

Difficulties Facing the Professional Practice of Social Work in Achieving Social Inclusion for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

The focus on human beings and their care is one of the important issues for all countries in the world, as human beings represent the nucleus of development, and their care is one of the most important criteria by which the progress of nations is measured (Ajaj, et al., 2022).

The current century has witnessed significant interest in the care of people with disabilities, and social care for the disabled has become one of the leading programs in both advanced and developing countries. The aim is to consciously plan to bring about the intended change and achieve compatibility between the individual's performance of his roles and social functions and his environment in which he lives. The disabled individual should realize that they possess immense abilities and potentials if they are trained, guided, and rehabilitated to become productive individuals like others (Ghubari, 2013, p.8)

The issue of disability is a multidimensional problem that does not only affect the disabled child but also extends its effects to the family and society. These effects vary depending on the type and degree of disability. The more severe the disability, the greater the obstacles to social integration, in addition to the numerous economic and social consequences of disability (Annual Report of the Disability Care Authority, 2020).

Keywords: *intellectual disabilities, social work.*

Introduction

First: Study Problem:

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The current century has witnessed significant interest in the care of people with disabilities, and social care for the disabled has become one of the leading programs in both advanced and developing countries. The aim is to consciously plan to bring about the intended change and achieve compatibility between the individual's performance of his roles and social functions and his environment in which he lives. The disabled individual should realize that they possess immense abilities and potentials if they are trained, guided, and rehabilitated to become productive individuals like others (Ghubari, 2013, p.8)

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the type and degree of disability. The more severe the disability, the greater the obstacles to social integration, in addition to the numerous economic and social consequences of disability (Annual Report of the Disability Care Authority, 2020).

A disabled person suffers from physical, sensory, intellectual, or social impairment that prevents them from competing on an equal footing with their peers in their daily lives. This makes the process of psychological and social adjustment and adaptation to normal life extremely difficult. Likewise, the disabled person becomes in dire need of special educational and social care, and we need to address their problems and provide treatment (Maliki, 1998).

Intellectual disability is not a specific medical disorder like pneumonia or sore throat, but it is a disorder in mental health. The functional performance of individuals with intellectual disabilities is much lower than average, limiting their ability to perform one or more daily life tasks. Intellectually disabled individuals need various forms of care through the perspective of social inclusion to enable them to obtain social respect and appreciation (Al-Khatib, 2018, p. 23).

Some scientific studies have shown that the non-inclusion of disabled individuals with their regular peers and the lack of adaptation to their social status can lead to many problems that negatively impact their performance and social interaction. This deepens the feelings of failure experienced by intellectually disabled individuals and hinders any possibility of their positive interaction in society in an acceptable manner (Barraza, Matthew Arthur, 2020).

"And a study by Al-Shafi'i (2019) emphasizes the importance of equipping individuals with intellectual disabilities with skills that help them integrate, develop a sense of belonging and loyalty, foster social relationships, and facilitate social communication with their peers.

Social work as a profession seeks to assist intellectually disabled individuals in regaining interaction, adaptation, and productivity. This is achieved by providing opportunities and vocational rehabilitation services tailored to their abilities and readiness, as well as providing appropriate educational opportunities, whether in special classrooms or specialized schools, based on their unique circumstances. It also involves creating the best conditions for the social upbringing of the disabled, which includes their ability to engage in realistic thinking (Yamani, 2020).

The professional practice of social work faces various obstacles in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities, including issues related to care centers, the workforce, disabled children, their families, integration institutions, and societal perceptions of them.

Based on the above, the main research problem can be formulated as follows: "What are the challenges faced by social work professionals in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities?"

Secondly, the importance of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Increasing awareness of the issues related to the social integration of children with intellectual disabilities and promoting the desired social change.
2. Directing efforts towards achieving equal opportunities and access to necessary services for these children and realizing their full potential.
3. Developing effective strategies and tools to enhance social integration and improve the quality of services provided.
4. Enhancing the special skills required to interact with children with intellectual disabilities, understanding their individual needs, and raising awareness of theoretical frameworks and available tools to promote social integration.

5. Utilizing the results and recommendations to influence policies, programs, and communities to improve conditions and provide opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities to actively participate in society."

Fourth: Study Objectives:

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- Identify the difficulties faced by social work professionals in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- 2- Propose solutions to overcome the difficulties encountered by social work professionals in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Fourth: Study Questions:

The study objectives were achieved by answering the following questions:

- 1- What are the difficulties faced by social work professionals in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities?
- 2- What are the proposed solutions to overcome the difficulties encountered by social work professionals in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities?

