

Improving Social Policies for Disabled People in China based on existing situation

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Abstract. Centered around the social status of and social policy related to disabled people in China, this paper aims to analyze the unfair treatment disabled people in China face. The research shows that because of bias against disabled people and the lack of facilities for them, disabled people in China do not have equal human rights. To improve this situation, developing countries like China should not only promote equal rights for disabled people but also rehabilitate disabled people's self-esteem. The government should also eradicate negative stereotypes, such as immoral people punished by the god, of disabled people by educating young children the cause of disability in school and the old in the communities. Finally, compared with Western countries, China needs to build more facilities for the disabled. Introduction

1 Introduction

The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in 1931 and the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979, as well as countless other conflicts in between, have resulted in massive numbers of death, injuries, and disabilities in China. According to the United Nations, there are currently almost 83 million disabled people in China.[1]

For decades, government protection for individuals with disabilities has been ensured by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and several other acts. [2] The Law on The Protection of Persons with Disabilities clearly states that "persons with Disabilities shall enjoy equal rights with Disabilities Other Citizens in Political, economic, Cultural and social respects and in family life as well," the centralized system and feudal history of ancient China made this clause become an empty word. [3] Despite this, disabled people in China still find it hard to live in the society as able-bodied people do, despite China's economic progress, which has been beneficial for other minorities. As China continues to grow, molding China into a more inclusive society is of increasing importance, urging us to pay more attention to the social policies regarding disability rights.

Most developed countries have taken several actions to help individuals with disabilities use the streets as conveniently as others. For example, 90% of buses in Edinburgh are barrier-free, low-chassis buses equipped with lifts and wheelchair fixing devices.[4] In America, handicapped parking spaces with blue markings are common in public spaces, and an able-bodied person who uses a disabled parking space can be fined hundreds of

dollars. [5][6] These actions, though they may not be sufficient, give disabled people the opportunity to participate in society with dignity.

Previous studies have demonstrated that not only does discrimination against disabled people exist but also many people in China deny such discrimination, indicating the possibility of deeper. [7] The root of these existing problems lies in aspects of traditional Chinese culture such as Confucianism and Buddhism. By examining these and comparing contemporary disability policies in China with those worldwide, I will determine what effective social policies China should adapt in order to promote the inclusion of disabled people into mainstream life.

The following research questions will guide this research:

a) How do disabled people in China feel about their current situation? Are they enjoying enough social care and commendation from the government?

b) What is the social attitude towards disabled people in China? Do most Chinese realize that disabled people should have equal human rights instead of having mercy on disabled people as if the able-bodied are above them?

c) Does the lack in facilities for the disabled in China influence the way disabled people regard themselves? Do western countries offer insights into what kind of social policies can China make to improve the life quality of disabled people?

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2 Investigation and research

2.1 Disabled people's self-assessment

The majority of studies conducted on social policies for disabled people and their living situation focus on the inadequacies of existing welfare programs and caring systems in China. Less attention is paid to the discrimination that disabled people are experiencing. [8] While, in many other countries, disabled people tend to keep disclosing the unfair treatment and discrimination they have suffered, and while other disadvantaged groups in China speak up about the discrimination they face, disabled people in China tend to “deny social discrimination” rather than seeking ways to fight for social inclusion.

This is primarily because in China's existing society and tradition, disadvantaged groups are not used to expressing their views through protests and marches. But more importantly, most of the injustices against disabled people are endured in silence by disabled people. Although the disability is not their fault, many disabled people do not realize the concept of equality with others, but blame their mistakes on themselves.

In fact, according to Lin and Yang [7], many disabled individuals in China don't regard the discrimination and bullying they have experienced as unfair treatment. Instead, many of them, if not most, are thankful to abled-bodied people or consider discrimination something they need to bear. The pursuit of unity is an important symbol in East Asian culture. Because they are different, Chinese disabled people feel inferior and deny themselves equal treatment.

Many disabled people feel alienated from the people around them because they lack arms, legs or a voice. Many of them therefore avoid or reject communication with the outside world. Because people with disabilities are different from those around them, they choose to hide themselves and pretend that they do not exist. However, this only leads to more and more mysterious people with disabilities and makes their difficult situation more difficult for the outside world to know.

