Introduction

As the world progresses and expands in its economic magnitude, those in the lower section of society are often neglected and denied their rights. Marginalization, or rather the social exclusion, of those who unfortunately suffer from mental and physical conditions brings about negative consequences to the entire society. The notion of marginalization can be explained simply through the lens of a child; “several young people experience violence, ranging from bullying and other forms of emotional violence to more physical forms of aggression”. Recent surveys delineate that those marginalized, especially those that are disabled, find themselves significantly isolated from the general society and express “feelings of alienation”.

Most governments around the world promise rights of freedom and equality in all aspects to their citizenry, however, the reality is slightly distorted than what the government reflects in its legislation. When discussing marginalization, it is of essence to recognize the minorities in society, that reflect the smaller groups in society whose voices are often unheard of and rendered trivial. Bearing in mind the social stigma surrounding the label disabled, these people that often embody the minority of society are marginalized and “forced to be at the edge of society”.

In today’s fast-paced world, marginalization results in a snowball effect of chain of events that only really worsen the plight of the situation. The preliminary effect, is of course feelings of emotional turmoil and the struggle of emotions that come with the exclusion of society. Alongside that, society brings upon these people the division of resources, the denial of rights, the language and communication problems and several general impacts that are bestowed upon these minority groups.

In spite of the fact that it is seemingly trivial, marginalization is a very serious problem that has changed the fate of multiple countries around the globe. Marginalization is another form of discrimination, and “needs to be addressed, as a priority, with respect to their impact” and all the negative consequences associated with it.
Definition of Key Terms

Marginalization

The action of either a single person, a group of people or its equivalent are made to feel of insignificance, especially by those in a higher power hierarchy.

Social Exclusion

A process wherein certain people [or groups] are “either partially, or completely excluded from a functioning social system, and denied their rights” and privileges simply based on the fact that they associate/belong to a lower minority group, or are in a current state of poverty.

Resources Distribution

Refers to the splitting of resources, eg: land, water, air, natural resources amongst certain sects of society and/or geographical entities. Often, those that are socially excluded, or marginalized from society have the least role in the distribution of resources, and end up in a worse state of poverty.

Disabled

A term used to label those that have either a physical or mental condition, that results into a limit in their daily functioning. For instance, movement from one place to another, communication with family is made difficult when an individual is *disabled*.

Background Information

History of disability discrimination

Disabilities have always been experienced by humans and in the past, many people were not fond of disabled people. A very early example of this is in the bible. Leviticus 21: 16-20 states “None of your descendants…shall draw near a blind or lame man, or he that hath a mutilated face or a limb too long, or man that has an injured foot or an injured hand, or a hunchback or dwarf or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be with scurvy, or scabbed”. In modern day english, this passage says that people should not get close, figuratively or literally to those that have disabilities. This is because disabilities had a connotation with sin, which makes it so people with disabilities have a harder time becoming closer to their spiritual belief.

Europe, in the dark ages, took this a step further and created “lunatic asylums” and “leprosariums” for those that had disabilities to be locked away under horrible conditions. They were considered as and
treated like they were subhuman. Even then, if they were lucky enough to be put in a hospital, it was not controlled by the state, but actually by the church. Several monasteries accommodated for the ones that needed it since it fulfilled the Christian duty of helping the less fortunate.

During world war two, Hitler ordered the "mercy killing" of all those with mental or physical disabilities to eliminate the "unworthy of life". He believed that it was not right to have these deformed people be living and they were not worthy of life. The program, nicknamed Aktion T4, killed about 275,000 people with many disabilities.

Slowly, over time, disabled people have been getting fairer and more equal representation in life. The idea of eugenics, that disabled people should be isolated and sterilized, has lost most of its appeal. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a large scale movement, based on the civil rights movement in the US, for disability rights and against inequality and and poor access for those with disabilities.

The idea is that disabled people now strive for a social model for disability, not a medical one so that the idea of their rights and of equality was in the forefront.

**Inequality experienced by disabled people**

People that are disabled experience many challenges that those without disability do not. They experience discrimination which leads to them having less access to things that are widely available. This then leads to economic inequality experienced by people with disabilities. This is because it is harder for them to be educated and to be employed due to the stigma against those with disabilities.

"People without disabilities have alternative options if they can’t get a job. They can be self-employed. But people with disabilities don’t have as many alternatives. People with disabilities can’t influence powerful people. In general, people have negative attitudes about disability, so they don’t employ us."

said a report that quoted several testimonies from the disabled. This is confirmed by the fact that recent data suggests a correlation between disability and poverty.

