

Social support for families of mentally retarded children

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Received: 17/04/2024

Accepted: 11/07/2024 Published: 12/10/2024

Abstract

The family is the primary source of education and socialisation for children, whether typically developing or with disabilities. The family unit is often confronted with a multitude of challenges and pressures, including the presence of one or more disabilities among children. This necessitates a multifaceted approach to support the family, encompassing both moral and material assistance.

The efficacy of social support for families with disabled children is manifesting in the well-being of both children and families, with varying degrees of impact contingent on a number of factors, including the cultural and educational attainment of the family, the material circumstances, the number of children with disabilities, and other variables. Et cetera.

This article aims to provide an analytical presentation of the most important theoretical elements forming the subject of social support for families of children with mental disabilities. It begins with an examination of the most significant concepts and connotations associated with the topic, progresses to an analysis of the nature and types of social support available to families of disabled individuals, and concludes with an evaluation of the process of social support for families and its effects on both the family unit and the disabled child.

Keywords: social support, family social support, mental disability, mentally handicapped child.

Introduction

Disability is an important issue in society that has different psychological, social, and economic dimensions, which receive the attention of studies from various scientific approaches.

Previously, attention was largely focused on the disabled, whether in terms of meeting their needs or addressing their problems, and on the question of how to integrate them. Nevertheless, at the present time, there is a greater awareness of the importance of studying the circumstances surrounding disabled individuals, with a particular focus on the family context.

The family unit provides a sense of security and stability for the individual, particularly for those with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities often require greater support from their families than any other group. Consequently, families with disabled children frequently seek assistance from a range of sources, including psychological, social, and financial support. The presence of social support for the family can be seen as a form of support for the disabled individual. The health and well-being of individuals with disabilities is contingent upon the health and stability of their family unit and the socioeconomic context in which they reside. It is therefore asserted that social support is a fundamental determinant of human health.

Although disabled children experience a multitude of challenges and pressures, their families are also significantly impacted, often enduring these difficulties in silence. Disability can destabilise and impair the functioning of the family unit, creating a pervasive and debilitating effect on both the individual and the family as a whole (Shuwaiei, Spring 2023, p. 320). The mere presence of a disabled person in the family unit gives rise to a set of responsibilities, challenges and concerns that are not typically encountered by other families with typically developing children.

It can be argued that the family of a disabled child requires a variety of forms of assistance, care and support, including social support. In some cases, the provision of social support for the family may be of particular importance, as the individual may be able to overcome the negative consequences of the

disability and become an integrated and adaptive member of society, provided that their family is able to accept the disability and improve its conditions. The interest in the families of the disabled is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging alongside a shift in focus towards the care and integration of the disabled. With the advent of educational, psychological and social sciences, the family of the disabled has become a subject of growing attention.

1. Conceptual Determinants

1.1. Social support

The term "social support" is used to describe the set of social interactions that provide individuals with genuine help, which the individual perceives as caring or loving (Ghaleb Jilan, p. 67).

The concept of social support is derived from the individual's perception of being loved and desired by others, and of being a valuable member of society. This assessment of the level of social support may manifest in periods of adversity, when problems are encountered, or when pressures are experienced (Ghaleb Jilan, p. 67).

It can thus be posited that social support is indicative of the strength of an individual's social connections and the degree of social integration they experience. This integration may, in turn, have a positive impact on an individual's health and well-being (Ghaleb Jilan, p. 71).

Social support can be derived from a number of sources, including relatives, friends and community bodies. It may manifest in various forms, such as emotional support (which may include expressions of appreciation and respect) and informational assistance (which may encompass counselling or skills training to help navigate the challenges of daily life). Additionally, support may be provided in the form of performance support, which could include assistance with work-related tasks or material assistance (Ghaleb Jilan, p. 72).

