

Unveiling The Disability: A Study Of Social Discrimination In The Memoir - Being Heumann

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Abstract

Memoires provide a better understanding of personal life as compared to the rest of fiction narratives and emerge as a true representative of individuals, especially when dealing with disabled persons in contemporary societies. Social discrimination often leads to stigmatization of disabled persons through negative attitude and behavior, thus paved a path towards formation of negative stereotypes, that adversely affects their socio-psychological domains. Such behavior can be traced in almost every memoir of a disabled person, even in advanced countries where disability rights have been exercised since decades. This paper aims¹ to highlight the social discrimination of disabled persons in contemporary American memoir, with special reference to “Being Heumann” by Judith Heumann (2020) through the lens of Dr Dana S Dun (2015). The study shows considerable depiction of social discrimination as discovered at various situations in the selected text. It ranges from social discrimination at home, school, workplace as well as at public places, as experienced by the disabled person. Moreover, it also sheds light on the steps to eliminate social discrimination of the disabled persons in the society by employing various technological gadgets, computer programs, software applications and above all by eliminating social and environmental barriers.

Key Words *Memoire, disabled person, social discrimination, stigmatization, stereotypes*

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a notable surge in the production of life narratives, encompassing a diverse range of literary forms such as memoirs, autobiographies, confessions, diaries, and online platforms like social media timelines and personal blogs. The digital landscape, particularly the Internet, has provided a spacious platform for individuals to share their life stories in contemporary cyberspace. Through these narratives, writers employ unique styles and diverse subjective approaches to illuminate various facets of their lives, offering insights into the experiences of disabled individuals from distinctive perspectives, diverse in content and style.

Emerging researchers are delving into life narratives from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, where disability studies has emerged as a burgeoning field of contemporary inquiry. Scholars explore disability through lenses such as race, gender, culture and identity, among other perspectives. While memoirs by disabled persons have been scrutinized through various thematic lenses—including gender, race, identity,

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education, and rehabilitation—a noticeable gap exists in scholarly examinations focused specifically on social discrimination within these narratives.

This paper endeavors to address this gap by examining the memoir of disabled individual through the lens of social discrimination. It aims to uncover the myriad ways in which disabled individuals experience discrimination in contemporary American society and explore the strategies, she employs to navigate through emotional distress in their daily lives. By shedding light on these experiences, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by disabled persons in society and pave the way for more inclusive and empathetic discourse surrounding the disability.

The endorsement by Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, advocating for the inclusion of disabled persons in the 2030 development agenda, underscores the imperative to address negative attitudes, stigma, discrimination, and accessibility barriers faced by this community worldwide (UN Report, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated social disparities, particularly impacting the daily routines and social interactions of individuals globally through measures such as “social distancing” and “quarantine”. The participation of the researcher in social restrictions, triggered the hypothesis of this research that the disabled persons exposed to similar social restrictions and marginalization throughout their lives, in almost every society of the world. Throughout their lives, disabled individuals encounter social discrimination in diverse settings, including home, school, workplace, and public places. This discrimination manifests in forms such as confinement, social injustice, deprivation, perpetuating exploitation, marginalization, and social discrimination against them. Consequently, the social lives of disabled individuals are profoundly affected across various dimensions including social discrimination.

Negative attitudes and behaviors perpetuate social stigma and discrimination, creating a chasm between disabled and nondisabled individuals (Dunn, 2015). To unravel the intricacies of social discrimination faced by the disabled, a comprehensive qualitative research approach is essentially required. By illuminating the multifaceted factors underlying social discrimination, this research aims to foster deep understanding and to bridge the gap between disabled and nondisabled persons, both within United States and across the world.

There is a long list of memoirs by disabled individuals in America and required a holistic academic scrutiny. So, the research is delimited to the exploration of “Being Heumann” by Judith Heumann (2020) by utilizing the theoretical perspectives of Dr. Dana S. Dunn (2015) to meet the research objectives. The theoretical perspective is also delimited to negative stereotypes, negative attitudes, stigma, and social discrimination in connection with disabled persons.

Theoretical Perspectives

The research is designed to explore social discrimination in the selected memoir of a disabled person. The theoretical perspective of Dr. Dana S. Dunn (2015) is most suitable for the present research. He earned his PhD degree in social psychology in 1987 and is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, Rehabilitation Psychology, General Psychology, and the Society for the Teaching of Psychology. He has written 25 books, more than 52 research articles, and several book chapters during his teaching career.