**Usage of language**

Language affects the way we think so therefore the language used to describe disability very important. The most commonly used derogatory terms are “cripple” and “retard”. They are both very offensive and are examples of ableism. Ableism is the marginalisation of disabled people, like racism but for those with disabilities. The problem is that these words marginalise them by giving this perception of what is normal and saying that these people are not “normal” as if these people are defective. This is such a problem that the Paralympics created a campaign to stop the usage of derogatory language to refer to disability by having athletes give powerful testimonies of how the word has personally affected them.
A more subtle example is the word “lame”. Historically, it has been used to describe a person with a walking disability. The problem is that over time, the word has now changed to mean stupid, unoriginal, or boring. These are all words that have a negative connotation. Then, there is now a word to describe a disabled person that has a negative connotation attached to it, which only worsens the discrimination they experience. This language that is derogatory increase the social exclusion people with disabilities experience. Now, many are starting to recognize the power of these words and view these words as derogatory. Words like “cripple” and especially “retard” are being used less and less in the media as people have become aware of the negative impacts of the word.

Lack of representation

There is a severe lack of representation of disabled people in the media. This is a problem because the media is an accurate way to portray the struggles that the disabled face. Increased representation would make it so people are more sensitized towards the issue and would cause improvement for disabled people’s situations. Even when there is disabled representation, it is not always the best at portraying the issues that they face, which is an important step. This may seem insignificant but it is not because the portrayal and normalization of these issues clears up any misconceptions and makes it so they are more accepted in the society which will improve their situation and improve human rights for these disabled people.

One way they are represented is through sports. The paralympics happen every four years following the olympics and while it doesn’t attract as many viewers as the olympics, the amount of viewers the event does attract is still substantial. Furthermore, the event has been celebrated in the media as it puts a spotlight on the success of people who have had to overcome so much and helps to raise awareness for the issues disabled individuals face. This type of representation is especially important in countries where disabled people are completely rejected by society.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

World Health Organization

The World Health Organization is a UN affiliated group that monitors the marginalization of disabled individuals and looks to help promote equal health care for these individuals. The organization has noted that people with disabilities “may experience a narrower margin of health, both because of poverty and social exclusion, and also because they may be vulnerable to secondary conditions, such as pressure
sores or urinary tract infections”. Health care is just one area in which disabled individuals experience inequality.

**United States of America**

The U.S is one country that has passed legislation directly addressing the issue. In 1973 the Rehabilitation Act. Section 405 of the Rehabilitation Act enforced civil penalties for public locations that failed to comply with the ADA Access Guidelines which prohibit discrimination against disabled people in employment, public transport, and with public accommodations.

The Voting Accessibility for the Eldery and Handicapped Act of 1984 was passed to promote access to special services in order to aid in exercising their right to vote. This included help registering to vote and voting aids. The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 was passed with the purpose of eliminating housing discrimination. It also ensured that disabled individuals would be allowed to make special modifications to their house to accommodate their needs. Further legislation has also been passed to address discrimination education

**UNICEF**

UNICEF specifically works with disabled children as the organization focused on protecting the rights of children. According to UNICEF, disabled children are one of the most marginalized groups and face insufficient access to education and healthcare. The organization estimates that there about 93 million disabled children at least. UNICEF is working to promote awareness worldwide and helping disabled children in less economically developed countries to access the appropriate resources they need.

**United Kingdom**

Disabled individuals in the United Kingdom have reported that they face many difficulties in being fully accepted into society. Forty percent have said that they feel as if they are not valued in society. Furthermore, more disabled people in the UK are living in poverty than non disabled people and younger disabled individuals face bullying in schools. Some of the inequalities are due to the difficulties in accessibility in most cities. This prevents them from being able to function independently. The UK has said they are working to address this to create an environment that is fully inclusive.

**South Africa**

The South African constitution gives all children the right to a free education but this right does not extend to children with disabilities, who must pay a fee in order to attend school. Most parents of children
with disabilities are not in a stable enough financial situation to pay these fees but are forced to do so anyways. As a result, many children with disabilities are unable to attend school which makes it virtually impossible for them to find work and live independently. This heightens the difficulties disabled individuals face when looking for work and has resulted in many disabled individuals living in poverty.

Kenya

Disabled people are one of the most marginalized groups in Kenya. Children are often rejected by their parents upon learning of their disabilities. There is a belief that disabled people have evil spirits inside of them or are possessed and as a result, they are unable to be fully integrated into society. Disabled individuals in Kenya have unequal access to education and health, and face a lot of trouble in finding work. Most end up living in extreme poverty as they are not accepted by society.