In their definition, Kaplan (2004) define social support as follows: "A system comprising a set of long-term, dependable and trusted social connections and interactions with others when the individual feels the need for emotional support." (Ali, p. 9)

Social support can be defined as the social resources that people draw upon, such as family, friends, relatives, or colleagues, in order to cope with the challenges and difficulties that arise in life. Furthermore, it is defined as the presence of individuals in one's social environment, such as family members, friends, neighbours, or colleagues, who provide emotional and moral support, or the perceived or actual availability of resources within one's social network that can be utilised in times of need. This provides the individual with social support through social relations with people with whom they have organised contact in one form or another. (Malkoush, 2000, p. 159)

The sociological perspective examines social support within the context of an individual's social network, including their contacts with others and their interactions within the social environment. With regard to psychological treatment, the objective is to provide psychological support and a conducive, respectful, and appropriate psychological environment. Some commentators have proposed that social support and the network of social relations are not entirely distinct concepts. Lieberman, for instance, has suggested that social support is a more limited concept than social networks. This is because social support is contingent on individuals' awareness of their social networks as frameworks that include individuals they trust and with whom they have a relationship. (Osbitan, 2014, p. 12)

Hanafi defines it as the various methods of assistance that the individual receives from their family and friends. These include the provision of care, attention, guidance, advice and encouragement in all life situations. They satisfy the individual's material and spiritual needs for acceptance, love and a sense of security. This enables the individual to trust themselves as they perceive it. It also increases their social efficiency. (Hanafi, 2007, p. 318)

It can be argued that social support is a fundamental need for all individuals, regardless of their health status or the context in which they live. This applies to individuals as well as to groups.

1.2. Family support

Providing all forms of support and assistance to the families of children with disabilities, including formal services provided by specialists, private and public institutions and associations, and

informal services obtained from social support networks represented by extended family, friends, co-workers and other families that share the same situation, and leaves important effects in alleviating psychological pressures. Social support has effects experienced by families of persons with disabilities during the process of raising a child with disabilities. (Damra & Jamil, 2016, p. 139)

1.3. Psychosocial support for families of individuals with special needs

The term signifies the provision of moral and material assistance and support by the government and society to families with a member with special needs, with the objective of safeguarding the psychological and social well-being of access to mental health. (Noman, July 2022, p. 53)

It can be argued that social support for families of disabled children should be defined as the provision of assistance and guidance to parents of disabled children, with the objective of alleviating their difficulties and addressing their needs. This should be done in a way that reassures them of their situation and offers them the necessary services to help them cope.

1.4. Family

Several clarifications were received for the concept of the family in language and terminology, among these connotations, that: "The family is the nucleus of multiplicity and reproduction, it is the cell of human formation, construction and preparation, but it is the basis of human industry." (Kharoubat, 2022, p. 23)

It is "the first social environment in which the child begins to form himself and get to know himself through the process of giving and taking and dealing between him and its members. It is in this environment that he receives the first sense of what should and should not be done. And the deeds that if he performed him received praise. And other acts that, if performed, are vilified and mocked. Thus, it prepares him to participate in the life of the community in general." (Al-Nujaihi, 1981, p. 82)

It is also defined as: "a biological unit based on the marriage of two people, and this marriage usually entails the production of children. Here, the family turns into a social unit, in which the child's first responses occur as a result of the interactions that arise between his parents and siblings." (Fahmy, 1974, p. 159)

The family unit is a small society comprising a father and mother, with children forming an integral part of the structure. The family is responsible for the protection and upbringing of its children. The family is regarded as a constant source of security and support for the child, providing a foundation for their development, including their values, behaviours and future prospects. (Amer, 2003, p. 78)

AtefGhaith defines it as: a systematic biological social group consisting of a man and a woman (between whom a prescribed marital bond) and their children" (Ghaith, 1979, p. 176)

Furthermore, it is defined as follows: The fundamental social entity is the marital relationship, which serves as the foundation for meeting innate needs and performing personal and social functions. It is one of the fundamental institutions of human society. (Zaimi, 2007, pp. 57, 58)

The aforementioned clarifications of the concept of the family have made it evident that the definitions in question pertain to both the structural and functional aspects of the family unit. The functional definition is of particular interest, as it encompasses the roles and functions played by the family, whether for its individual members or for society as a whole.