Disability establishes as a dynamic and individualized characteristic within a temporal context. Its manifestations and repercussions diverge widely among individuals, contingent upon factors such as the nature and severity of the disability. Consequently, disability exhibits an inherent variability, even within the confines of a single individual's experience.

This complexity underscores its intricate entanglement across social, personal, physical, and psychological spheres. The discussion about the negative stereotypes and discrimination as per the clarification of Garland Thomson (2013) falls under the First wave of disability and is termed as, “recuperation and revelation”. It mainly links disability with its social contexts, and leads towards the emergence of the Society for Disability Studies (1982) in America and the publication of *The Disability Studies Reader* (1997) by Davis. The convergence of these multifaceted dimensions frequently precipitates psychological complexities among people with disabilities.

One foundational concept elucidated by Dunn (2015) is the "Actor/Observer Bias". This bias relates to the observer's tendency to interpret a given situation based on his subjective perceptions, potentially deviating from objective reality. Within this framework, individuals often perceive psychological disability through a lens colored by notions of adversity, anguish, indignity, and disruption to daily life (Dunn, 2015, p. 6). Such biased perceptions serve to stratify society into dichotomous social strata, erecting significant barriers between them. Consequently, the observer's subjective attachments to a situation allow them to significantly distort reality, thereby presenting an imagined portrayal rather than an accurate depiction of the actual circumstances.

Within the realm of disability discourse, a conspicuous societal dichotomy emerges, delineating two distinct groups: the disabled and the non-disabled. This schism engenders a palpable undercurrent of bias between these factions, palpable in everyday social interactions and often rooted in perceptions of one group's supremacy over the other. Dunn (2015) astutely observes that "Responses to disability pose particular social and psychological challenges to people with disabilities (PWDs) and their allies, that is, nondisabled individuals who are personally committed to supporting members of the disability community" (p. 39). This highlighted bias underscores the foundational dynamics of social discrimination within contemporary society, as elucidated by Dunn (2015). The social and cultural representation of disability is derived from the historical and cultural contexts, as Fine and Asch (1988, p.17) found on ontological levels and ignored the exploration in the epistemological spheres, thus lacks behind the true experiences of disability in the society.

In the subsequent phase, Dunn (2015) extrapolates individual responses to encompass broader community or group reactions, characterizing them as typically harboring negative perceptions towards individuals with disabilities. These adverse perceptions, as categorized by Erving Goffman (1963) and referenced by Dunn (2015), include tribal identities, body abominations, and blemishes of individual character. Tribal stigma encompasses factors such as sex, race, religion, and nationality, while physical deformities are subsumed under the category of body abominations. Additionally, behaviors such as addiction, unemployment, and mental health disorders are classified as blemishes of individual character. These classifications often coalesce into two overarching categories: "bodily differences and character blemishes" (p. 43). The delineation of stigma across these dimensions encapsulates various facets of practical social existence. The spontaneous emergence of emotions such as distress, anxiety, revulsion, and apprehension within individuals serves as crucial indicators for discerning genuine responses to any given situation (Dovidio, Major, & Crocker, 2010). It constitutes a major dive into the intricacies of social discrimination in the society and particularly highlights the origin of all such behaviors which nourish it as endorsed by (Tarantola, 2004),

“Discrimination manifests itself through neglect, isolation, rejection, harassment, and abuse perpetrated by the state, by those acting on its behalf, and by non-state actors in their individual or collective capacity” (p. 10).

Stigmatization poses a significant threat to individuals, precipitating the erosion of their value within society. Disabled persons, in particular, find themselves vulnerable to the pernicious effects of stigma, largely stemming from societal perceptions of their physical disabilities. The conspicuous markers of disability, such as wheelchairs, guide dogs, or hearing aids, serve as visual cues that contribute to the formation of negative stereotypes. The stigmatization of the disabled through negative stereotypes is the most important form of social discrimination, being exercised in society since centuries. Furthermore, the emotional responses exhibited by disabled individuals are influenced by a myriad of factors, including their level of self-esteem. Dunn (2015), corroborated by Dovidio et al. (2010), underscores the intricate interplay between self-esteem and socio-psychological dynamics, emphasizing their role in shaping emotional reactions.

Central to this process is the phenomenon of categorization, wherein individuals swiftly categorize others as “friend or foe”, “like us or unlike”, “foreign or familiar”, based on superficial characteristics. This oversimplified categorization fosters the formation of distinct social groups, with disabled individuals often relegated to the periphery. This parallels the notion of “otherness” elucidated in postcolonial theory (Bhabha, 1992), wherein individuals are marginalized based on perceived differences. Consequently, society tends to operate under the framework of an “insider/outsider bias”, wherein the nondisabled population assumes the role of insiders, relegating the disabled to the margins. In essence, the proliferation of negative attitudes towards disability engenders a climate of stigma and bias, exacerbating the division between the disabled and nondisabled communities.

