

SOCIETAL NEGLECT OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL IMPAIRMENT

Introduction

Amaudo Itumbauzo has been contributing immensely towards having a beautiful and peaceful society by way of picking and rehabilitating mentally ill patients from the streets. Notwithstanding all these efforts put into it by this organization, this group of people is still seen on so many of the streets where Amaudo has her clients.

In the light of the above, I wish to highlight, through this article, the importance of involving the society in rehabilitation of these brothers and sisters of ours.

Amaudo Itumbauzo is just an NGO located in Bende Local Government Area in Abia State, having limited resources that can perfectly take care of the growing number of mentally ill persons on the street.

The term society embraces the different communities where these persons may come from and there are bigger/larger in size and embraces or houses more organizations such as corporate bodies, churches, private individuals, states and local government, students, market, women, different groups etc.

When a job or an action that is supposed to be carried out by different group/people is abandoned for any one or few, the weight becomes heavy for whoever such activity is left to. While this is seen as neglect or negligence on the part of those who feel unconcerned on the issue at stake, the weight will be too much on however decides to show interest.

If the Government, Churches, different organizations and private individuals refuse to acknowledge the fact or refuse to see it as very necessary joining hands with Amaudo Itumbauzo to better the health of the mentally ill, it is a big negligence and the unexpected might come to play. In the alternative, when every body the Government, Churches, Corporate bodies, private individuals all join hands together to face this problem, better results will be achieved and the society will be a better place for all. This is seen as societal involvement in solving the problem.

Like mentioned above, all hands must be on deck to tackle this problem effectively; therefore the government (Local and State), corporate bodies, churches, influential individuals and the general public should all show interest in the subject matter and act fast towards saving lives of these ones.

Due to the fact that the group of people in discussion are not working but mostly destitute, it is important for us to know their needs so as to know how to help them.

The centre at Amaudo Itumbauzo I am sure because of inadequate funds was built to handle only 60 patients or residents (as they call them) at a time.

I am sure Roseline Nkechi Corwill the initiator of the programme had much more money, she would have increased the size of the centre thereby housing many more mentally sick people. Be as it may, the centre had been built according to what her finances could carry. Yet there are still numerous of those who had not been picked before and those discharged and relapsed seen on streets, market place etc.

Interestingly, one might be tempted to ask that if Amaudo Itumbauzo being so well organized, finds it difficult to get this job done, who else will? And then one question might be what is the percentage of people with mental illness in each state and what really is the need?

Apart from the number being housed in the centre at Itumbauzo, the organization sees and treats as many as four hundred and sixty patients every month in Abia State alone making it very difficult to continuously purchase and provide drugs and other physiological needs for patients in not only Abia but Imo and Ebonyi States.

However, it is difficult for one to deduce why this group of people are being neglected by the society. Today it is commonplace to see headlines in most of our newspapers screaming about HIV/AIDS, polio, orphans etc. And it is quite disheartening to note that the attention from society at large on issues that affect people with mental illness seem to be getting dimmer and dimmer by the day.

With the hustle and bustle of these days where every body is trying to make out a living, how many people have ever sat down to consider this group of mentally ill persons how they survive? In a society where almost every body or most people are complaining of the economy and hunger, how many really care how the mentally ill eat, gets clothes, and/or accommodation to protect themselves from the harsh weather.

People with disabilities continue to suffer from segregation and social stigma. To this day, the none disabled community regards people with disabilities as people whose lives are of little or no value. Yet people with disabilities like any body else have needs, skills and rights just like every body else.

It should be borne in mind that the consequences related to disability are not only experienced by the individuals but also by their families and society.

Although the issue of mental illness is as old as humanity, efforts have been made to rid negative attitudes and segregation against people within this group; our society still abounds with people with prejudice that have and continuously step on the rights of the mentally ill.

Studies have it that the greatest problem surrounding mentally ill people is the issue of negligence which come in different modes.

Lack of awareness: Most people have refused to render help to them because they live with the belief that mental illness is not treatable e.g. in Nigeria it is commonly believed

that once a mentally ill person enters a market place they can never be cured. Others even believe that helping people with mental illness or having any thing to do with them is dealing with evil spirits.

Stigmatisation: Similarly parents of this group of people shy away from being associated with them.

Another reason why people neglect them borders on the fact of economic situation. Due to the fact that many people live on a very low income, they have virtually nothing to spare.

Another important reason why the society neglects them is for the fear of the unknown. Because of their kind of ailment, people think they could easily loose their temper at any time.

Finally, I feel a lack of interest in other people's wellbeing is another reason for neglect. If people would ever show love for one another like Christ preached the world would have been a better place for place because by doing so we would have been bearing each other's burdens.

With the much talked about 21st Century, the Internet Age, we feel we have come of age for our society to do away with negative attitudes against the disabled.

There is a mistake in thinking that a disabled person needs only basic necessities of life like food, shelter and clothing. While this is true, it is too superficial to be accepted. It should be borne in mind that a human being is a social animal. And as such, there is one thing the disabled lack most in their day to day life, love. The mentally ill need our love and affection most for them to feel they are part and parcel of the community.

The mentally ill need love most of them to reach and maintain their physical, psychiatric and social function level. Our families, communities and leaders should learn to transfer resources to them. Dependency is not a characteristic limited to mentally ill persons only. On the contrary all human beings are dependent on each other during many years of their lives.

Consider the mentally ill people not as Government responsibility but as our responsibility. While Government has got its own share to contribute towards the mentally ill, the society has a share as well. Love which is most lacked among the mentally ill is a priceless commodity which can easily be supplied by you as an individual.

Love has the capacity to level the rugged edge of life. Until we become ambassadors of love, the fear and anxiety that comes when one meets these hidden members of our society will continue to grow.

In our quest to continually seek for solutions for this great problem of negligence, it is advised that individuals, communities and the government focus more on these primary preventive measures.

Biologically how many kids one should have when to have them with regards to economic and health status of the family. Psychologically every individual should be given an equal opportunity to learn. Failure to learn and develop skills required for problem solving, handling emotions constructively and for establishing satisfactory interpersonal relationships places individuals at a serious disadvantage in coping with life problems and constitute mal-adjustment and mental disorders.

Sociologically, it is believed that each screening in our social institutions like churches, social clubs and all levels of education institutions is carried out there will be early detection of mental illness.

While we solicit with the government to pay more attention to this group of people by way of providing support to victims of this ailment e.g. purchase of drugs, expanding the centre at Amaudo Itumbauzo to house more of them and proving the human and material resources the centre need be more successful, we equally advise families, victims and the public at large not to jeopardize her efforts.

Like mentioned above government has a lot to do towards making sure that they are assisted by communities, families, corporate organizations, etc. to reduce the number of sufferers of mental illness.

The following are some other ways that support could come in a bid to reduce negligence.

Creating of awareness

The public should be advised on the best way to avoid being victims and to help the sufferers condition improve.

Poverty

Since poverty is seen as one of the causes of government should endeavour to better the living standard of the people, if this is done more people will have the resources to be able to help sufferers.

Unemployment

Government should, as a matter of necessity provide jobs for her citizens and make it as a point of policy having tax rebate for any organization that employs a stabilized once mentally ill patient.

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