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## **Algerian Society's Efforts in Integrating and Rehabilitating People with Disabilities**

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### **Abstract:**

The legislative and legal framework for the care, protection, rehabilitation, and professional and social integration of people with disabilities reflects the state's awareness of its responsibilities towards this important group in society, It also demonstrates its sense of accountability, Since independence, Algeria has been striving to support this group, helping them integrate into society and live with dignity, free from all forms of marginalization and discrimination. These efforts align with the principles of dignity, equality, and equal opportunities in various fields, particularly in education and employment.

This research paper seeks to understand and discuss the Algerian state's efforts to rehabilitate and integrate people with disabilities into Algerian society.

**Keywords:** Disability, Disabled person, Integration, Rehabilitation.

### **Introduction:**

In nearly every human society, individuals with disabilities are present. What differs, however, is how societies perceive and interact with them. Each society has its own historical and cultural characteristics, as well as a set of values and social norms that influence how individuals perceive

various aspects of life. Disability is widely recognized as a human and social phenomenon that brings challenges and crises for individuals and groups alike.

Historically, this social group has been marginalized. Recently, however, this negative perception has shifted, and there has been a renewed focus on the potential of people with disabilities. The multifaceted challenge of development—social, economic, infrastructural, and environmental—remains significant for both advanced societies and developing ones, albeit at different levels. Consequently, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach to development that integrates all sectors and social groups, including those with disabilities.

Disability presents complex challenges, as it bridges two sides of difficult equation individuals who are excluded and marginalized, but who are also capable of creativity and productivity.

In this context, this research paper explores the efforts of Algerian society in integrating and rehabilitating individuals with disabilities. It examines the psychological, medical, social, and professional dimensions, as well as the extent to which these efforts can change society's perception from seeing people with disabilities as objects of charity and helplessness to viewing them as capable, active members who can fully participate in life without being subjected to assistance that comes with pity or condescension.

## **1. Conceptual Approach to the Subject**

### **1.1 Definition of Disability and Disabled Person:**

#### **1.1.1 Disability:**

Disability refers to a condition that limits an individual's ability to perform one or more tasks that are considered essential to daily life, such as self-care, social relationships, or economic activities, within the range typically considered normal. Disabilities can arise from physical, neurological, or mental impairments that are physiological, psychological, or structural in nature (Ibrahim, 2000, p. 02).

### **1.1.2 Disabled Person:**

A disabled person is anyone who differs from what is typically considered "normal" physically, mentally, or socially to an extent that necessitates specialized rehabilitation processes. The goal is to enable them to make the best possible use of their abilities and talents (Othman, 1992, p. 13).

An exploration of the literature on disability reveals synonymous terms commonly used in this field, such as "crippled," "handicapped," "abnormal," "disabled," and "people with special needs." All of these terms have a negative connotation, leading to feelings of discouragement, discrimination, and inferiority among the individuals they describe. These terms are often unhelpful because they convey negative perceptions of those they label.

In response, scientific initiatives have proposed replacing the term "disability" with less negative terminology. A suggested alternative is "injury," which is more acceptable from both a psychological and social standpoint. An injured person is one who has a defect or impairment, whether inherited or acquired, that prevents or limits their ability to perform activities like others. Therefore, they require special care and support according to the type and extent of the impairment, enabling them to become productive and active members of society.0674329450

## **1.2. Definitions of Integration and Rehabilitation:**

### **1.2.1 Integration:**

Integration means that a person with disabilities lives safely and securely wherever they are, and is recognized as a valuable member of their family. They shouldn't feel isolated or alienated within the community. Integration is about achieving a degree of effective personal and social harmony, while also continuously participating in school and classes with non-disabled peers. They should benefit from all educational, cultural, academic, recreational, sports, and medical services just like others. Furthermore, they should be able to work alongside others in various professional institutions according to their abilities and potential (Karam, 2006, p. 102).