The ramifications of social discrimination, characterized by biases, negative stereotypes, and stigmatization, manifest in profound psychological repercussions among individuals with disabilities (Gill et al., 2016). These psychological implications, in turn, exert a deleterious influence on the social integration of disabled individuals. To comprehensively grasp the intricacies of these social complexities, it is imperative to dissect the multifaceted environmental and societal factors at play.

Efforts to ameliorate this disparity necessitate to bridge the divide between these two distinct social cohorts within every society, facilitating the full inclusion of disabled persons into the societal mainstream. This imperative underscores the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to undertake concerted endeavors aimed at mitigating negative biases, dispelling negative stereotypes, and combatting stigmatization within society. Such endeavors entail the dissemination of education and a critical reevaluation of the portrayal and representation of disabled individuals in literature, media, and broader societal narratives. Through these concerted efforts, society can strive towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for all individuals, regardless of any disability.

Dunn's (2015) exploration delves not only into the underlying causes of social and psychological discrimination within contemporary American society but also offers viable strategies for narrowing the gap between disparate social groups. Central to Dunn's framework is the concept of positive psychological science, which endeavors to elucidate, comprehend, and leverage human strengths to foster psychological and physical well-being (p. 107).

In advocating rehabilitation of disabled individuals, Dunn (2015) underscores the transformative potential of regular treatment and robust support systems, which empower them to actively contribute to the enhancement and progression of society. He advocates for the integration of positive psychological principles into the rehabilitation process, emphasizing the pivotal role of bolstering self-esteem and facilitating access to higher education for disabled individuals. By harnessing the tenets of positive psychology, Dunn

(2015) contends that disabled individuals can be equipped with the requisite tools and confidence to assume meaningful roles within society.

Furthermore, Dunn (2015) advocates for a multi-faceted approach to the welfare and rehabilitation of disabled individuals, encompassing personal, community-based, and state-level support initiatives and programs. By mobilizing resources at various levels, society can endeavor to create an environment conducive to the holistic development and inclusion of disabled individuals. Ultimately, Dunn's advocacy for the adoption of positive psychological strategies underscores the transformative potential of empowering disabled individuals to actively participate in societal progress.

The theoretical framework expounded by Dunn (2015) situates itself within the realm of social psychology, grounded in empirical scientific inquiry—a departure from the literary research paradigm prevalent in the study of memoir or autobiography. Within literary research, disability is often scrutinized through the lens of the cultural model, where disability serves as a symbolic or metaphorical construct. This approach facilitates the identification of negative stereotypes perpetuated within literature, with disability frequently depicted as synonymous with ugliness, weakness, or malevolence (Thomson, 2013, p. 9). Such portrayals often dictate the roles assigned to disabled characters within fiction narratives, a trend evident even in contemporary literary works.

However, recent scholarship has expanded the purview of disability literature within the cultural model to include notions of empathy or narrative empathy. This evolving perspective offers a nuanced exploration of disability autobiography but remains constrained by its limited scope. To comprehensively explore the complexities inherent in disability memoirs, there is an unrelenting need for interdisciplinary research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Furthermore, the integration of a similar theoretical perspective, akin to the framework of Dunn (2015), is imperative for fostering a holistic understanding of disability within the socio-psychological domain. Operationalizing Dunn's theoretical framework within the context of literary research necessitates a nuanced interpretation by the researcher, one that acknowledges the interplay between social psychology and literary analysis. By synthesizing these disparate disciplines, researchers can embark on a more distinctive exploration of disability within autobiographical narratives, thereby enriching scholarly discourse and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of disability representation.

Critically, this theoretical framework not only illuminates the challenges faced by disabled individuals but also elucidates their resilience and agency in confronting psychological distress and social barriers. By delineating pathways for problem-solving and rehabilitation in practical life, this framework offers a robust foundation for achieving the research objectives. In short, the theoretical framework of social psychology emerges as an apt paradigm for contextualizing and analyzing the experiences of disabled persons as depicted in autobiographical text, thereby facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the social realities and pathways towards empowerment and inclusion in the society.