1.5. The concept of disability and mental disability

1.5.1. Disability

The term "disability" has a number of linguistic connotations, including: Such linguistic connotations as "obstruction," "disability," "discouragement," and "delay" may be employed to impede, hinder, or otherwise impede the progress of the individual in question. (Badawi, 1993, p. 191)

In addition, it can be stated that: The term "obstruction" is used to describe something that hinders an individual from achieving a goal or completing a task. This hindrance can be caused by external factors, such as distractions or delays, which prevent the individual from reaching their desired outcome. Disability, therefore, can be seen as a form of delay or prevention. (Dar Al-Mashreq, 1967, p. 119)

The French dictionary Le Grand Dictionnaire (Encyclopédique) defines the term "handicap" in seven distinct ways:

- 1) It is an examination, competition, or contest in which competitors are granted or denied temporal privileges, distance, weight, or even scoring in order to provide them with equal opportunities for victory despite their disparate advantages.
- 2) It is a horse race in which the probability of winning is modified by obliging the most accomplished horses to carry specific weights during the race.
- 3) The term refers to the disadvantage or prejudice imposed on a horse with a high probability of winning.
- 4) The term is used to describe the disadvantage faced by a competitor, such as a team whose player is injured.
- 5) A disability can be defined as a condition that impairs an individual's physical or mental abilities, whether due to an inherent genetic predisposition or an acquired condition.
- 6) Such damage is frequently a natural phenomenon, an inherent limitation, as exemplified by the fact that poor eyesight is widely regarded as a disability within this profession.
- 7) It is the economic and social disadvantage experienced by a group or country in relation to others, for example, the obstacle resulting from the political instability of a country. (Larousse, 1983, p. 5140) Mentioned in: (Beladi, March 2005, pp. 198-199)

In light of the linguistic definitions of disability, it can be concluded that: "Disability is not an isolated issue in itself, but rather a competitive phenomenon, shaped by the dynamics of its surrounding context. Its nature is contingent upon the interplay with other factors within this competitive environment." In other words, it is not an isolated individual issue, but rather a situation that is somewhat specific to its relationship with those around it. (Beladi, March 2005, pp. 198-199)

In his work, Jalil Wadih Shakour offers the following definition of terminology: In its general sense, the term "disability" denotes an inability to perform an activity, whether motor, social, mental, relational, or otherwise. This inability may manifest as a form of social disability, moral disability, psychological disability, cultural disability, economic disability, or communication disability with others. (Shakour, 1995, p. 13)

This definition defines disability as a condition that impedes an individual's ability to perform the roles and responsibilities expected of them, leading to an imbalance in their relationships with others and in their ability to fulfil their roles.

Furthermore, it is defined as follows: A chronic illness is defined as an ongoing health condition that affects an individual's physical or psychological abilities, thereby impairing their ability to perform at the same level as their peers. (Mr. Ramadan, 1995, p. 135)

A chronic deficiency or illness that affects an individual's abilities and results in disability, whether physical, sensory, mental or social, impairs the individual's capacity to benefit from educational and professional experiences and equal competition with other individuals. (Abdel Momen, 1990, p. 12)

The two definitions presented here define disability in terms of a comparison between the disabled individual and the normal individual, as well as a competitive dynamic between them. This is evident in some linguistic definitions of disability.

Therefore, after presenting the previous definitions of mental disability, it becomes clear that the concept is broad "that includes social, psychological, cultural and medical aspects that are often difficult to quantify, including the difficulty of determining their limits, which can be described as mental disability even based on measures and degrees of intelligence that appear accurately, which are disputed among the specialists themselves." (Beladi, Mental Disability: Thinking Elements in Sociology, 06, November 2010, p. 122)

1.5.2. The concept of a mentally retarded child

From a linguistic perspective, the term "disabled" is frequently employed to signify individuals who are confronted with impediments that impede their capacity to lead their lives in accordance with moral standards. Furthermore, the term "disabled" is used more frequently than "obstructed" in the

context of hindrance. However, the term "hindered" is not commonly found in dictionaries of the language. Instead, it is often accompanied by other terms such as "disabled", "manumission", and "obstruction". Additionally, the term "disabled" is often used in conjunction with the effect of "disability", which is also known as "obstructed" or "hindered" from the perspective of the thing that is hindered by obstruction. The following terms have been identified in the downloaded text: disbursement, imprisonment, prevention of obstruction, and emancipation. These terms are associated with the concept of "obstruction," which has been defined as a hindrance or obstacle. The true origin of the term "obstruction" indicates that it refers to prevention and retention. In other words, obstacles prevent us from achieving our goals.(Ibn Manzur, p. 279)

