

Young People's Perceptions of Disability: The New Generation's View of a Public Seen as Vulnerable and Marginalized

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Abstract : For a long time, disabled people lived in isolation within the family environment, with little interaction with the outside world and a high risk of social exclusion. However, in a number of countries, progress has been made thanks to changes in legislation on the social integration of disabled people, a significant change in attitudes and the development of CSR. But the problem of their social, economic and professional exclusion persists and has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This societal phenomenon is sufficiently important to be the subject of management science research. We have therefore focused our work on society's current perception of people with disabilities and their possible integration. Our aim is to find out what levers could be put in place to bring about positive change in the situation. We have chosen to focus on the perception of young people in France, who are the new generation responsible for the future of our society and from whom tomorrow's decision-makers, future employers and stakeholders who can influence the living conditions of disabled people will be drawn. Our study sample corresponds to the 18-30 age group, which is the population of young adults likely to have sufficient experience and maturity. The aim of this study is not only to find out how this population currently perceives disability but also to identify the factors influencing this perception and the most effective levers for action to act positively on this phenomenon and thus promote better social integration of people with disabilities in the future. The methodology is based on theoretical and empirical research. The literature review includes a historical and etymological approach to disability, a definition of the different concepts of disability, an approach to disability as a vector of social exclusion and the role of perception and representations in defining the social image of disability. This literature review is followed by an empirical part carried out by means of a questionnaire administered to 110 young people aged 18 to 30. Analysis of our results suggests that, despite a recent improvement, disabled people are still perceived as vulnerable and socially marginalized. The following factors stand out as having a significant influence (positive or negative) on the perception of disability: the individual's familiarity with the 'world of disability', cultural factors, the degree of 'visibility' of the disability and the empathy level of the disabled person him/herself. Others, on the other hand, such as socio-political and economic factors, have little impact on this perception. In addition, it is possible to classify the various levers of action likely to improve the social perception of disability according to their degree of effectiveness. Our study population prioritized training initiatives for the various players and stakeholders (teachers, students, disabled people themselves, companies, sports clubs, etc.). This was followed by communication, e-communication and media campaigns in favour of disability. Lastly, the sample was judged as 'less effective' positive discrimination actions such as setting a minimum percentage for the representation of disabled people in various fields (studies, employment, politics ...).

Keywords : disability, perception, social image, young people, influencing factors, levers for action

Conference Title : ICDD 2025 : International Conference on Disability and Diversity

Conference Location : Cancun, Mexico

Conference Dates : January 21-22, 2025