Unveiling the Social Discrimination in Being Heumann

Heumann's memoir, "Being Heumann" (2020), serves as a powerful tool for enlightening researchers, students, and the general public on the realities of living with a disability. Through the candid portrayal of her life's struggles, Heumann provides invaluable insights into the daily challenges faced by disabled individuals, fostering empathy and understanding among readers. Born in 1947 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Judith Heumann (1947-2023) diagnosed polio at just 18 months old, leading to a lifetime of dependency on a wheelchair. Her memoir vividly captures the trials and triumphs she

encountered in a society that lacked comprehensive disability rights legislation. Readers are afforded a glimpse into the hidden scars of social discrimination engraved upon her body and soul, serving as a poignant reminder of the pervasive social barriers faced by disabled persons.

Social Discrimination at Home

In the post-World War II era, the landscape of disability in the United States was deeply influenced by the plight of war veterans, prompting a reevaluation of societal perceptions. Despite prevailing notions rooted in the morality and social models of disability, wherein disability was often stigmatized as a curse or misfortune, Heumann and her family steadfastly refused to view her disability as a burden. This unwavering acceptance of her condition, exemplified by her own affirmation, "I NEVER WISHED I didn't have a disability" (p. 4), underscores her resilience and agency in navigating a world marked by prejudice and exclusion.

Moreover, the decision of Heumann's parents, to reject institutionalization—a common practice at the time—speaks volumes about their unwavering commitment to their daughter's well-being. Their resolute stance reflects a profound dedication to familial solidarity and unconditional acceptance, encapsulating Heumann's astute observation that they were prepared to confront any obstacle that lay ahead in forthcoming life.

Through "Being Heumann" Judith Heumann not only shares her personal journey but also imparts invaluable lessons on resilience, determination, and the transformative power of acceptance. By shedding light on the lived experiences of disabled individuals, Heumann's memoir serves as a catalyst for societal change, challenging prevailing stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive and empathetic world for all

“In many ways, institutionalization was the status quo in 1949. Parents weren’t necessarily even encouraged to visit their institutionalized children. Kids with disabilities were considered a hardship, economically and socially. They brought stigma to the family. People thought that when someone in your family had a disability, it was because someone had done something wrong.” (p. 4)

The decision made by Judy's parents to reject the proposal of institutionalization resonates deeply with the profound bond of love and familial solidarity they share with their daughter. This steadfast commitment to Judy's well-being not only reflects their unconditional love but also serves as a poignant rejection of the institutional mechanisms prevalent in United States at that time. The indication of “stigma” and “done something wrong” in the family, are deeply rooted in the social and cultural models of disability, which directly express the social discrimination of the disabled in society.

Judy's reflection on the atrocities committed during the Nazi regime in Germany, particularly the systematic extermination of disabled individuals under the guise of "institutionalization," emphasizes the grave consequences that institutionalization can entail. The harrowing statistic she cites—of “5,000 children murdered” (p. 7) in these institutions—serves as a stark reminder of the lethal consequences of unchecked eugenics policies.

Indeed, the legacy of the eugenics movement continues to cast a long shadow over contemporary American society, as elucidated by Mooney (2019). The persistent threat posed by the eugenics movement and its modern-day iterations underscores the ongoing challenges faced by disabled individuals worldwide. From coercive sterilization programs to discriminatory healthcare practices, disabled individuals remain vulnerable to the insidious effects of eugenics-based ideologies.

In essence, Judy's recollection serves as a sobering reminder of the enduring struggle for disability rights and autonomy. By shedding light on the historical atrocities perpetrated against disabled persons, she amplifies the urgency of safeguarding the rights and dignity of disabled persons in contemporary society. Through her poignant narrative, Judy highlights the imperative of confronting and dismantling the discriminatory structures that continue to marginalize disabled individuals, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

The historical atrocities committed by Nazi Germany, including the systematic extermination of disabled individuals, represent the extreme end of social and psychological discrimination. This heinous crime, rooted in eugenics ideologies, instills a profound fear of death among disabled individuals—a fear exacerbated by modern iterations of the eugenics movement. The legacy of these discriminatory practices casts a long shadow over contemporary society, fostering mistrust and suspicion among disabled individuals towards medical professionals and institutions. Modern disability activists rightfully view institutions as a threat, recognizing them as instruments of systematic discrimination and oppression, as noted by Mooney (2019).

Indeed, the expansion of institutionalization as a state policy in the Western world, including America, underscores the pervasive nature of institutionalization as a purported welfare scheme for disabled individuals. However, this approach perpetuates systemic inequalities and reinforces societal norms that devalue the autonomy and agency of disabled persons, as elucidated by Oliver and Barnes (2010).