The term "disability" is defined terminologically as "any individual who has lost the capacity to engage in their occupational duties or undertake other work as a consequence of a physical, sensory or mental impairment, whether this deficit is the result of an accident, illness or congenital disability."(Makhlouf, 1991, p. 19)

The dictionary of physical disability defines disability as an organic, psychological or neurological deviation in the body of the individual or their structure. This deviation may constitute a disability for the individual. Furthermore, the term "disability" is not necessarily indicative of the extent to which an individual is able to interact with their surrounding environment. Researchers have identified that disability can be defined as the impact of a physical or mental impairment that significantly impairs an individual's ability to perform essential functions in various life domains, including self-care, mobility, communication, and social interaction, as well as the capacity to engage in gainful employment or participate in meaningful activities outside of work.(Abd al-Rahman, 2001, p. 92)

Muhammad SayedFahmi offers the following definition of the term "disabled": "A term used to describe individuals whose abilities impede their normal development, except when special assistance is provided."(Fahmy M. , 1974, p. 12)

The term "disabled person" is used to describe any individual who is unable to meet their basic needs or engage in social activities to the same extent as others due to a congenital or other impairment that affects their physical or mental capabilities.(Turki, 1982, p. 44)

The term "disabled person" is used to describe an individual who has a physical, sensory, or mental impairment or condition that limits their ability to function normally. It is also evident that the disability in question affects the psychological and social aspects of the individual's personality. The aforementioned disability impairs the disabled individual's capacity to engage in gainful employment. The disabled person may be born with a disability that is caused by factors inherent to their biology or acquired from the environment. Those with disabilities are often characterised by a dependence on others, a lack of autonomy and poor self-adaptation, both psychological and social. It is therefore necessary to provide the disabled with special care in order to overcome these negative effects. The notion of the disabled person has emerged in place of that of the minor as a consequence of the advent of the concept of reclassification, given that the category of persons with disabilities falls within the purview of reclassification.(Messaoudane, 2005-2006, p. 43)

A child with a disability is defined as a child whose performance level is significantly lower than that of their peers in a specific area of performance, to the extent that they are unable to follow the typical developmental trajectory, except through external intervention or by making a total adjustment in the circumstances surrounding them.(Issawi, 1997, p. 8)

A child with an intellectual disability is typically less able to understand and think at the same level as typically developing children. They are often less aware and less willing to learn, and their ability to remember and concentrate is frequently very limited. (Turki, 1982, p. 44)

2. Theoretical literature on social support for families of the disabled

2.1. Sources of social support for families of the disabled

Dunst identifies two categories of family support: Formal resources of support. The second category of sources of family support comprises those that are informal in nature. The category of resources encompasses a variety of forms of assistance, including tangible and intangible assets, as well as access to material and immaterial resources.

2.1.1 Sources of Official Support

The term denotes the assistance provided by private and public institutions and associations to families in need. This assistance may take the form of training, the provision of support tools, psychological counselling, and other services offered by these bodies. The aforementioned forms of assistance encompass support for specialists, emotional support, information support, material support, and legal and moral support.

2.1.2 Informal Support Resources

The term "social support" denotes the provision of assistance and resources by an individual or group to another individual or group, in this case, the family. This support can be received from a multitude of sources, including extended family members, neighbours, friends, and colleagues at work. The act of receiving social support from others can lead to a sense of belonging and acceptance within the family unit, fostering a perception that others love and understand the family's unique circumstances and challenges. The role of social support in families' acceptance of disability has been a topic of study. Social networks and family support groups have been identified as contributing to families' acceptance of their child's disability, helping them to overcome psychological pressures, alleviate isolation and loneliness, and confront the challenges they are facing. Ultimately, the objective of family support programmes is to assist families in providing assistance to their children. (Damra & Jamil, 2016, pp. 1139-1140)

2.2. The importance of social support for families of the disabled

Social support has been demonstrated to exert a beneficial influence on both the disabled child and their family. From the perspective of the family, social support is of particular importance for the following reasons:

- The prevention of diseases and disorders, the ability to face the pressures of life, and the satisfaction of the need for psychological security are all factors that contribute to the overall well-being of an individual. The family of a person with disabilities, however, is a distinct entity that involves contradictions in this entity, whether in its structure or function. These contradictions can be seen as a kind of internal conflict, which can be conceptualised as "To be or not to be." It is therefore imperative that, with the provision of socio-psychological support, efforts are made to facilitate the fulfilment of their potential and to assist them in making an informed decision between these alternatives. An effective life is an optimal option. (Talaat, March 2009, p. 34)

Mohammed Hassan Obaid has defined social support functions in: (Obaid, April 2020, pp. 54-55)

- Social support plays a significant role in enhancing an individual's mental and emotional well-being. It enables the individual to navigate the psychological and social pressures that arise from the vicissitudes of life, fostering psychological stability and positive outcomes.
- The volume of social support and the level of satisfaction with it influence how the individual perceives the various stressful life events, the methods of confrontation employed in response to them, and the manner in which these events are dealt with. Social support has a beneficial impact on the health of the individual. This is because the social support network is more likely to adopt healthy behaviours and form a healthy pattern. Furthermore, the social support network is more likely to provide proactive behaviour in times of illness and need. It is also more likely to provide the necessary advice and stimulate positive behaviours.
- In addition to the fact that social support helps in self-protection, social support performs the task of protecting the person for himself and increasing the sense of his effectiveness, but the chances of an individual suffering from psychological and mental disorders decrease when the person realizes that he

receives social support from the network of social relations surrounding him, and there is no doubt that this support plays an important role in overcoming any crisis that a person may face.

- Social support also has a positive role in mitigating the negative effects of the suffering received by the individual, and that the low level of social support in the family and work has a negative impact on the individual's compatibility, and that social support has a strong impact on coping with frustration, and an important factor that prevents falling into social isolation.
- The protective effect of social support on physical and mental health is a consequence of its influence on the general state of wellbeing. The presence of a robust social network can provide an individual with a regular source of positive experiences and a range of roles that are socially and culturally valued. This can, in turn, lead to an enhanced sense of happiness.
- Social support fulfils two fundamental functions in the life of the individual. Firstly, it plays a preventive role, whereby individuals who have established social connections with others perceive these relationships as trustworthy and as being conducive to psychological wellbeing. Secondly, it fulfils a developmental role, whereby individuals who lack such social connections are psychologically disadvantaged in comparison to those who have them. Social support serves to mitigate the impact of stressful events. Individuals who are experiencing distressing circumstances demonstrate a capacity to regulate their emotional responses, including anxiety and depression, in part through the presence of social relationships and the support they offer. Conversely, a reduction in social support, in terms of both quantity and quality, may increase the likelihood of developing mental disorders.
- It can be posited that social support serves to enhance familial integration and equips families with the tools to navigate the challenges that arise from the presence of a disabled child. It is regarded as a preventive mediator in the context of disability, and also contributes to the identification of solutions to the results and repercussions of disability.

2.3. Forms of support directed to the family

The forms of support available vary according to the source from which they originate. The following forms are thus identified:

- The term "social support" is used to describe the assistance and resources that an individual may receive from their social network. This can be defined as the support received by the family from members of the extended family, friends, colleagues at work and others. The most significant advantage is the enhancement of the family's capacity to love and to comprehend the needs and difficulties of others.
- Official or professional support is furnished through private or public institutions and associations, as well as through doctors, specialists, psychologists, and special education specialists.
- The provision of legal and moral support is of great consequence. The significance of this form of assistance lies in the necessity for educational and developmental services, including medical care, for children with disabilities. Without effective educational and therapeutic intervention, these children are unable to develop and progress.(Al-Sayed, 2014, p. 124)
- The provision of information and advice is a key aspect of the support offered. This is attributable to the necessity for the family to possess adequate information regarding the nature and etiology of the disability, as well as guidance on how to provide assistance to the disabled individual.

Social support is also classified into four categories in accordance with the function it performs:(Ghaleb Jilan, pp. 74-75)

- **Emotional support:**The term can be defined as the behaviour that assures an individual that they are loved and appreciated as a human being, regardless of their mistakes or achievements. It can also be described as a feeling of empathy, expression of interest, love, acceptance and showing a special understanding. Furthermore, it is defined as the importance of emotional support, as it has been proven to increase the individual's self-esteem, reduce the severity of depression and anxiety, and increase motivation to live with stress.
- **Information Support:**It encompasses the provision of assistance in comprehending and managing a range of circumstances, delivered in the form of counsel, direction, or assistance with problem-solving.

