

INTEGRITY OF THE PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. *This article seeks to analyze the importance and methods of integration of the people with mental disorders in modern society. It shows the importance of highlighting and discussing the problem of misunderstanding and stigmatization through arts, films, TV shows. As a solution, it suggests some possible social strategies and methods to provide a comfortable and safe environment for the successful integration into the human community. It presents the analysis of the IT solutions that can treat people with mental illnesses using complex IT inventions such as electrical brain implants.*

Key words: *mental diseases, integration, society, disorder, stigmatization, IT solutions.*

Introduction

What main characteristic comes to your mind when you think about the society of the 21st century? Tolerance. At the same time the question of the integrity of mental ill people is still open. Did you know that the number of such people worldwide, according to the statistics of Our World in Data by 2018, is 970 million? It is 13% of the total human population, which is bigger than Europe's population. All these people have to integrate somehow into modern society to live a normal life. But how exactly do they have to do that if there are a lot of barriers preventing them from this? People with mental disorders face social misunderstandings, stigmas and rejection every day. They are the people who don't differ from us, but they still have to "fight" everyday to be accepted by society.

The stigmatization of society

"The worst part of having a mental illness is people expect you to behave as if you don't" [1].

Huge amount of mentally ill people do not tell anyone about their problem, because they are afraid of condemnation. To come closer to the problems of these people, here is the experience of Cecilia McGough, an astronomer and activist in fighting against the negative stigma towards mental illness: "It took me eight months to finally get the treatment that I needed. I didn't even have a diagnosis of schizophrenia. And because of that, what kept me from getting help were conversations like these. I told my mom "I'm sick. I need a doctor." Her response? "No! You can't tell anyone about this. People are going to think that you're crazy, that you're dangerous and you won't be able to get a job" [2].

Mental health is one of the most vulnerable fields to society's stigmatization. Mental Health Foundation statistics showed that 9 out of 10 people with mental disorders feel that social stigma and discrimination have negative impact on their lives: it is difficult for them to find a job, to be in long-term relationship, to make friends. Unfortunately, the media aggravates the stigma. Most common stereotype shown in the "slasher" and "psycho killer" movies is that people with schizophrenia are "homicidal maniacs".

People, who struggle with mental disorders, are mostly blamed by the media consumers for their illnesses. For instance, the most stigmatized symptom for depression is suicidal behavior/tendencies, for people with schizophrenia - auditory and visual hallucinations. In fact, only 60-80 % of people who suffer from schizophrenia have these symptoms.

A 2012 paper “Portrayals of Schizophrenia by Entertainment Media: A Content Analysis of Contemporary Movies” showed an analysis of 41 movies that had been released between 1990 and 2010. The researchers analyzed the movies for depictions of schizophrenia. They discovered that most of the characters in these movies demonstrate violent, cruel and aggressive behavior towards themselves and others, a quarter of the characters killed themselves, in a quarter of the movies it was implied that an important and significant causative factor for them was a traumatic life event or a painful moment from their past. All of these facts are strongly overestimated [3].

The society’s stigmatization turns the person’s life into a constant fight and defense of his human rights. The statistics state that mental disorders are the cause of 14.3% of deaths worldwide, which is approximately 8 million deaths every year [4]. More than 90% of suicides occur because of mental health disorders or substance use disorder, according to the meta-analyses of psychological autopsies, which studied the causes of the suicide across high-income countries [5].

Social perspectives in integrating people with mental disorders

The main question is still open: How do people with mental disorders deal with social integration and how do they experience life in the community? The findings from the studies showed that people who suffer from mental diseases consider their home to be a safe place, which is important for their independent life. Their home is a place where they develop their autonomy and virtue in communication with others. Integration and living in the community is very important for these people. The participants of the study have only experienced living with people with similar types of diseases. Identical life experiences and situations were more significant for them than age, interests, hobbies and passions [6]. There are a lot of social organizations that help people to integrate in modern society. They organize meetings where they talk to people with mental illnesses and try to help them to overcome their issues and the barriers between them and the society.

For instance, there is a popular social non profit organization called ‘Students with Schizophrenia’, which has been founded and organized by a person who also suffers from schizophrenia. This organization helps and empowers students from colleges and universities and gives them the resources, which will help them to continue their studies and be successful. The owner of the organization says: “I’m not going to wallow in self-pity about my diagnosis. Instead, I want to use it as a common denominator, so I can help other people who have schizophrenia. And I’m not going to rest until anyone who has schizophrenia worldwide is not afraid to say the words: ‘I have schizophrenia’. Because it’s okay to have it.” [7].