Fifth: Study Concepts:

1- Concept of Difficulties:

The concept of difficulties refers to anything that negatively affects the achievement of goals, completion of tasks, or the practice of professional programs and activities (Arabic Language Academy, 1991: p. 60). Webster's dictionary defines difficulties as obstacles, actions, or things that hinder progress (Saeed, 2002, p. 15).

Procedural Concept of Difficulties: The challenges that hinder the professional social worker's role in achieving social integration for children with intellectual disabilities, thereby limiting the effectiveness of their professional role.

2- Concept of Professional Social Work Practice:

Professional social work practice refers to the methods and standards followed by professionals in the field of social work to provide support and assistance to individuals and communities in need. The aim of professional practice is to enhance the well-being of individuals and improve social and human rights conditions for individuals and communities (Al-Sukkari, 2010).

Procedurally, professional social work practice is defined as the type of practice in which the social work practitioner relies on a set of skills and knowledge specific to the field of social work. This includes the ability to assess the client's needs and develop an appropriate treatment or support plan, provide counseling and psychosocial support, and provide guidance and assistance in accessing appropriate resources and services.

3- Concept of Social Integration:

The conceptual definition of social integration is for individuals with disabilities to live, participate, and be included in daily activities, alongside enabling them to perform roles similar to their non-disabled peers. It also entails ensuring the presence of effective and impactful policies in society that enable individuals to achieve this (Al-Khateeb, 2018: p. 59).

Social integration is defined as an integrated process of various activities related to the lives of individuals with disabilities, through their participation with their non-disabled peers, in order to achieve social acceptance and a sense of remaining and developing remaining abilities for a better life (Al-Fatlawi, 2022).

Procedurally, social integration is defined as providing all services to intellectually disabled children to interact with all groups within the community, whether they are health, educational, or community services.

4-Concept of Intellectual Disability:

Disability is a term that refers to the impact resulting from a state of inability in light of different personal, social, and cultural variables (Farouk Al-Rousan, 2003).

Intellectual disability is a significant decrease in a person's intellectual functioning since birth or early childhood, resulting in limited ability to perform ordinary daily life activities (Stephen, 2020).

Procedurally, it is a state of reduced intelligence or tangible impairment in general mental functions. The needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities vary, and they usually require special support and care in various areas such as education, healthcare, communication, and life skills.

Sixth: Methodological Procedures of the Study:

1- Study Type:

The study belongs to the category of "descriptive-analytical" studies, aiming to report the characteristics of the studied phenomenon and analyze it quantitatively and qualitatively, reaching proposals to overcome the difficulties faced by social work professionals in achieving social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

2- Study Methodology:

The study adopted a comprehensive social survey methodology to identify various aspects of the phenomenon and its relationships with other phenomena in order to reach results that help in understanding the current reality for future development.

3- Study Instrument:

The study relied on a questionnaire to achieve its field objectives. This instrument was chosen to align with the nature of the study in terms of its objectives, methodology, and community.

4- Study Population and Sample:

The study population consists of all social work professionals working in comprehensive rehabilitation centers in the cities of Mecca and Jeddah, totaling 51 individuals, during the study procedures in the year 2024.

Seventh: Field Study Results

(a) General characteristics of the respondents

Type 1- Table (1) shows the qualitative characteristics of the respondents

Ratio	Iteration	Type
56.9%	29	male
43.1%	22	Female
100%	51	Total

The data of Table (1) indicated that the majority of respondents were (males) with a percentage of 56.9%, while the percentage of females reached 43.1%.

Age :2

Table (2) shows the age characteristics of the respondents

Ratio	Iteration	Age
29.4%	15	25-35 years
45.1%	23	36-45 years
21.6%	11	46-55 years
3.9%	2	Over 55 years old
100%	51	Total

The data of Table (2) indicated that the majority of respondents in comprehensive rehabilitation centers in the age group of (36-45 years) by 45.1%, followed by the age group of (25-35 years) by 29.4%, while the age group of (46-55) years reached 21.6%, while the age group (over 55 years) reached 2.9% of the total respondents.

Academic Qualification:3

Table No. (3) shows the academic qualification of the respondents

Ratio	Iteration	Academic Qualification
80.4%	41	Bachelor
19.6%	10	Master
100%	51	Total

The data of Table (3) indicated that the majority of respondents have a bachelor's degree by 80.4%, followed by those who have a master's degree by 19.6%, and the data indicates a high educational level of the respondents, which reflects positively on their responses to the issues raised .