The advantage of information support is that it enables the individual to access the requisite services by enhancing their awareness of the information that is relevant to them.

- **Social Companionship:**The term "social assistance" is defined as the time spent with others in a recreational environment and opportunities for cohabitation and belonging. The benefit of this type of social assistance is that it produces positive effects and allows the individual to be free from thinking about life requirements in their problems. His attention is elsewhere, engaged in meditation.
- **Performance Support:**In terms of assistance with work and financial matters, the advantage of performance support is evident in the resolution of practical issues, thereby enabling a greater allocation of time for rest and recuperation.

Furthermore, the researchers highlighted that social support serves a number of functions:

- The term "material assistance" is used to describe the provision of resources, including financial assistance and tangible items, to those in need. It is the provision of financial and material resources, as well as in-kind donations.
- The term "behavioral support" is used to describe interactions with others that involve sharing emotions and expressing gratitude and interest.
- The following guidance is provided: It comprises the provision of counsel and the dissemination of data and directives.
- Feedback: It means giving the individual the idea of his behavior and feelings and clarifying and justifying his thoughts.
- The term "positive social interaction" is used to describe participation in social interactions with the intention of seeking enjoyment, entertainment, and meaningful engagement that is perceived as positive.(Ghaleb Jilan, p. 77)

2.4. Conditions for providing social support:

The level of support provided is as follows: The provision of social and psychological support at an excessive rate may result in the individual becoming overly reliant on such support, which could subsequently lead to a decline in their self-esteem.

The selection of an appropriate timing for the provision of support is a crucial aspect in the process of offering assistance. This dimension necessitates the utilisation of considerable social skills on the part of the support provider, in order to facilitate optimal outcomes for the recipient.

- The source of support is as follows: In order to provide effective support, it is essential that support providers possess certain characteristics, including flexibility, maturity and a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the problem being experienced by the recipient.
- The degree of support provided can be quantified in terms of its intensity. The provision of social and psychological support to the recipient facilitates the expeditious resolution of the issues they are facing.
- The degree of support provided can be quantified in terms of its intensity. The provision of social and psychological support to the recipient facilitates the expeditious resolution of the crises they are experiencing, thereby enabling them to overcome these challenges in a timely manner.
- The type of support provided can be classified into the following categories: This dimension is represented by the ability, skill and understanding of support providers to provide them in proportion to the actions and behaviours of the recipient that are aware and desired by the recipient, commensurate with the type and nature of the support provided to him.
- The concept of similarity, understanding and empathy encompasses the notion of social support that can be accepted in instances where there is a psychological and social alignment between the individual offering the support and the individual receiving it. This form of support is deemed effective for the recipient if the circumstances experienced by the provider and the recipient are analogous. (Ghaleb Jilan, p. 94)

3. The efficacy of social support provided to the families of children with mental disabilities is to be examined.

Following the initial focus on the disabled individual, the department has expanded its remit to encompass the family unit. This shift reflects the recognition that successful and effective intervention cannot be achieved in isolation from the family.

Furthermore, identifying the needs of the child, particularly those with disabilities, is an integral part of addressing the family's social, economic, and emotional circumstances. These conditions have a direct impact on the health and well-being of both disabled and non-disabled individuals. For instance, providing financial assistance to families in order to alleviate the financial burden of disability-related expenses, including treatment costs and transportation, is crucial. This is particularly relevant for families who are economically disadvantaged. The term "disabled person" encompasses not only those with a medical condition, but also those who are deprived of education, employment opportunities and public services. This deprivation leads to poverty, which in turn leads to an increased prevalence of disability. This, in turn, further exacerbates poverty. (Busi, 2018, p. 10)

The philosophy of social care for the disabled is based on a model that prioritises the support of the family. This is because the family represents the collective to which the disabled child belongs and is therefore able to provide assistance and make appropriate decisions. This approach enables social workers, psychologists and the wider professional team to provide support, assistance and additional resources to empower families and promote the development of new skills in the disabled child, thereby facilitating the resolution of their problems.