It finds out that engineers very often face mental health problems. The Professional Engineering survey showed a high level of stress among the engineers. More than 77.8% of respondents consider that their work is often stressful. About 53.7% said that the stressful environment and workplace have a negative impact on their behavior, mental health and well-being. The workplace stress has an even worse effect on them than the problems at home and personal issues. The survey also showed that 67% of respondents go to work (ignoring their feeling of emotional or mental unwell) despite feeling emotionally or mentally unwell. Other 42.3% of people said that their mood and poor mental health affected their work. They couldn’t concentrate and accomplish their tasks properly and efficiently. This might have very serious circumstances for these people [8]. But how can we avoid this?

The Head of Workplace Health and Safety at Hydro Tasmania, Adrian Daniels, leads A New Mindset, the organisation’s award-winning mental health and suicide prevention program in partnership with OzHelp Tasmania Foundation [9]. More than 70% of workers at Hydro Tasmania have accomplished training, dedicated to suicide-prevention awareness. This training, called “Looking after your mates”, supports in growing the organization’s culture of acceptance and empathy. Adrian Daniels suggested a list of recommendations for the employers, which will help them to form a positive environment and to prevent their workers from burn-outs:

1. Train staff to be vigilant and attentive. They should be aware of the warning signs of mental illness. Create a safe environment such that your workers won't be afraid to discuss the problem.
2. Find the sources of the stress related to their work and the solutions to minimize or eliminate it. Help your workers to identify and manage their personal sources of stress.
3. Be aware that mental illnesses have a negative impact not only on your workers, but also on your business and effective working of the company.
4. Understand that mental well-being has a lot of benefits on the business from the perspective of successful teamwork, staff retention and attraction of specialists.
5. Work with the mental health institute to spread and develop this practice not only in your organization, but also outside it [9].

IT solutions

The scientists from Dartmouth College have created the AI model for discovering mental disorders with help of data analysis from Reddit. It is part of a new system of screening tools that are being used to analyze social media posts and obtain information about people's mental state. In their work, the researchers focused on what they call emotional disorders with clear emotional patterns: depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. Then the researchers trained their model to label the emotions expressed in user messages and display emotional transitions between different messages so that they could be labeled as "joy," "anger," "sadness," "fear," "lack of emotion," or a combination of both. They ended up with a matrix showing how likely the user is to go from one state to another, such as from angry to neutral. By creating an emotional "digital fingerprint" of the user and comparing it with established signs of emotional disorders, the model can detect them [10].

In 2021 University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) successfully treated for depression with an electrical brain implant. This device detects patterns of brain activity related to depression and automatically interrupts them. For the interrupting process it uses tiny pulses of electrical stimulation, which are delivered deep inside the brain [11].

More than 100,000 Parkinson's Disease patients have been treated with deep brain stimulation (DBS) since 1997. DBS is a surgical technique and it involves the implantation of ultra-thin wire electrodes, also known as 'brain pacemaker'. The implant delivers electrical pulses to the subthalamic nucleus, which is located near the center of the brain. The device effectively alleviates many of the physical symptoms of the disease. It can be used to treat tremor, muscle rigidity and slowed movements [12].

Conclusions

Since the amount of people with mental diseases is extremely huge, the integration problem without any doubt is very important. People with mental disorders suffer from social misunderstandings and stigmas. Our society has to highlight this problem to help these people to integrate. Despite the fact that these people have to "fight" with their disorders, they have to defend their rights to normal life, facing society's rejection. That is why we have to speak about mental health in schools and universities. We should organize a subject in the school, where psychologists will tell kids about the importance of being vigilant and kind towards people with mental health problems. We have to be attentive toward stress and burning-out at work, to show mental disorders in mass-media with care and ethics, to create necessary organizations that defend the rights of the mental ill and, all-in-all, we have to keep in mind that all people have the right to live. We live in the informational technologies century where researchers and engineers invent something new every day. The technologies are developing really fast and one day we will be able to treat mental disorders or even prevent their occurrence during the pregnancy period or the transmission of genes by heredity.

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