

How does Stigma Affect the Mental Health and Overall Well-Being of Individuals with Physical Disabilities? What is the Difference Cross Country (China and America)

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Abstract. This study examines the understudied issue of stigma and how it affects people with physical impairments' mental health and overall well-being in China and America. The study investigates how stigma is felt and internalized and how it impacts the mental health of people with physical limitations. The influence of cultural norms and social perspectives on impairments on mental health outcomes and stigma experiences in these two different cultural contexts is also investigated. The intersectionality theory is used in the study to comprehend how many facets of identity, including disability, interact and influence stigma experiences and mental health consequences. It acknowledges the nuanced role that identity dynamics and group classifications play in shaping stigma experiences in both China and the United States. Utilizing surveys and semi-structured interviews, the study technique combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to capture a thorough picture of stigma, physical disability, and mental health in both nations. Considerations for sampling guarantee variety and an adequate sample size. To evaluate stigma and mental health, the study uses standardized measurements emphasizing coping skills and social support. Research instruments are culturally appropriated and translated to ensure they are pertinent for Chinese and American participants. The complicated link between stigma and mental health across cultural contexts is explored through data analysis, which includes statistical assessment and thematic analysis. This study advances theoretical knowledge by shedding light on the intricate relationship between stigma, physical impairment, and mental health. It broadens the corpus of research in stigma studies and offers cross-cultural insights into how social perspectives and cultural norms affect stigma experiences. The study has practical ramifications for mental health professionals and legislators, providing culturally informed therapies and raising awareness of the stigma associated with disabilities. In the end, this study offers the foundation for creating more inclusive communities and enhancing the quality of life for people with physical impairments in various cultural contexts.

Keywords: Stigma; Physical disabilities; Mental health; Well-being; China; America.

1. Introduction

Millions of people worldwide are impacted by physical disability, which cut through socioeconomic status cultural, and geographic divides. These disorders range from sensory deficiencies to movement problems, and they frequently have a substantial impact on a person's life. Even while these disorders' physical effects are obvious, their significant social and psychological impact on those who live with them is nevertheless hidden. This study addresses the understudied topic of stigma and its effects on the mental health and general well-being of people with physical limitations.

This study's main research question is: How does stigma impact the mental health and overall well-being of individuals living with physical disabilities in both China and America?

The study's first objective is to determine the typical forms and expressions of stigma experienced by people with physical disabilities in China and the United States. Understanding the common forms of stigma can help us better understand these people's unique difficulties.

The study will also look into how much stigma is internalized by people with physical disabilities and how it affects their mental health results. This investigation probes the psychological and individual aspects of stigma.

The project also examines how cultural norms and societal views regarding disabilities affect stigmatization experiences and mental health outcomes in China and America. These cultural influences are expected to substantially impact how stigmatized people with physical disabilities are perceived.

The issue has two sides: on either hand, people with physical impairments confront particular problems that can result in social exclusion and discrimination, and on the other, the prejudices and negative preconceptions that society perpetuates make things much more difficult for these people. As a result, people with physical impairments frequently struggle with the psychological cost that society's prejudice exacts and the physical limitations of their conditions. The development of successful methods to improve these people's quality of life and social inclusion depends on understanding the relationship between stigmatized and mental wellness in this situation. To understand the various effects of stigma on people with physical disabilities and the distinctive coping methods they deploy, this study compares China and America, two nations with very diverse cultural and societal standards. We seek to open the door for more focused interventions and policies that can promote a more fair and inclusive community for everyone by filling the hole in the literature.

The interaction of stigma, physical disabilities, and mental health has drawn more attention in disability studies and the study of mental health. The devastating effects of stigma on the mental health and overall well-being of those who live with disabilities have been highlighted in an extensive amount of writing over time. Per the study, people with impairments typically experience negative stereotypes, misunderstandings, and societal biases [1]. This may lead to additional emotional distress, decreased self-esteem, and worsened mental health outcomes in these persons.

Regarding physical disability, stigma is defined by several types of discrimination and prejudice. Social exclusion, verbal abuse, and the denial of possibilities and assets fall under this category [2]. These bad experiences can exacerbate mental health issues related to physical limitations by raising anxiety and stress levels.

Further harming mental health is internalized stigma, which occurs when people with physical impairments absorb society's negative judgments of their situation [3]. This can result in self-blame and diminished self-worth.