The historical and contemporary context of institutionalization underscores the urgent need for a paradigm shift in how society perceives and supports disabled individuals. Rather than relegating them to the margins of society, true inclusivity requires dismantling discriminatory structures and fostering environments that uphold the rights, dignity, and autonomy of all individuals, irrespective of their disabilities.

Heumann's early experiences with disability began around the age of six when she first began using a wheelchair, a challenging adjustment for a child. The manual wheelchair posed significant difficulties in her daily activities, restricting her movements and interactions. Even mundane tasks such as playtime or visiting neighbors became fraught with obstacles, with simple steps posing insurmountable barriers akin to the "Great Wall of China" (p-4). The inaccessibility of her wheelchair at a domestic level compounded her challenges, left her feeling awkward and excluded from activities like ringing the doorbell of her neighborhood friend, Arlene. These frequent obstacles persisted throughout her life, reflecting the pervasive challenges faced by disabled individuals. However, Judy's narrative rarely highlights explicit acts of social discrimination during her formative years as,

“Even when we jumped rope or roller skated, we figured it out. We'd put roller skates over my shoes, and I would pretend to be skating in my chair, or I'd turn the rope for the jumpers. It was because we were kids, and kids are problem solvers. But it taught me, at a very early age, that most things are possible when you assume problems can be solved". (p. 9)

Heumann's life, while outwardly happy, is imbued with a poignant undertone of unfulfilled experiences. Despite her cheerful facade, she grapples with the reality of being unable to partake fully in sports and recreational activities like her peers. Instead, she resorts to "pretending" to enjoy such activities, masking her true feelings of exclusion and limitation. From childhood, her choices have been constrained by societal discrimination and her own disability, echoing the broader limitations faced by the disabled community. These

constraints permeate various aspects of her life, shaping her experiences and opportunities in ways that diverge from those of her non-disabled counterparts.

Heumann's desire to overcome her disability and compete on equal footing with her non-disabled peers is thwarted by systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality. The wheelchair, typically viewed as a symbol of incapacity or illness, becomes a source of stigma and discrimination. A simple encounter with a child's innocent question—"Are you sick?" (p-10)—evokes a profound emotional response in her, highlighting the deep-seated societal stereotypes surrounding disability.

Mooney (2019) aptly characterizes these societal attitudes as "judges of normalcy" (p. 21) underscoring the role of social interactions in perpetuating negative stereotypes and discrimination against disabled individuals. These encounters often inflict psychological wounds, as illustrated by Heumann's visceral reaction to the child's question. The transition from social to psychological discrimination underscores the profound impact of societal attitudes on the emotional well-being of disabled persons, as they navigate a world marked by misunderstanding and stigma.

The pervasive analogy of disability with sickness not only undermines the confidence of disabled individuals but also perpetuates dependency and destabilizes their aspirations for independence. The societal perception that a person in a wheelchair is inherently sick restricts their ability to engage in daily activities such as playing, shopping, or attending school, further exacerbating their sense of isolation and exclusion from society. Such types of negative stereotypes are visible throughout the literature since centuries, all over the world, and thus paved a step towards social discrimination.

Social Discrimination at School

Heumann's educational options are limited due to her disability, and restrict her to enroll in a special education program. While her peers enjoy the freedom to choose their schools based on religious affiliation or public versus private options, her educational trajectory is determined by her disability. As she poignantly reflects, the segregation among school-going children is starkly illustrated by her own experience, "The Catholic kids on my block went to Catholic school, the Protestant kids and my brother went to public school, and I went to 'school' at home; we all went to 'different' schools" (p. 11). This segregation underscores the discrimination faced by disabled children, exemplified by remarks made by the school principal. Her educational journey is shaped not by choice, but by societal attitudes and institutional barriers that perpetuate segregation and inequality. The deep scars on body and soul of Heumann are visible from the text,

"My mother helped me put on a nice dress, pushed me to school, and pulled my wheelchair up the steps. But the principal refused to allow me to enter. 'Judy is a fire hazard', he said, explaining to my shocked mother how the school system saw wheelchairs as a dangerous obstruction. Children who used wheelchairs were not permitted to attend school". (p. 9)

The pervasive nature of social discrimination against disabled individuals, exemplified by Judy's experiences, extends beyond educational institutions to various facets of everyday life. Despite the passage of disability rights legislation, disabled individuals and their parents continue to encounter social discrimination in offices and public spaces across America. The inherent inaccessibility of public places further compounds the challenges faced by the disabled community, hindering their full participation in society.

