of Hong Kong's population, had one or more kinds of disability [17]. Additionally, the results suggest that 72.5% of the 534,200 people with disabilities had just one handicap. However, Hong Kong's effective public transportation system is not very convenient for those with disabilities. 247,600 people (48.6%) did not require transportation help, according to the results of the survey on the topic. In this survey, 48.2% of people with disabilities said that their impairments made it difficult for them to go about their daily lives. Of the 462,400 people with disabilities who lived in households, 44.2% had someone else help them with daily tasks because of their impairments and chronic illnesses.

As a statutory organization charged with carrying out the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DOO), the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance, and the Race Discrimination Ordinance in Hong Kong, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was founded in 1996 [18]. Certain actions are made illegal by the DOO, and protection is strengthened. This act protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in terms of building access, membership in clubs and associations, employment, and the provision of goods and services. In conclusion, it is theoretically feasible for people with disabilities to fully participate in all facets of Hong Kong society. For further information, visit the EOC website, which also processes complaints, provides legal services and resolves conflicts. In addition, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) of Hong Kong works with persons with disabilities to provide services such as aid for people with disabilities going from school to the job and rehabilitation for people with disabilities [19].

There are numerous organizations and agencies in Hong Kong that offer training and retraining to equip people with disabilities with the skills they need to achieve employment. They are assisted in finding employment on the public markets by this. People with disabilities can get pre-employment training through the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) of the Labor Department's Selective Placement Division (SPD) and receive an $80 daily training stipend. In addition, the government has introduced several programs and initiatives to encourage firms to hire persons with disabilities. For employers to hire each individual with a disability who is having job difficulties within an allowance term of up to nine months, WOPS of the Selective Placement Division of the Labor Department will provide an allowance of up to $60,000 [20].

The public transportation industry has made an effort to support and accommodate customers with disabilities with initiatives like Rehabs and Easy Access Bus. Those who are temporarily unwell or incapacitated can get the equipment they need to move around thanks to the Hong Kong Red Cross's mobility equipment loan program [19].

Despite being crucial to the daily lives of those with disabilities, environmental accessibility is not always upheld. Only one out of every 52 enterprises with a street frontage in Hong Kong is accessible to those using electronic wheelchairs, by a survey of restaurant accessibility conducted by the Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped. In contrast, 73.08% of selected establishments inside commercial buildings are. This results in higher costs and a more challenging environment for people with disabilities [21]. 149 public restrooms in Hong Kong were visited by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation (HKSAR), which discovered that roughly 30 of them were inaccessible to individuals with disabilities. Among these restrooms was the Wellington Street Public Toilet, which can only be reached by steps. The Promotion of Inclusion Group discovered that 70% of the facilities in shopping malls were not appropriate for people with disabilities during a site visit to 25 malls in Hong Kong between November 2017 and January 2018 [22]. For example, there were no tactile guide paths or tactile Braille maps for those who are visually impaired.

Another issue is the stigmatization of people who have disabilities. Few people in the general public were aware of the predicament of those with disabilities, according to a poll conducted in 2017 among more than 1,400 members of the general public. For example, 88% of them believed that wheelchair users needed assistance to cross the short steps, and 50% believed that those with visual impairment and those who are blind are the same. In 76% of cases, those with physical and visual disabilities received unfair treatment; in 86% of cases, they faced discrimination; and in 89% of cases, they faced severe treatment [22]. In the meanwhile, creating a system of forced employment quotas for people with disabilities to compel businesses (including the government) to hire a certain number or percentage of people with disabilities may have a negative stigmatizing effect on these people, which is bad for their integration into the workforce and the community.

People with impairments have a low employment rate that has persisted over time. By the findings of the overall profile of employed people with disabilities in the study issued in December 2021 by C&SD, out of the 490,800 impaired people aged 15 and older, 86 300 (17.6%) had jobs [17]. Finding jobs that suit a person's talents can sometimes be difficult for those with disabilities. CareER association limited offers peer assistance to people with disabilities and special education needs (SEN) who have finished higher education. Only 59% of respondents with high educational attainment were employed, 14% had previously held a job but were now unemployed, and 28% had never held a job, according to a 2016 survey on the employment status of those with high educational attainment. An average of 4.8 months was determined to be the typical waiting period for high-educated respondents who were currently employed or had previously held employment, with 36% taking longer than six months [23].

4. How to Build the Mental Resilience of the Disabled

In Hong Kong, there is some policy backing for those with disabilities in terms of accessibility to jobs and physical environments. The Disability Discrimination Ordinance, which ostensibly permits individuals with impairments to participate freely in all facets of society, is one piece of legislation that the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) makes information on its particular available. The Social Welfare Department (SWD), which collaborates with the disabled to provide services including rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities, is in charge of carrying out government policy on social concerns. The Social Welfare Department administers all Social Security benefits, including those provided to those with disabilities, and is supported by several non-governmental groups in its work (SWD). Travel around Hong Kong for the disabled is possible via a variety of sources in terms of transportation and information, including the website of the accessibility options for travelers with disabilities made public by the Hong Kong Transport Department and Kowloon Motor Bus (KMB). Licenses for disabled parking are issued by the Hong Kong Transport Department. The three-year permit lowers parking costs in lots and grants free parking at meters [19].