### **1.2.2 Rehabilitation:**

The term "rehabilitation" refers to a process by which a person adapts to their environment or is re-prepared for life. If this adaptation is primarily medical, then medical rehabilitation is needed, focusing on restoring whatever physical abilities can be provided (El-Sayed, 1991, p. 38).

If an individual requires psychological adjustment, vocational rehabilitation may be necessary. This involves collaboration between a psychologist and other specialists, such as social workers or rehabilitation experts, to support the individual's reintegration into society (El-Sayed, 1991, p. 39).

### **2. What is meant by rehabilitation and social integration of people with disabilities:**

The main goal of rehabilitation is to ensure that people with disabilities can reach their maximum physical and mental potential, benefit from regular services and opportunities, and achieve full social integration in their communities. This goal is based on the logical concept of achieving equality in opportunities and integration into the local community. In its broadest sense, community rehabilitation is a comprehensive approach that includes preventing disabilities, providing priority healthcare activities, integrating children with disabilities into regular schools, and offering profitable economic opportunities for adults with disabilities.

From this perspective, rehabilitation enhances the rights of people with disabilities within their communities, ensuring they enjoy health, well-being, and full participation in educational, social, cultural, religious, economic, and political activities.

Rehabilitation has both personal and professional aspects, with many branches under each. The primary aim is to achieve integration into society, thereby accomplishing both personal and professional goals. This allows people with disabilities to adapt to those around them, as well as to objects and events. These branches can also be referred to as adaptive rehabilitation, as individuals with disabilities are pre Rehabilitation involves efforts by specialists to make people with disabilities suitable for social life in all its aspects as much as possible and deserving of recognition. It strengthens their willpower and perseverance to reach a better level in their

professional life, despite their disability. Adaptation and integration with society are achieved through rehabilitation, where the person with a disability is trained to adapt to the community. Rehabilitation covers multiple aspects, training individuals in each of them in preparation for comprehensive rehabilitation. Ultimately, they reach a stage of full social adaptation to their environment and community, pared to adapt to their society and environment ([Sultan, 2005, p. 94](#)).

From this, we find that rehabilitation is a structured and continuous process aimed at bringing the person with a disability to the highest level of their medical, social, educational, psychological, professional, and economic abilities. This helps them adapt to the society in which they live, where the steps of this process are interconnected.

### **2.1 Psychological Rehabilitation:**

This consists of services aimed at helping the individual with a disability resist feelings of inferiority that might arise from societal attitudes or from comparing themselves to others. It seeks to overcome the psychological conditions that accompany disability or impairment. When their psychological state improves, and they are filled with hope for the future, they realize that it is possible to lead a valuable life, like any other individual. They can confidently use the other abilities God has given them, apart from the part that is disabled or significantly impaired. They recognize that what God has given them is not less than what has been given to any other human, understanding that human strengths differ from person to person, it's possible that the energy God grants to an individual with disabilities is stronger and greater in their remaining abilities than those of others. For instance, a wheelchair-bound or physically disabled individual may have sharper vision than someone who is able-bodied but lazy and lacks initiative. God may grant them this strong vision to compensate for their inability to move, enabling them to see far distances that others cannot ([Sultan, 2005, pp. 95-96](#)).

The same applies to other senses. If these ideas take root in the mind of a person with a disability, they will approach life with a strong heart and firm spirit, leading to success in other areas of rehabilitation.

## **2.2 Medical Rehabilitation:**

Medical rehabilitation is considered one of the most important aspects of comprehensive rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities. Medical treatment begins from the moment a disability is detected and continues through the end of training or rehabilitation, this type of rehabilitation supports individuals with all necessary medical resources to provide them with strength and endurance throughout the training and rehabilitation processes.

Physical therapy is often the most suitable form of treatment provided to an individual with a disability as part of their social and professional rehabilitation journey. It helps strengthen muscles after a period of inactivity and stimulates blood flow after periods of slow movement and stillness.