The unfair treatment meted out to disabled individuals by society stems from deeply ingrained social and psychological discrimination. Heumann's experiences in high school

starkly illustrate the dehumanizing effect of societal attitudes towards disability. She is relegated to the status of a "crippled girl" devoid of the same social visibility and recognition afforded to her non-disabled peers. This relegation to a "non-sex" identity further compounds her sense of social discrimination and alienation from societal norms.

From her earliest school days, Judy's aspirations for a normal life are thwarted by the pervasive discrimination she faces. Her longing to partake in the same experiences as her peers is continually hampered by the stark disparities imposed by her disability. These inequities manifest not only in her external experiences but also leave a lasting impact on her personality and social interactions, reflecting the profound toll of social and psychological discrimination on disabled individuals like Heumann. The award distribution ceremony, to all students, especially the outstanding ones, is certainly marked as a memorable time. However, unfortunately, at the time of Heumann, the stage at the high school is not accessible and her father managed her at the stage to receive her prize, like rest of the brilliant students. Judy's remarks contained a deep sense of pathos, "I couldn't stop my tears. I was utterly humiliated. 'Dad', I said, 'I want to go home. Take me home' (p. 29). The insult felt by her at that time has tremendously impacted her psychologically as visible from the text. There might be countless incidents of social and psychological discrimination in the school life of Heumann, which have encountered by her on daily basis. Her memoir chronicles a series of discriminatory incidents that underscore the pervasive social and psychological discrimination faced by disabled individuals in America. From inaccessible stages at award ceremonies to unaccommodating university facilities, her experiences highlight the barriers that impede the full participation of disabled individuals in the society, and often resulted into social and psychological discrimination.

Social Discrimination at Workplace

The disabled persons often feel social and environmental barriers at every step due to their special medical conditions and require special treatment and facilitation to overcome such barriers, as supported by the American Disability Act and other peripheral legislation. The social discrimination of Heumann starts just after her graduation, when she applied for a grade two teacher. One particularly egregious example is Heumann's ordeal at a medical examination for a teaching position, where she was subjected to degrading questions and ultimately deemed a danger to children solely because of her disability. Despite her qualifications and capabilities, the medical board's discriminatory assessment left her shattered, underscoring the profound impact of such discrimination on her self-respect and self-esteem.

Heumann's activism in advocating for disability rights is a testament to her resilience and determination in the face of systemic discrimination. She tirelessly fights against the entrenched societal attitudes and institutional barriers that perpetuate inequality and exclusion for disabled individuals. However, even legal protections such as the Human Rights Act's Section 504, which guarantees equal rights, are often insufficient to address the pervasive discrimination faced by disabled individuals. Judy's advocacy efforts, including her participation in disability protests and impassioned speeches, reflect her unwavering commitment to challenging societal norms and advancing the rights of the disabled community as,

"When I was five years old, I was denied the right to school because the school wasn't accessible. When I was finally allowed to start school in the fourth grade, some of my classmates were eighteen years old and still didn't know how to read. We will no longer be patient. There will be no more compromise. We will accept no more discrimination". (p. 67)

Heumann's memoir provides a comprehensive account of the myriad forms of social and psychological discrimination experienced by herself and the broader disabled community. Her advocacy for disability rights is deeply rooted in her upbringing under the guidance of her courageous mother, whose influence likely nurtured Judy's innate compassion and resilience. She always struggled to mitigate the social discrimination in the society, be educating the disabled community during her disability activism.

The discrimination faced by disabled individuals is often perpetuated by healthcare professionals, as exemplified by Ed Roberts' chilling account of a doctor suggesting his mother for his "early death". Such remarks not only reflect the pervasive influence of eugenics ideologies but also contribute to the erosion of disabled persons' self-esteem and morale. It requires special training of the healthcare staff regarding the disability ethics so that they can change their attitude towards the disabled persons and their parents.

Social Discrimination at the Public Places

The disabled persons often feel discriminated and insulted at the public places. The life of Heumann is replete with such incidents. She felt discrimination at the LaGuardia airport in Queens, where the lady at the check-in counter stopped her from boarding the plane as a single disabled person, however, there was no regulation for restricting any disabled person to board a plane. The conversation between the two is interesting, "Who are you flying with today?" she asked me. I looked at her, annoyed. 'No one. I'm flying by myself'. 'I'm sorry, ma'am, but you're not allowed to fly by yourself', She called the supervisor, who let her to board the plane after listening her arguments" (p. 58). Heumann looks triumphant when boarded the plane. She again encountered by another locally formulated rule that a disabled person can only fly by a plane when someone available to assist her/ him in case of emergency, whereas, Heumann is flying by "herself". The flying attendant expressed her consent as,