4- social status

Table No. (4) shows the social status of the respondents

Ratio	Iteration	social status
68.6%	35	married
19.6%	10	single
9.8%	5	absolute
2%	1	widower
100%	51	Total

The data of Table (4) indicated that the marital status of the majority of social workers working in comprehensive rehabilitation centers of married persons by 68.1%, followed by 19.6% single, and the marital status of divorced persons amounted to 9.8%, while the

5-Monthly income

Table (5) shows the monthly income of the respondents

Ratio	Iteration	social status
29.4%	15	5000- to less than 10000
47.1%	24	10000- to less than 10000

23.5%	12	15000 SAR or more
100%	51	Total

The data of Table (5) indicates that the monthly income of the majority of the members of the study population of social workers has a monthly income of (10,000-15,000 riyals) by 47.1%, followed by 28.4% their monthly income ranges between (5,000 to 10,000 riyals), and 24.5% of the respondents have a monthly income of more than (15,000 riyals).

6-years of functional experience in the field of the disabled

Table (6) shows the number of years of job experience in the field of disabled respondents

Ratio	Iteration	social status
30.4%	15	Less than 5 years
23.5%	12	5 to 10 years old
46.1%	24	10- years and above
100%	51	Total

The data of Table (6) showed that the years of experience of the majority of respondents in the field of disability (more than 10 years) by 46.1%, followed by 23.5% of the respondents years of experience were (less than 5 years), and 23.5% years of experience were (5-10 years). This means that they have experience in the nature and objectives of the work of these centres and the different ways and methods to achieve those objectives.

Answer to the first question: What are the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving the social integration of persons with intellectual disabilities?

First: Difficulties related to comprehensive rehabilitation centers.

Table (7) shows the difficulties related to comprehensive rehabilitation centers

Percentage	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Difficulties related to comprehensive rehabilitation centers	ر
86%	0.74	4.3	Weak use of modern technological means in comprehensive rehabilitation centers.	1
84%	0.93	4.2	Lack of financial support to meet the needs of comprehensive rehabilitation centers.	2
%82	0.96	4.1	Lack of qualified staff to provide services to persons with intellectual disabilities in the centers	3

The data of Table (7) indicated that the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving the social integration of persons with intellectual disabilities associated with comprehensive rehabilitation centers were represented in the weak use of modern technological means in comprehensive rehabilitation centers by (86%), followed by the lack of financial support to meet the needs of comprehensive rehabilitation centers by (84%), followed by the lack of qualified staff to provide services to persons with intellectual disabilities in the centers by) 82.(%

Second: Difficulties associated with children with intellectual disabilities.

Table (8) Difficulties associated with children with intellectual disabilities

Percentage	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Difficulties associated with people with intellectual disabilities.	rank
86%	0.67	4.3	Poor independence skills in some children with intellectual disabilities.	1
84%	0.83	4.2	Cognitive deficiencies of children with intellectual disabilities.	2
84%	0.84	4.2	Limited participation of children with disabilities in programs and activities practiced within comprehensive rehabilitation centers.	3

The data of Table (7) indicated the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving the social integration of persons with intellectual disabilities associated with children with intellectual disabilities, represented in: "Poor independence skills among some children with intellectual disabilities by (86%) This is followed by (84%) the cognitive impairment of children with intellectual disabilities, and the limited participation of children with disabilities in programs and activities practiced within comprehensive rehabilitation centers .

Third: Difficulties associated with the families of children with intellectual disabilities

Table (9) Difficulties associated with families of children with intellectual disabilities.

Percentage	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Difficulties associated with families of children with disabilities.	rank
90%	0.79	4.5	Negative perception of families of children with intellectual disabilities.	1
88%	0.69	4.4	Lack of awareness of some families about service institutions that provide assistance.	2
86%	0.80	4.3	The family of people with mental disabilities feels inferior and inferior in the face of others.	3
88%	0.65	4.4	The dissatisfaction of the families of persons with intellectual disabilities with the services provided by the institutions to their children.	4

The data of Table (9) indicated the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving the social integration of persons with intellectual disabilities associated with the families of children with intellectual disabilities, represented in: "The negative view of the families of children with intellectual disabilities by (90%), followed by (84%) by the lack of awareness of some families of service institutions that provide assistance, and the dissatisfaction of families of persons with intellectual disabilities with the services provided by institutions to their children.