Accordingly, the functional approach to social support is predicated on the notion that the provision of assistance can mitigate the challenges and stressors experienced by families of individuals with disabilities.

The discussion was informed by a multitude of programmes, philosophies and trends, the majority of which advocate for the support of families with children with disabilities and propose various strategies to assist them and their children. These strategies include: Community-based parent support programmes diverge from the conventional parental human services programmes in that they offer a plethora of programmes, formats and alternatives designed to bolster these community initiatives in their mission to bolster families of children with disabilities, which endeavour to furnish parents with resources and assistance. The principal aim of these programmes is to furnish parents with the requisite support and information in a manner that enhances their sense of capability and competence. (Damra & Jamil, 2016, pp. 1137-1138)

The issue of how to deal with a disabled child became inextricably linked to the question of how to integrate him or her back into the family unit, rather than isolating him or her from it. As a result of lacking direct experience of mental illness and uncertainty about how to interact with their children, parents often seek external support to form a network of social relations. This may involve relatives, friends, professionals, or even members of civil and official society. The provision of support and assistance serves to enhance the security of the family unit.

The social support received by disabled individuals and their families plays an important role in alleviating the disability and facilitating the return to social, professional, and academic life. Research has confirmed that the availability of different types and forms of support, especially informal (social) support provided by personal networks such as friends and family groups, has multiple effects on family outcomes. These include personal health and well-being, family satisfaction, positive attitudes towards the child, and increased positive family interactions. Additionally, social support has been shown to contribute to the development of self-ambitions and the reduction of the sources of psychological pressure faced by families of people with disabilities. (Damra & Jamil, 2016, pp. 1137-1138)

It is thus imperative to cultivate a collaborative relationship between families, social workers and children with disabilities, in order to guarantee the efficacy of social assistance and support for those with disabilities.

The aforementioned family-centred support practices are distinguished by the following key characteristics:

- The families in question are treated with dignity and respect. - Offer individualised and flexible support. Information should be shared with families in order that they may make informed decisions. - Guarantee the family's selection of intervention options. "It is essential to provide parents with the requisite resources and support to enable them to care for their children in a manner that yields optimal outcomes for both the child and the family."(Damra & Jamil, 2016, p. 1138)

The provision of support to the family also serves to enhance the child's perception of the quality of life, particularly given the additional difficulties and challenges that disability can present for both the child and their family, which may be outside of their previous experience. This has a detrimental impact on the family unit's ability to fulfil its functions and demonstrate effectiveness.

The role of the family in relation to its disabled members can be defined as follows:

- It is essential to satisfy the psychological and emotional needs of children, particularly their need for love and affection. This is particularly crucial for children with disabilities, who require a nurturing environment to thrive. This has a significant impact on their mental health. This atmosphere plays an important role in the formation of the child's personality. It is therefore essential to ensure a balance in the care of the child, avoiding the extremes of protection that can lead to lethargy, laziness and dependence, as well as cruelty and neglect that can result in aggressive behaviour and social disorders.(Mokhtar, 2000, pp. 129-133)
- The provision of healthcare for disabled children is a fundamental aspect of child welfare. One of the most fundamental rights of the child is the provision of healthcare that encompasses both psychological and mental wellbeing. This is particularly the case for children who are sick or disabled, as they often require medical and healthcare services to address the health issues and illnesses that they face. However, the availability of these services is often constrained by the financial circumstances and economic status of the family in question.
- The social function of the aforementioned concept is as follows: The objective is to facilitate the social integration of the family of the disabled child, enabling them to accept and adapt to others. This necessitates that the family initially accept the disabled child, and subsequently facilitate his acceptance and interaction with others, as well as encourage others to accept him. Consequently, the perception of disabled children within society is transformed.

The aforementioned concept's social function can be described as follows: The objective is to facilitate the social integration of the family of the disabled child, thereby enabling them to accept and adapt to others. This requires that the family accept the disabled child initially and subsequently facilitate his acceptance and interaction with others, as well as encourage others to accept him. As a result, the way disabled children are perceived by society is altered.(Abu Al-Nasr, 2002, p. 138)

The significance of social support for the family of a disabled individual is derived from the multifaceted nature of their needs:

- The necessity for medical services among the families of disabled individuals.
- The necessity for educational services for families of disabled individuals.
- The necessity for health education services for families of disabled individuals.
- The necessity for rehabilitation and employment services for disabled individuals within families.
- The necessity for families to provide care for disabled individuals following the death of their parents.