"I'm sorry, ma'am; you're not permitted to fly by yourself. If you don't have someone who can be with you to help you in the event of an emergency, then I'm going to have to ask you to get off the plane". (p-59)

The flight was on hold, and the conversation between the flying attendant and Heumann did not resolve. In the end, two policemen came directly to Heumann and said, "Ma'am, you're under arrest. Please have your seat" (p. 59). This is how she faced discrimination at the airport, in a series of encounters at various steps. She, however, managed to free herself from the custody of the port police. Moreover, she filed a suit against the airline for this act of discrimination in court. The court denounced that the act does not highlight any act of discrimination and has a value of up to \$500, so it dismissed the case. The compensation for the loss is not important for Heumann, but the social and psychological discrimination has a lasting impact on her as a disabled person. The whole mess was created due to the disability of Heumann, and not otherwise.

The social discrimination faced by the disabled persons at the public places has lasting impact on the social and psychological life of the disabled persons. A majority of the disabled has no access to disability rights awareness or avoid to launch any law suit to get their due rights as per law. Inaccessible public places and offices further aggravates the challenges faced by disabled individuals, as highlighted by Heumann in her memoir. Discriminatory practices, enacted by managers, supervisors, and professionals, serve as barriers to complete inclusion of disabled persons in contemporary society.

Social Discrimination Beyond America

The advocacy of Heumann extends beyond the borders of America, shedding light on the plight of disabled individuals in developing countries like India. The prevalence of infant

killings and exploitation by criminal groups underscores the systemic injustices faced by the disabled in impoverished communities. Her poignant reflections on the dehumanizing conditions endured by disabled individuals in India serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for global action to address the root causes of discrimination and inequality.

Through her memoir, Heumann amplifies the voices of the disabled community, advocating for their rights and dignity on both national and international platforms. Her unwavering commitment to challenging discriminatory norms and systemic barriers exemplifies her role as a pioneering disability rights activist. During the Paralympics in Germany, Judy's encounters with athletes from various regions, including South America and Africa, brought to her attention a significant disparity between participants from affluent and impoverished nations. Reflecting on this experience, she remarked,

"For the first time, I was being exposed to the great inequality between the rich nations of the world and the poor nations of the world. Even among the Paralympians, who are among the elite athletes of their countries, there was tremendous disparity" (p. 112).

This observation extends beyond the realm of sports, highlighting broader disparities between disabled individuals in wealthy and economically disadvantaged countries. Alwan (1999) echoes this sentiment, emphasizing how the poor and disabled often face double marginalization due to the deprivation of basic human rights. Furthermore, the discrepancy in resources and facilities between advanced and Third World countries exacerbates this inequality, constituting a form of social discrimination on an international scale. Despite the inclusive spirit of the Paralympics, the unequal distribution of resources perpetuates systemic inequities among athletes worldwide.

Judy's keen insights into social and psychological discrimination operate on multiple levels, from individual experiences to national and international contexts. Through her memoir, she meticulously documents the ongoing struggles faced by the disabled community, shedding light on the pervasive nature of discrimination across different spheres of society. The great disparity among the athletes at an international event is enough to highlight the uneven distribution of resources and wealth, both within the countries and between the disabled and the nondisabled community. Poverty aggravates the balance between the two distinct strata of the society, thus double augments to the ongoing social discrimination in the poor societies.

Elimination of Social Discrimination

In her memoir, Heumann outlines several strategies aimed at mitigating social discrimination against disabled individuals. One crucial step involves educating non-disabled individuals about the challenges faced by those with disabilities. Awareness of these issues tends to be limited to a small circle surrounding each individual, highlighting the need for broader societal sensitivity towards disabled persons. Throughout her life, Heumann has been a staunch advocate for equal human rights and opportunities for the disabled. She emphasizes the importance of providing disabled individuals with equal access to opportunities across various domains of life, in accordance with basic human rights principles. Central to this is the promotion of fairness and equality in creating accessible environments that accommodate the needs of disabled individuals, as

"Part of the problem is that we tend to think that equality is about treating everyone the same, when it's not. It's about fairness. It's about equity of access. And equity of access, whether to housing, health, education, or employment, looks different for someone like me and the hundreds of thousands of us who cannot do things the same way than it does for the majority of people who can". (p. 110)

Judy embodies a beacon of hope for the disabled community, envisioning a future free from all forms of discrimination and bias within society, protected not only by social ethics but also enshrined in legal provisions. Her vision extends to every aspect of life, advocating for the integration of disability accommodations for the benefit of the disabled community.