Thus, medical rehabilitation generally aims to help individuals return to a lifestyle that is as close to normal as possible in terms of their physical, psychological, and social functioning. This is achieved by utilizing all technical and medical resources, such as physical therapy, exercises, prosthetic devices, medicine, surgery, occupational therapy (daily life activities), psychotherapy, sports therapy, and appropriate vocational training. In essence, it is an integrated effort tailored to serve individuals with disabilities (Sultan, 2005, p. 96).

It is clear that medical rehabilitation accompanies all other aspects of rehabilitation, as each branch requires medical follow-up at every stage to strengthen certain parts of the body, enabling the person to continue other rehabilitation activities.

## **2.3 Social Rehabilitation:**

There are many different interpretations of the concept of social rehabilitation, with various understandings based on the diverse disciplines that address it and the different branches that deal with it.

Social rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities is defined as a program that harnesses their abilities and efforts through social, psychological, medical, cultural, and professional services to help them overcome the effects of their disabilities. (Tawfiq, 1989, p. 96)

The goal is to reintegrate individuals with disabilities into normal life, harmonizing them with the community they live in—a harmony that was disrupted by their disability. This process should ultimately result in securing suitable employment and stability. The ultimate objective is to empower individuals with disabilities within their abilities, enabling them to become productive participants in the natural life of society (Sultan, 2005, p. 98).

From this perspective, individuals with disabilities can gradually contribute to the comprehensive development of society, facilitating their progressive integration into the community.

## **2.4 Vocational Rehabilitation:**

Vocational rehabilitation involves the re-employment of individuals with disabilities in a professional capacity. It is a continuous and lengthy process aimed at preparing individuals for specific administrative or manual jobs and obtaining an acceptable professional qualification that allows them to practice as craftsmen, this aligns with the residual abilities of individuals following their disability, according to International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration No. 55/99, vocational rehabilitation is defined as a systematic, continuous set of processes with a professional content, including guidance, selection, and academic empowerment (Al-Nimass, 2000, p. 285).

The program aims to enable individuals with disabilities to return to their original jobs or find another that suits their current condition and remaining talents and capabilities. Ultimately, it helps them become self-reliant (Boudraa, 1995, p. 145).

## **3. Practical and Legislative Efforts by the Algerian State:**

### **3.1 Educational Measures:**

Early care for children with disabilities is ensured by providing education regardless of age. This is mandatory in educational and vocational training institutions or through special classes within educational, vocational, or medical settings, where necessary, in suitable physical conditions, specialized institutions provide training, sometimes including accommodation for teachers and trainees, Psychological and social services are offered depending on the condition of the person

with disabilities, a specialized vocational training center has been established for individuals with motor disabilities, in addition to establishing a national center for specialized staff for disability institutions. ([Executive Decree 81/391, 1981](#))

These measures enable individuals with disabilities to gain the knowledge and practical skills necessary to enter the job market and integrate into society, this presents a challenge that the state must address to ensure that this group can engage in suitable activities that guarantee their physical and economic independence.

In terms of care and rehabilitation more generally, after independence, the Algerian state established an educational system consisting of specialized educational centers for people with disabilities, particularly children in this category. Initially, there were only 8 centers dedicated to caring for and rehabilitating people with disabilities. Today, there are over 441 centers focused on the rehabilitation of various types of disabilities, along with 146 specialized schools for the education and training of people with disabilities, including 93 schools for individuals with intellectual disabilities, 23 for the deaf and mute, and 21 for the blind. These schools offer various educational resources tailored to each type of disability, such as Braille books and even internet access ([Issa, 2012, p. 14](#)).

### **3.2 Living Facilities:**

To improve the living conditions and welfare of individuals with disabilities, measures are implemented to eliminate barriers that hinder their daily lives. These include architectural standards and adaptations for residential, school, university, and religious facilities, as well as spaces designated for cultural, sports, and recreational activities. Other measures include ensuring access to prosthetic devices and technical aids that facilitate physical independence, improving communication and information technology accessibility, and prioritizing housing on lower floors<sup>1</sup>

### **3.3 Preventive Measures:**

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1- See: Law No. 88/27.



