

The Sexuality of People with Physical Disabilities: A Qualitative Feminist Perspective of Carer's Points of View

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Abstract : In 2016 Japan started to enforce domestic legislation in the form of the Act of Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disability, along with ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2014. However, it is not clear what kind of situations would be considered cases of discrimination in relation to issues of sexuality according to this legislation. Furthermore, in March 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) made a recommendation to the Japanese government to conduct a study of the forced sterilization of women under the Eugenic Protection Act. This research is carried out against this background in which the experiences of people with disabilities have often been restricted by caregivers and family members—as evidenced by the high number of eugenics surgeries performed on people with disabilities without their consent. This research contributes to this topic by presenting voices and perspectives of key people, especially focusing on the voices of carers who are working with people with physical disabilities in a Non-Western country, Japan. Furthermore, since 90% of the research on the topic of sexuality of people with disabilities is conducted in Western countries, the voices from Non-Western countries in this regard are greatly lacking. In the part of the research presented here, the researcher has employed a feminist disability theory to understand the circumstances surrounding people with physical disabilities. She has gathered voices from 58 carers by using an on-line questionnaire (55) and by conducting face-to-face interviews (3). In this presentation, the researcher will introduce experiences and thoughts regarding sexuality and people with disabilities by using carers' own words. One of the major findings was carers' concern about a boundary issue. Although each carer has had unique experiences depending on their professional or personal relationship with people with physical disabilities, many of them shared some similar viewpoints. This included a concern that assisting with the meeting of some forms of sexual needs (e.g. assisted masturbation) would result in the possibility of transgressing the boundary between the carer and the person with physical disability. Most of the carer did not have any opportunity to receive any trainings regarding to sexuality of people with disabilities. Furthermore, most of the carers conceptualized that 'Keeping a sexual dignity of people with disabilities' means practicing a 'Principle of same sex assistance'. The researcher hopes that this presentation provides an opportunity for audiences to look back at their own community and to think about what sexuality of people with physical disabilities means to their carers as well as to look back at their own practice in relation to this issue.

Keywords : Carer, Japan, physical disabilities, sexuality

Conference Title : ICSW 2018 : International Conference on Social Work

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : September 13-14, 2018