What's more, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and other Chinese traditional cultures regard disability as negative bad karma. Disabled people are bearing the bad karma because they didn't follow their Dharma in their previous life. In addition, the relationship between the disabled people and their family also contribute to this self-assessment. To be specific, because the Chinese society will regard disabled people as fragile burden that need to be carefully taken care of.

Although modern China is a non-religious country, Confucianism and Buddhism are deeply rooted in the hearts of every Chinese. The concept of samsara has convinced the Chinese that disability is not gratuitous. In addition, due to the lack of education in rural areas, many people believe that disability is cursed or even contagious. Such prejudice further leads to the tragic fate of disabled people being bullied and even killed in rural areas.

Also, due to the Confucianism, if a person fails to take good care of his disabled family, he will be

considered irresponsible or unkind. Although well-intentioned, such high demands cannot guarantee the human rights of the disabled. On the one hand, under such a high level of protection, it is difficult for disabled people to exist as an independent person, unable to be independent, unable to explore their own interests, unable to establish their own social contacts, but can only be kept at home as fragile treasures. On the other hand, although many people are unwilling to take care of their disabled family members, they are forced by social pressure to support the disabled. In many areas of rural China, disabled people are not well taken care of. Instead, they are only guaranteed basic survival. However, in order not to be laughed at by others, the families of disabled people hide them in their homes, cut off from communication with the outside world, and let them live their lives like pigs and sheep in captivity. Many disabled people who grew up in this situation could not read or even speak.

Because they naturally put themselves in a position where they need to be expelled and excluded, any relevant welfare policy makes them feel surprised and grateful. Disabled people themselves do not think that they are equal to able-bodied people.

2.2 The impact of traditional culture and religious belief on the general social attitude

This self-abasement can be attributed to the dominant Buddhist and Confucianist values in traditional Chinese culture, which consider the birth of a crippled child shameful—a kind of retribution against the mother. Disability is associated with omens and evil, and Chinese people with disabilities “have been oppressed, stigmatized and seen as defective.”[9] That, in Chinese, the dominant term for disabled people is “Can fei,” which literally means “deformed and useless,” also contributes to the stigma and humiliation.

In rural areas, many have children in order to obtain more labor. However, disabled men are killed at birth because they cannot provide value for manual labor such as farming. Disabled women are slightly better off, kept until they are about 10 years old and sold to traffickers immediately after their first period. Traffickers sell them to men who cannot find wives, most of whom are mentally ill or incompetent. Disabled women are abused by their husbands and become complete fertility machines.

Society as a whole dislikes and is reluctant to engage with disabled people. In China, if there are disabled people in the family, they are more likely to be laughed at and discriminated against instead of caring or sympathy. Many family members transmit external discrimination to vulnerable disabled people. This makes disabled people become the end of the negative energy of the whole society. Some may even say, if you weren't my child, I would earn more money or so.

As a result, isolation and discrimination takes place even within families, where disabled family members are harmed in hidden and inconspicuous ways, such as through verbal abuse. Besides, because traditional Confucianism requires people carefully take care of their

disabled family members, disabled people are seldom given enough and independent space for exploration and development. If a disabled people work in the society, his/her family will be blamed as too cruel or not caring enough. China is an acquaintance society, other people's views are therefore more important than it seems to be. Hence, most family members of disabled people not dare to provide sufficient room for disabled people to explore their own interest, and live and work like abled-bodied people for the do not want to be accused of indifference by other people.

In China, it is rare to see disabled people walking alone on the streets, let alone working. Whether in public institutions or private enterprises, disabled people are not provided with or rarely provided with care positions. People do not think that disabled people need normal communication, people even think that the support of disabled people is an extra concession.

At the same time, due to the lack of facilities for the disabled in China—for example, there are few facilities for the disabled in shopping malls and public restrooms—it is difficult for the disabled to live independently, and they often need the help and support of around them. Since the disabled people can not live normally without the help from his/her family member, he/she may therefore often feel insecure and tend to hide their internal need but to please others.

If the caregiver feels dissatisfied or unhappy, he or she is likely to give up letting the disabled person contact society. Disabled people themselves have no control over their bodies or society, so they have to try their best to restrain their emotions. To achieve one's own ends by ingratiating or arousing the sympathy of others. They have no self-worth and have a hard time trying to achieve it.

