

Good essay on stigma of mental illness

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People with mental illnesses are recipients of stigmatization. Levels of stigmatization directed towards the mentally ill are, unfortunately, still high despite clear gains in public knowledge about mental illnesses (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). In the US, attitude surveys reflect an increase rather than a decrease in the levels of this stigmatization.

Society has a role to play in the development of this social problem. Mentally ill, people are often rejected socially. Such rejection has serious psychological effects on the already mentally compromised person: it is like double tragedy. Besides, such social exclusions of the mentally ill has dire consequences. The psychological blow that mentally ill patients get following rejection is even worse than their primary mental problem. This social problem is international in nature, and it is orchestrated across countries, races and ethnicities. Stigma of mental illness has a rich history just like human history.

Because of the demonological nature of mental illnesses, they are attributed to the devil, evil spirits or animal spirits. These harsh moral judgments are on the forefront of stigma of mental illness. Besides, the mentally ill are seen as violent and unsafe to hang up with. They are seen as people of low self-esteem, low IQ, and are potentially harmful, and that is why they are avoided. Some families feel embarrassed of having a mentally ill member. In this case, they prefer hiding that member from the public limelight.

The emotional and behavioral displays of the mentally ill subjects at times stem from stigmatization by onlookers. There are mixed reactions among the clergy, scholars, physicians and the public over the exact causes of mental illness. Some think that it is a result of evil spirits, the result of social

inequities or moral fiber and disease that resides in the affected person (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). However, these opinions have been challenged by medical researches of the brain that attribute mental illness to biochemical anomalies in the brain.

Some in the society see deviant behavior as immoral. The mass media are another means through which this stigmatization has been enhanced. The television, for instance, often reports the negative attributes of the mentally ill people. In other cases, people who do absurd things are always checked to evaluate if they have any mental illness and this adds up to the list of stigmatization (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). The internet is another means through which such stigmatization is orchestrated. Because of its permissiveness, people can say anything they want about the mentally ill without being apprehended.

As a psychology student, I have had a chance to study mental illnesses, and this has played a big role in understanding the stigmatization associated with them. The media have been another source that has shaped my understanding of mental illness stigmatization.

How can this issue of stigmatization be handled? Efforts to reduce this social problem must be collaborative in nature lest they will be short lived (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). In addition, it must begin by amending laws and social policies, as well as massive campaigns to change the perception of the public towards the mentally ill. Hinshaw (2007) calls for revision of media portrayals, as well as the enhancement of sensitivity and awareness among healthcare workers. There is a need to involve the family members of the mentally ill in these campaigns. In addition, it is paramount to increase the

access to treatment and other supportive resources for the mentally ill people (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008).

If this endeavor has to be long-lasting and successful, strategies that are both top-down and bottom-up are needed (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). Policy changes are mandatory. For instance, some laws are inherently discriminatory in nature. People with a history of mental illnesses are ineligible to pursue some courses or careers such as driving, medicine, and hold public office, among others (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). In the current medical covers, mental illnesses are given little attention. Compared to physical illnesses, mental illness coverage is exceedingly low. Such circumstances have made the treatment of mental illnesses very expensive, and as a result, many people shy away. These examples emphasize the significance of having policy changes in areas that touch on mental illness. The media are another major player that ought to be used in championing this agenda. Since it has a wide outreach and has a huge influence on its audiences, the media can be used to shape the perception of the public on mental illnesses for the better. The media should be compelled to portray accurate messages that are clear and illicit hope. The media should report facts on mental illnesses and broadcast different ways through which the mentally ill can be empowered to become economically productive.

In summary, this paper has shown that stigma of mental illness has a rich history, and the society plays a part in championing it. If this problem has to be nested forever, there is a need to have a collaborative effort. It is essential to change some laws that are inherently discriminatory in nature, as well as alter the public's perception of the mentally ill. In addition, the

mentally ill need to be empowered economically as this will help them earn a reputation in society.

References

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