Benin

Disabled individuals in Benin face many problems, the most significant being insufficient access to health care. There are more than 840,000 disabled individuals in Benin, many of whom are living in extreme poverty. Benin is not fully equipped to address this issue as almost 47% of the population is living in extreme poverty.

China

China has passed legislation to ensure equal rights for disabled individuals but it has not been well implemented into Chinese society. This is evident through the reduced opportunities for higher education, employment and just general access to public places that disabled individuals in China face. There are about 85 million disabled people in China and many of them struggle to be financially independent. The One Child Policy in China caused a lot of children to be rejected by their parents which has resulted in a high homeless population of disabled people in China.

Timeline of Events

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The ICF (International Classification of functioning disability and health) is approved by the World Health Organization</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Chicago holds history’s second Disability Pride Parade</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>The UN adopts the convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>The first meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is held</td>
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2010  Rosa’s Law passes and is reinforced in the US
2014  The UN publishes a statement titled “Eliminating forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary sterilization”
2015  New York holds a Disability Pride Parade
2016  Sagamihara Stabbings

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events:**

- Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities March 27 2008 Resolution 7/9
- Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda July 24, 2008 Ecosoc Resolution 2008/21

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

There have been several previous attempts in order to resolve the issue and end marginalization for those disabled minorities in society. As an obligatory action, governments always raise general awareness in order to address the issue and make it common knowledge for the citizenry that are unaware of the negative consequences of marginalization. According to the former executive director of UNICEF, social exclusion as such is purely a picture of “a tragic waste of potential - for these children and for their societies and economies.” The Global Partnership for Assistive Technology provides a life-changing support for those disabled persons that “include wheelchairs, prosthetics and hearing aids”; their goal is to provide support to a whole 500 million people all across the globe by the year 2030. Other human rights oriented organizations have also launched campaigns in countries where marginalization for the disabled is very prevalent. An organization by the name of Humanity & Inclusion focuses on helping disabled individuals primarily in less economically developed countries.

Governments have also begun to take action on this issue, by ensuring to include access to resources and all rights and positions in society, regardless of them being disabled and marginalized. In fact, certain society leaders have provided disabled people with special access to healthcare, and other resources that should ideally be equally as accessible as normal people. For instance, a plethora of countries have special parking spots for those disabled, special seats on trams and trains, and special bathrooms so as to provide them with the care that they not only deserve, but truly require to function
normally in society. Some governments have also introduced legislation that prohibits discrimination against disabled individuals in areas such as employment, healthcare and housing, to address the issue.

In addition to that, employment agencies, housing agencies, and schools all over the world have started to recognize disabled persons equally as capable as non-disabled people. There have been several different employment sectors, whereby disabled people that were employed have worked and raised the company’s name. In terms of schools, certain member states have created special schools in order to adhere to the needs of disabled persons in society. Most of the veto powers, such as the UK and USA also have facilitated access to housing for those disabled as a means to ensure that they aren’t deprived of the basic right of a roof over their heads as a result of purely being disabled and socially excluded.

Overall, despite the fact that previous attempts have been taken by multiple member states and several sectors of the UN organization, marginalization and social exclusion continues to grow on an exponential scale, especially disabled. It needs to be addressed with utmost priority, and stringent action needs to be taken against those that deliberately marginalized the minorities of society when knowing the consequences.

**Possible Solutions**

There are many ways to approach this issue and work to solve it. First is education about disabilities in primary schools, with the purpose of showing that people with disabilities aren’t in anyway less important or valid that anyone else. This will help tackle the wide spread ableist mindset that does unfortunately exist. This can also be addressed through representation in media. Disabled individuals tend to be overlooked in the entertainment industry which contributes to their lack of integration in society. Highlighting the work they do may not only help to show others that they are important members of society, but is also important to help disabled individuals to show that it is possible to lead a successful and fulfilling life with a disability.

Furthermore, it is also important to make the resources disabled people need to function individually on a daily basis more accessible to them. Many countries, such as the U.S, UK and China have implemented legislation that directly addresses this, but there are still many countries that haven’t done the same. Even in the countries that have, physically disabled individuals report having difficulties going through public areas on a daily basis. Another possible solution is providing career and education resources for disabled people. It is significantly more difficult for those with a disability to find a job and get the education they need, which usually results in homelessness. Providing services to help these individuals may help in making progress with the issue. Finally representation in government can also be
a very useful tool. Including the perspective of someone with a disability while drafting solutions that will directly impact that specific group will help to ensure that all actions taken from here on out efficiently addresses the issue at hand.

Bibliography