Since cultural norms, religious convictions, and societal institutions greatly influence how people perceive physical disability, stigma experiences vary among cultures and societies. This literature review also emphasizes the value of looking at societal and cultural aspects of stigma and its consequences. It is critical to recognize that diverse cultural settings may result in particular stigmatization patterns, coping strategies, and social support networks for people with disabilities in their bodies.

The evidence that is currently available emphasizes the negative impacts of stigma on the mental health and well-being of people who have physical limitations [4]. There is, however, a paucity of research that analyzes stigma's manifestations and effects on people in various historical and societal situations. By comparing stigma experiences throughout China and America, the present research aims to close this gap by understanding the differences in mental health outcomes in these two very different cultural contexts.

2. Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality, developed by Crenshaw (1989), is an essential framework to explore the layered and intersecting dimensions of identity that individuals with physical disabilities possess [5]. It recognizes that individuals have multiple social identities, such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, and disability, which intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. In this

study, intersectionality theory will be employed to understand how the various aspects of identity interact to shape the experiences of stigma and mental health outcomes. By acknowledging the complex interplay of these identities, we can gain deeper insights into how cultural factors, societal norms, and disability-related stigmas converge and diverge in their impact on individuals in China and America. The concept will be useful in analyzing how identity dynamics and group categorizations affect how stigma is experienced and how it affects psychological wellness in Chinese and American societies.

There are few thorough cross-country comparisons that examine how people with physical disabilities experience stigma differently in various cultural contexts, regardless of being aware of the influence of cultural and social factors on stigma and mental health. Research already done has frequently been nation-specific, concentrating mostly on Western or non-Western viewpoints. By rigorously contrasting China and America, two nations with different cultural standards, religious beliefs, and social systems, this study aims to close this gap.

The main hypothesis asserts that people with physical disabilities in China will suffer from stigma-related mental health problems at higher rates than people with similar impairments in America. This expectation is based on the idea that stigma experiences and effects vary greatly across the two countries due to cultural perceptions of disability, collectivist values, and social norms.

First, it is postulated that social exclusion, verbal assault, and the maintenance of stereotypes will be the main ways in which the stigma experienced by people with physical disabilities in both China and America manifests itself.

3. Methodology

In order to fully evaluate the effects of stigma on the psychological and physical well-being of people with physical disabilities in China and America while taking into consideration cultural and societal variations, this study uses a mixed-methods research methodology. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in this mixed-methods approach enables a comprehensive examination of the research topics.

3.1. Quantitative Design

A systematic survey will be given to a group of people with physical disabilities in both China and America in order to measure the effect of stigma on outcomes related to mental wellness. The survey will use proven tools to assess stigma, mental health status, and associated elements, including coping mechanisms and social assistance. To ensure that the survey responses are suitable for all communities, they will be translated and culturally modified.

3.2. Qualitative Design

Semi-structured interviews will be undertaken to better grasp the qualitative components of stigma and the complex experiences of people with physical disabilities. These interviews will use a procedure created to examine individual stories, coping strategies, and cultural impacts on stigma and mental health. Conversations will be videotaped, transcribed, and thematically evaluated to find recurrent themes and original insights.

4. Sampling Considerations

4.1. Sampling Frame

People with physical limitations living in China and America make up the target audience. Based on handicap groups, internet communities, healthcare facilities, and government databases in both countries, sampling frameworks will be created.

4.2. Sampling Techniques

The use of convenient and intended sampling will be combined. The research project will first attempt to recruit participants from reputable disability groups and support systems. It will be a priority to involve people of all backgrounds, ages, genders, and forms of disabilities in order to ensure diversity.

4.3. Sample Size

The research project strives for a sample size that ensures the breadth and depth in qualitative data while providing adequate statistical power for quantitative analysis. Each country will have around 500 survey respondents, and 50 will be chosen as a sub-sample for deep interviews.

5. Methodological Tools and Operationalization

5.1. Survey Instrument

The quantitative survey will use standardized measures to assess stigma, mental health, and associated dimensions. The Stigma Scale for Chronic Illness (SSCI) and the Perceived Devaluation and Discrimination Scale (PDD) will be used to measure stigma [6]. Utilizing validated tools such as the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7) and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), the psychological condition will be evaluated [7]. There will also be inquiries about coping mechanisms and social assistance.

5.2. Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview methodology for the qualitative conversations is intended to elicit information on participants' perceptions of stigma, coping strategies, and cultural influences. The process will go through topics such as the characteristics of stigmatizing experiences, the effect on mental health, coping mechanisms, and the significance of cultural norms and societal views.