4. The role of the social worker in supporting the families of disabled children

The mentally handicapped are considered to be one of the most important groups to which social work has paid attention. The philosophy of social work in the field of caring for the disabled is based on the premise that disability affects family members, thereby necessitating their support and assistance from the social worker. Furthermore, it is essential to identify the challenges and difficulties faced by these families. One of the most significant social issues resulting from disability in the family is the stigma attached to mentally disabled children. Mental disability differs from other forms of disability in terms of societal acceptance. Those with physical or sensory disabilities are accepted by society as patients to be treated, whereas those with mental disabilities are rejected.

The mentally handicapped are considered to be one of the most important groups to which social work has paid attention. The philosophy of social work in the field of caring for the disabled is predicated on the assumption that disability has an impact on family members, thereby necessitating their support and assistance from the social worker. Moreover, it is crucial to ascertain the challenges and difficulties encountered by these families. One of the most significant social issues resulting from disability in the family is the stigma attached to children with mental disabilities. Mental disability differs from other forms of disability in terms of societal acceptance, which is a key factor in the way it is perceived and treated. Those with physical or sensory disabilities are accepted by society as patients to be treated, whereas those with mental disabilities are rejected. (Barakat & et al, 2017, pp. 164-165)

It is imperative that social workers consider the role of the family in achieving positive outcomes for individuals with mental disabilities. Without a holistic approach that encompasses the family unit, it is unlikely that social workers will be able to facilitate meaningful change for those they are assisting. Investment in the family of the disabled plays a significant and dependable role in the activation of the social work profession with the disabled. The role of the social worker in relation to the family of the disabled can be defined as follows: (Hanbaza & Nouh, p. 358)

- 1) Assist the family in accepting the situation and endeavour to alleviate the parents' negative sentiments towards their mentally disabled son.
- 2) It is essential to persuade the parents to accept their son unconditionally in order to facilitate his well-being and support his development.
- 3) It is important to explain to parents that the use of rejection and ill-treatment of the son may result in behavioural issues.
- 4) It is recommended that the mother be encouraged to assist the son in learning the habits of proper sleeping and eating, as well as training him to interact automatically within the family by offering encouragement in the event of any progress in his behavior or when he performs a successful task.
- 5) Assisting the mother in teaching the son correct pronunciation, with guidance on the importance of repetition, to ensure he is able to respond and is motivated to improve.
- 6) Reducing the negative sentiment towards individuals with mental disabilities.
- 7) Reinforcing religious beliefs within the family of the mentally ill to foster acceptance, care, and assistance in an appropriate manner.

In this context, the social worker employs the group service method to address the family as a collective unit, and may also utilise the individual service method when engaging with a parent or sibling.

The skills and interventions conducted by the social worker with the family of the disabled individual represent a crucial step in fostering closer ties with the family and in discerning the social perceptions of the family towards the disabled son. In addition to identifying the socio-cultural and economic circumstances of the family, its diverse needs, and diagnosing the issues it faces, particularly those resulting from the challenges of disability, the social worker is prepared to provide suitable assistance and services.

Conclusion

It can be stated that... A person's disability affects their family in a simultaneous and reciprocal manner. For the family to serve as an active partner in supporting the disabled child, it must rely on its own capabilities and resources. This process, which entails "strengthening the family's own strengths," represents a pivotal point of social support. In light of this vision, it is imperative to direct attention towards family interventions, their consequences, and the means of providing them with support.

A review of the literature reveals a multitude of studies on disability and the family. These studies encompass the challenges faced by families due to the disability of one of their members, as well as the family's responses to disability. Additionally, they examine the services and care that disabled individuals receive within their families or from other institutions. Nevertheless, addressing the issue of family and disability is insufficient for a comprehensive discourse on the subject. It is also imperative to consider the

extent to which conditions and a conducive environment are provided to the family so that it can provide appropriate and effective assistance to the disabled child by providing appropriate support to the family.

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