Fourth: Difficulties related to the relevant community institutions in which the disabled are integrated (education - day care centers)

Table (10) Difficulties Related to Relevant Community Institutions

Percentage	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Difficulties associated with relevant community institutions	rank
86%	0.82	4.3	Suffering in accepting ordinary children of people with intellectual disabilities when inclusion.	1
84%	0.78	4.2	Poor suitability of programs and activities offered in educational institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities	2
82%	0.95	4.1	Lack of equipped means of transportation in institutions related to the integration of persons with disabilities and for their transportation	3
82%	1.02	4.1	Lack of devices that facilitate education and movement for people with intellectual disabilities	4

The data of Table (10) indicated the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving the social integration of persons with intellectual disabilities associated with the relevant community institutions in which the disabled are integrated (education - day care centers) represented in "suffering in the acceptance of ordinary children of persons with intellectual disabilities when integrating by (86%), followed by the poor suitability of programs and activities provided in educational institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities by (84%), in addition to the lack of equipped transportation in institutions. related to the integration of persons with disabilities and their transportation, and the lack of availability of devices that facilitate education and movement for persons with intellectual disabilities by (82%)

Fifth: Difficulties associated with the treatment team

Table (11) Difficulties associated with the therapeutic team

Percentage	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Difficulties associated with the therapeutic team	rank
82%	1.1	4.1	Lack of staff from the relevant disciplines to deal with persons with intellectual disabilities.	1
86%	1.3	3.4	Weak cooperation by the administration to provide the required services for people with intellectual disabilities.	2
66%	1.2	3.3	Weak cooperation of the work team with social workers within the comprehensive rehabilitation centers.	3

The data of Table (11) indicated that the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving the social integration of persons with intellectual disabilities associated with the treatment team were represented in the lack of staff from the relevant specialties to deal with persons with intellectual disabilities by (82%), followed by weak cooperation by the administration to provide the required services for persons with

intellectual disabilities by (68%), weak cooperation of the work team with social workers within comprehensive rehabilitation centers by (66%)

Answer to the second question: What are the suggestions to overcome the difficulties facing the professional practice of social work in achieving social inclusion for persons with intellectual disabilities

Achieving social inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities can be challenging, but there are some proposals that can help overcome difficulties and promote investigation in this area. We list them as follows:

1-Awareness and education: Awareness of intellectual disability and the challenges faced by children with intellectual disabilities should be promoted, and educational workshops and seminars can be organized for the community, including families, teachers and the local community, to promote understanding, empathy and acceptance of children with intellectual disabilities.

2-Provide appropriate support: Children with intellectual disabilities and their families must be provided with appropriate support, social workers can be recruited to work with this age group and provide the necessary counseling and guidance, and psychological and emotional support can be provided to children and their families to deal with the challenges they face.

3-Encourage community participation: Community participation of children with intellectual disabilities should be encouraged in local activities and events, and opportunities can be provided to participate in sports and art clubs, summer camps, and other community events, this helps to promote social inclusion and develop communication skills and social interaction.

4-Develop integrated educational programs: Integrated educational programs should be developed that meet the needs of children with intellectual disabilities, and these programs should include planning, setting goals, and providing appropriate educational support, and there should also be opportunities for co-education with ordinary children to promote understanding and coexistence between them.

5-Provide a supportive environment: A supportive environment must be provided in schools, educational institutions and communities, the necessary capabilities and resources must be provided to meet the special needs of children with intellectual disabilities, and the appropriate infrastructure needed in schools and public places should be provided to enable children with intellectual disabilities to access services and events easily.

6-Joint cooperation: Joint cooperation between the various authorities concerned with the care and rehabilitation of children with intellectual disabilities must be strengthened, including cooperation between workers in the field of social service, special education, mental health and family, and this cooperation can contribute to providing comprehensive care and integrating efforts to achieve social integration for children with intellectual disabilities.

7-Communication and public awareness: Communication with the media and the public must be made to raise awareness of the issues of children with intellectual disabilities and the importance of achieving social inclusion for them, and awareness and media campaigns can be organized to disseminate correct information and break down misconceptions and stereotypical challenges related to this age group.

8-Training and professional development: Training and continuous development opportunities should be provided to social workers and other professionals dealing with children with intellectual disabilities, and training programs can be provided that focus on understanding the special needs of this age group, enhancing communicative and interactive skills, and learning appropriate intervention and support strategies.

9-Joint work with the community: Cooperation with the community, NGOs and other institutions can be strengthened, partnerships can be formed to provide support, resources and exchange of knowledge and experiences, and joint events can also be organized with the local community to promote social inclusion and encourage interaction between children with intellectual disabilities and their peers.

10-Supportive legislation and policies: There must be strong and supportive policies and legislation to achieve the social inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities, these policies should protect the rights of children with intellectual disabilities and promote equality and equal opportunities for participation in society, and government policies should also encourage the provision of funding for programs and services directed to this age group.

11-Effective communication with parents: There should be effective communication with parents of children with intellectual disabilities, communication should include the continuous exchange of information, observations and updates about the child's progress and needs, and emotional support and practical information can be provided to parents to help them deal with difficulties and enhance their role as partners in achieving social inclusion.

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