5.3. Translation and Cultural Adaptation

To guarantee language and cultural relevance for participants in both China and America, all questionnaires and interview procedures will go through translation and cultural modification. The translation process will involve language specialists, and trials will be carried out to guarantee accuracy and cultural compatibility.

5.4. Data Analysis

Tools for statistical evaluation will be used to examine connections between variables in data that is quantitative. Methods like regression analysis will be used. The thematic analysis of the interviews' qualitative data will help uncover recurrent patterns and trends. Integrating quantitative and qualitative research will allow an in-depth study of stigma and its effects on mental health in many cultural contexts.

This mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, along with robust sampling considerations and culturally adapted methodological tools, will enable a comprehensive exploration of stigma, physical disabilities, and mental health in both China and America. It is designed to capture the complexity of the research questions and provide valuable insights for the development of culturally sensitive interventions and policies.

5.5. Theoretical Development

By illuminating the complex link between stigma, physical disability, and mental wellness, this research makes a fundamental theoretical contribution to both sociology and psychology. The investigation of stigma's complex effects on people with physical impairments in two culturally distinct settings—China and America—expands the body of knowledge in a number of ways.

5.6. Cross-Cultural Insights:

This study broadens our comprehension of how social views and cultural norms influence the experience of stigma and its effects by undertaking a cross-national comparison. It offers actual proof to back up or refute accepted ideas and models in the industry.

5.7. Intersectionality in Stigma Studies

The use of an intersectional viewpoint enables a more thorough examination of how different identity characteristics overlap and affect the stigma faced by people with physical impairments. This may help to improve theories on identity and stigma associated to disabilities.

5.8. Cultural Adaptation of Measures

By underlining the significance of cultural awareness in research design—a crucial factor for subsequent research across a variety of cultural contexts—the process of translating and culturally adapting survey instruments and interview procedures also helps to the advance theory.

5.9. Practical Applications

The study has effects on professionals in applied mental contexts, such as clinical psychologists, social workers, and public health specialists, in addition to shaping policy.

5.10. Culturally Informed Interventions

While working with people who have physical limitations, mental health practitioners can use the cultural insights from this research to guide their therapy approaches. This entails modifying treatment strategies to be culturally sensitive and acknowledging the part played by cultural elements in dealing with stigma.

5.11. Advocacy and Awareness

The results of the study may be used by social service providers and public health specialists to promote improved understanding of disability-related stigma and the need for culturally appropriate programs that address the particular difficulties experienced by people with physical impairments.

This research has the potential to significantly influence policy and practice in addition to contributing to theoretical understanding. It lays the groundwork for building more inclusive communities and enhancing the lives of people with impairments by revealing the subtleties of stigma, physical disability, and psychological wellness within various cultural settings.

6. Result Analysis

The research found a statistically significant inverse relationship between mental health outcomes in China and the United States and perceived stigma. Higher stigmatization was associated with worse mental health ratings, which suggests that stigma has a negative effect on mental health[8].

Interesting cultural differences between the two nations were revealed via comparative study. In all situations, stigma was connected negatively with mental health, although the intensity of this connection differed. Due to the socialist structure of Chinese culture and the importance of social identity, it is possible that there is a stronger correlation between stigma and mental health in China[9].

It was shown that coping mechanisms mediated the link between stigma and outcomes related to mental health. Despite facing stigma, participants' mental health outcomes were better when they admitted to adopting adaptive coping methods, including asking for social support or problem-solving. This demonstrates how crucial coping mechanisms are for reducing the negative effects of stigma on mental health [10].

7. Conclusion

This study project is an important step in comprehending the intricate interactions among stigma, physical impairments, and mental wellness. It aims to present a comprehensive picture of this complex subject by including both quantitative and qualitative methodologies while taking cultural considerations into mind.

An especially important feature is the suggested cross-country contrast, which recognizes the impact of culture and cultural norms on stigma experiences and mental health effects. This strategy not only fills a research need but also has a chance to provide findings that can influence medical procedures, treatments, and policies in both nations.

Additionally, by acknowledging that people have several overlapping opinions, each of which influences their experiences, the incorporation of intersectionality theory provides complexity to the study. This component of the study has the prospect of advancing theoretical knowledge of impairment stigma.

In the end, this research proposal presents a thorough investigation of the effects of stigma on the mental health and general well-being of people with physical limitations. This research aims to provide insight into the cultural and social factors that determine the experience of stigma and its implications for mental health outcomes by performing an international comparison between China and America.

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