However, the policymaking was ill-conceived and the insufficient coverage or research led to the inadequate implementation of the policy without achieving the desired result. The research shows the

ineffectiveness of the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) of the Labor Department's Selective Placement Division (SPD). Of the 802 work scenarios covered by the scheme in 2017, only 263 had employment contracts lasting more than 10 months. In 2015 and 2016, just 30% and 28% of all employees with disabilities had occupations that lasted longer than a year, respectively. Some social workers pointed out that the dismissal of workers with disabilities after the employer gets the allowance is a common situation [22].

In terms of the environment, insufficient legislation contributes to the issue in addition to the inaccessibility of the surface. The law does not require all businesses and public areas to be accessible to people with impairments. Wheelchair accessibility is required for any new construction, according to the Buildings Department's Design Manual, which was issued in 2008. The Manual, however, exempts establishments like stores and restaurants from having proper access. Older structures are also exempt from the requirement unless they undergo considerable repairs. In the meanwhile, Hong Kong's building regulations require additional specificity. Legislation and rules controlling building design are often in place to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. Accessible amenities are frequently planned for and provided, but they are seldom well maintained. It is unclear which government entity in Hong Kong is in charge of monitoring accessibility requirements, and there is no formal legislation for the administration of accessible facilities. The issue of who is accountable when a barrier-free facility gets damaged is never obvious, from the landlord to the property management to the Building Department [24].

According to the disability paradox [25], personal experience with a disability is crucial in determining a person's identity, worldview, social environment, and interpersonal interactions. These unique experiences may help to explain why people with persistently significant disabilities report an acceptable quality of life even while other people may perceive their living conditions to be unpleasant. Additionally, resilience reduced the negative effects of self-stigma. This suggests that having an impairment does not lower an individual's standard of living and that a person's capacity for handling day-to-day activities may also be highly significant [26]. By encouraging resiliency and creating initiatives to enhance the psychological well-being of people with disabilities.

The process of resilience can be strengthened by assets and resources [27]. a person's positive characteristics and qualities, which stand in for the internal source of resilience, are assets, and one's social network may serve as an external source. Self-acceptance and autonomy were highlighted as internal sources. The social network and routine tasks can be used as external sources of resilience. The ability to make independent judgments and feel autonomous were strongly related to one another, and managing money was a crucial aspect of feeling in control and becoming more autonomous. Even though people with disabilities depend on care, it is essential to give people chances that fit their talents and capabilities so they can have the most control over their own life as feasible. Creating resilience might be accomplished by joining a self-advocacy organization, according to Clarke et al. [28]. His research demonstrates that someone with an intellectual disability can learn how to speak up, make decisions, and develop other self-determination skills by taking advantage of various chances in a self-advocacy group. Strengthening autonomy will provide the disabled person with a sense of control, which will result in better degrees of autonomy and favorable effects on well-being. A supportive social network is frequently mentioned as a key element in fostering resilience, along with the significance of family, friends, and professional caregivers. Particularly, individuals who interact frequently with trained caregivers appeared to be better able to forge bonds under their supervision and direction. Consequently, "autonomy" and "supportive social network" were linked in Starke's [29] research. Researchers learned from participants who considered their families to be a source of life happiness that their families had helped them become independent.

The government's attitude is a crucial aspect that could influence society's attitude toward all social partners because fundamental change is also required for the majority of people's thinking and laws. In Hong Kong, Lillian Lei Li serves as the division's chief executive for the Direction Association for Handicapped People's Social Enterprise. According to her, the reasons why companies are given a free pass have more to do with the ideas upheld by the government. Government policies that favor

the commercial sector over the minority are evident in the fact that it encourages rather than mandate enterprises [23]. The private sector is likely to take a more inclusive stance as the government keeps boosting perks and incentives for employers and business owners. It is important to implement sensitization and awareness-raising initiatives to end stigmatization and prejudice toward those with disabilities. After the apparel brand gained notoriety online with a "bankruptcy contribution" during the floods in Henan, China in July 2021, the sale volume of HONGXING ERKE GROUP items on that day climbed more than 52 times year over year. Within three days, online sales on TikTok had already surpassed the total sales in the first half of 2021. Governments, businesses, and social groups all have a certain amount of power to contribute, but well-intended and effective marketing can also have an impact on public opinion and bring about adequate benefits.

5. Conclusion

This essay addresses the resiliency of urban disabled persons and refers to the relationship with stigma, which can both moderate internalized stigma and improves the psychological well-being of metropolitan disabled people. It also covers the challenges faced by disabled residents of urban Hong Kong, the social support they receive, and how resilience is generally shaped for disabled residents of urban areas. The ability to make independent decisions, supported by a certain economic base, is necessary to create individual resilience through a sense of inner autonomy and well-being. Another component of the source of resilience is a sense of control over one's life and self-acceptance. The difficulty of social inclusion for individuals with disabilities necessitates cooperation at both the governmental and societal levels, and there is a need for fundamental shifts in public perception and governmental policy on the outside. The development of more efficient services to improve the resilience of people with physical disabilities is encouraged by this study. To lessen the stigma associated with people with physical disabilities, practitioners are advised to employ a contextual approach when creating services and programs that consider the daily perceptions of environmental accessibility and the experiences of such individuals.

In addition, this study will discuss how urban residents with disabilities interact with the rest of society. How resilience is formed will depend more on various factors, such as the differences between rural and urban communities, and political, religious, and employment context considerations, which must take into account various attitudes and social inclusion practices toward people with disabilities.

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