Thus, people with disabilities are prone to developing an inferiority complex, labeling themselves a “family burden,” and thinking that they deserve to be punished for the trouble they have caused others.

2.3 Government social care and relevant welfare policies

In addition to discrimination, disabled people in China are offered very limited long-term formal care provided by the government. The main problem with the public service delivery system in China is that disabled people have little opportunity to be involved in the “design, delivery and evaluation of the services provided for them.” [10] The China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) was firstly established by the son of Deng Xiaoping, a powerful Chinese ruler. This origin may result in its limit in representing the interest of disabled people. The CDPF directly works with the government and is often criticized for its “half government–half public” status as an institution because of its inclination towards the interests of the local government instead of disabled people's interest.[11] A survey shows that among the sampled disabled people in two cities, more than half of them were not satisfied with the work of the CDPF, indicating the failure of the CDPF. [12]

On the other hand, while non-profit organizations are often more democratic and devoted to protecting the interest of disabled people, their lack of funding sources often make local non-profits unable to provide long-term and cohesive care. Because local NPOs lack reliable and consistent funding sources, they often have to compete with one another for official funding, which is inconsistent. Therefore, few NPOs can support local disabled people coherently.

Additionally, due to the lack of basic protective measures for the disabled, the disabled are unknown to the public, which makes them vulnerable to stigmatization and further discrimination. The lack of facilities such as elevators and ramps for disabled people has prevented many disabled people from participating in mainstream society. Because most disabled people have been excluded from mainstream social life for a long time, it is difficult for them to have enough knowledge and resources to help themselves fight for their human rights, creating a vicious cycle that further marginalizes them.

However, there are still several effective policies made to help disabled people. For instance, eligible disabled people can apply for “living subsidies for disabled people in need” and “nursing subsidies for severely disabled people” at the same time. The disabled who not only meet the condition of the above two subsidy applying requirement but also the conditions of “welfare living allowance and nursing allowance for the elderly, disabled on business, and retired” can apply for one of the living allowance and nursing allowance at a higher level. The disabled children who enjoy the basic life security policy for orphans will not enjoy the living allowance for the disabled with difficulties, but can enjoy the nursing allowance for the severely disabled. The two subsidies for disabled persons are not included in the income of urban and rural families with minimum living security. Nevertheless, disabled people will be able to enjoy the two subsidies for the disabled if they receive the living care fee of the industrial injury insurance or if they are included in the support security for the poverty-stricken people.

In order to better build a more inclusive society, the following suggestions can be taken:

First of all, the public employment service institutions established by the relevant government departments shall provide the disabled people with employment directing services for free.

Second, the employment directing service institutions set up by the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) shall organize and carry out free vocational guidance, employment introduction and vocational training for disabled people. They may provide services and assistance for the employment of disabled persons and the recruitment of disabled persons by employers as well.

Third, people with disabilities can visit national museums, large-scale commercial activities, tourist attractions and various scenic spots for free.

Finally, less expenses for using cable cars and garden cars priced by the government in scenic spots.

Hence, the disabled people will no longer be a mysterious group but instead free of stigmatization.

3 Conclusion

Based on the research above, disabled people in China often view government policies as excessive compensation rather than necessary for the protection of their human rights. At the same time, due to the shortcomings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and other traditional philosophies, Chinese society generally believes that a person's health is positively correlated with his moral character. As a result, discrimination against disabled people is an ingrained part of Chinese society, generally. Because of the concept of "Ren", most Chinese people's attitude towards disabled people is not so much that they wish to deny disabled people equal human rights, but that they condescend to and pity them. This attitude of mercy will lead to the dependency of disabled people on abled-bodied people, preventing them from integrating the society and behaving as abled-bodied people. Finally, the absence of disabled people in official the service system and the design of the welfare system, along with the lack of facilities for the disabled in China, further deepen the inferiority of the disabled. Missing from social life, people with disabilities are unable to counter many of these stigmatizing. Because of their infrequent contact with disabled people, able-bodied people's prejudices against disabled people are difficult to correct, leading to negative biases regarding disabled people and both direct and indirect social discrimination. By publicizing policies that promote disabled people's equal human rights and building more public accommodations for disabled, China can greatly improve the lives of disabled people.

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