In line with her vision, Judith Heuman proposes a series of steps aimed at eliminating environmental barriers in American society, as articulated by Sendi Richards (2014). These measures encompass a range of accommodations, including ramps, wider doorways, handrails, sign language interpreters, captioning, accessible technology, audio descriptions, Braille documents, and personal assistance for individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities. By addressing the shortcomings of existing infrastructure and social environments, these alterations play a crucial role in combatting the prevailing social discrimination pervasive in contemporary American society.

Introducing modern technological innovations such as speech software, specialized applications, hearing devices, and electric wheelchairs can significantly alleviate the severity of disabilities, thereby fostering greater independence and social integration for disabled individuals. Heumann is blessed amongst the disabled community that her parents managed her wheel chair at the age of six years only, which later on upgraded to electric wheelchair. This perspective is echoed by David R. Strauser (2014) in "Career Development, Employment, and Disability in Rehabilitation", who emphasizes the importance of leveraging technology to enhance the lives of disabled persons. Recognizing the unique strengths and talents of disabled individuals, initiatives should be undertaken to provide them with increased employment opportunities in both public and private sectors, mirroring the trajectory of Judy's own career. Collaborative efforts involving various NGOs can further support specialized rehabilitation schemes tailored to the needs of disabled individuals.

Heumann's observations regarding universal healthcare facilities during her travels underscore the need for comprehensive support systems that extend beyond conventional healthcare services. These facilities encompass personal assistance for daily activities such as dressing, shopping, and cooking, as well as housing modifications to ensure accessibility. Each nation's social welfare systems reflect its unique cultural and traditional contexts, highlighting the importance of amalgamating successful initiatives from diverse societies to create an inclusive international framework for the benefit of disabled individuals worldwide.

The discussion above illustrates numerous instances of social discrimination experienced by disabled individuals, as portrayed in "Being Heumann". Judith Heumann confronted these challenges with unwavering courage, shedding light on these to raise awareness. Throughout her life, she staunchly advocated for disability rights, actively participated in the disability rights movement and provided support and education to fellow disabled individuals. Despite facing adversity, she remained resilient, tirelessly seeking solutions to her challenges and refused to succumb to defeat. Her remarkable resilience enabled her to lead a successful life despite her disability, while also proposing strategies to combat social discrimination within society. Judy's dedication to the rehabilitation of disabled individuals serves as a testament to her profound impact on social change.

Conclusion

The analysis presented above scrutinizes various situations and incidents through the lens of Dr. Dana Dunn (2015) theoretical perspectives, elucidating the negative attitudes, stigma, and social discrimination experienced by Judith Heumann and other disabled individuals in contemporary American society. Social discrimination is deeply rooted in the life of disabled persons, and also resounds with findings by Michelle Fine and Adrienne

Asch (1988). There is considerable depiction of social discrimination in the selected memoir, “Being Heumann” by Judith Heumann (2020). The instances of social discrimination ranges from home, school, workplace to public places. The disabled persons are discriminated at every step in the United States as highlighted from the analysis of the text.

The perpetuation of negative stereotypes and social discrimination towards the disabled echoes outdated models of disability, such as the morality and medical models. Even the cultural model of disability also has a narrow approach and may be expanded as per contemporary disability theories. To bridge the gap between these social groups, it is imperative to revise these antiquated models and implement necessary measures. Accepting disabled individuals as integral members of society, rejecting negative stereotypes, and promoting a positive portrayal of disability in media are crucial steps. The existing terminologies related to the disabled persons are required to be renewed in order to eliminate the historical lineage of negative stereotypes as endorsed by Mooney (2019). Collaborative efforts with disability rights activists can help to establish a new social disability ethic conducive to inclusivity and equality.

There is a great disparity in the disability severity and types of disability, which includes physical disability, deaf, blind and several disabilities related to brain impairment. Every disabled person or each type of disability, require specific measures to overcome the impact of social discrimination. In this regard, input from each type of disability persons may be acquired and subsequently analyzed to facilitate each category within the disabled community. However, general disability facilities may be provided to each major category to eliminate environmental barriers, ensuring equal opportunities for the disabled, and educating the society, as endorsed by Enn Alwan's (1999). Effective communication and implementation of legislation like the Disability Rights Act, Human Rights initiatives, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act are crucial to attain the 2030 sustainable agenda for the inclusion of disabled persons in mainstream of the society. The effects of disability can be mitigated with the help of technological gadgets, computer programs, and software applications. Furthermore, involving disability activists like Judith Heumann in policy-making and implementation can enhance the quality of life for the disabled persons, both at United States and across the world, including Pakistan.

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