Preventive efforts involve screening programs, medical prevention campaigns, and public awareness initiatives to inform citizens about factors that cause disabilities. Early medical and social screening, testing, and examinations are conducted to identify disabilities and address them while reducing their causes.

In the same direction, declaring a disability is mandatory for provincial social protection departments. This declaration can be made by the guardians of individuals with disabilities, their representatives, or healthcare workers as soon as the disability is detected. This ensures that the relevant authorities can address the disability promptly.

Additionally, the same law provides regulations related to health in general, including prevention and protection of maternity, health education within educational settings, and environmental protection ([Law No. 05-85, 1985](#)).

#### **4. Effectiveness of Legal Mechanisms in Protecting People with Special Needs:**

The annual reports of the National Advisory Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights are the primary documents for monitoring the status of human rights and those of people with special needs in Algeria ([Decree No. 01/71, 2001](#)).

In the 2013 annual report, which we obtained a copy of, the commission annually assesses national efforts related to human rights. The report provides the following summary relevant to our study:

##### **4.1 Legal Framework:**

Algeria's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on May 12, 2009, marked a new commitment to promoting and protecting human rights ([Qacentini, 2013, p. 214](#)).

In the same spirit, Algeria enacted a law on May 8, 2002, concerning the protection and promotion of people with disabilities. This law was established before the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UN General Assembly in 2006. The

law helped identify specific needs related to disabilities and promote the social integration of people with disabilities, establishing a national commitment to solidarity.

Based on these two foundational pillars of the legal framework—the convention and the law—the following implementing texts were developed implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- Compliance with the directive issued by the Prime Minister ([Prime Minister's Instruction No. 368, 2013](#)), which requires consideration of disabilities in all ministry programs.
- Preparation of a preliminary report on disability to be presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to evaluate measures taken for implementing the convention.
- Enforcement of executive decrees under Algerian law, as discussed in this document.

#### **4.2 Key Actions for Promoting and Protecting People with Disabilities:**

##### **4.2.1 Education for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities:**

In the 2013/2014 academic year, 201 facilities under the public sector were dedicated to caring for children with disabilities. These facilities served a total of 18,846 children and adolescents, a 10% increase from the previous year. Multidisciplinary teams consisting of specialized teachers, social workers, and psychologists supervised these facilities. The notable increase in the education of children with disabilities in Algeria, encouraged by the Ministry of National Solidarity, resulted in high success rates among students both in regular and specialized educational settings ([Qacentini, 2013, p. 217](#)).

##### **4.2.2 Awareness Initiatives:**

Awareness efforts by the ministries responsible for national solidarity include:

- **Informing Individuals with Disabilities:** Providing information through local facilities, the internet, radio, and television programs, as well as open-door events.

- Commemoration of National and International Days: Celebrating specific days like March 14 (National Day for People with Disabilities), December 2 (Maghreb Day for People with Disabilities), and December 3 (International Day of Persons with Disabilities). These days aim to increase understanding of disability issues and support inclusive design to ensure the rights of people with special needs. They also raise awareness about including people with disabilities in political, economic, and cultural life.
- Organizing meetings with civil society groups active in the field of disability to outline the measures taken.

#### **4.2.3 Organization of National and International Meetings:**

In 2013, several meetings were organized, including the National Forum on Early Disability Detection and Educational Inclusion of People with Disabilities. These meetings aimed to exchange expertise, learn about the programs implemented in other countries, and gather information on awareness, prevention, and education methods.

#### **4.2.4 Employment and Job Creation:**

The Ministry of National Solidarity launched many projects focusing on employing individuals with disabilities, one of these was a draft decree to revise the existing decree regulating work assistance institutions, this targeted associations exclusively to establish work assistance centers and involve them in efforts to integrate people with disabilities.

#### **4.2.5 Financial Assistance for People with Disabilities:**

Financial assistance programs were implemented to support individuals with disabilities.

#### **4.2.6 Improving Public Services for People with Disabilities:**

- **Accessibility:** The issue of daily accessibility faced by people with disabilities due to the lack of appropriate arrangements is a responsibility not just of the public authorities but also of civil society and social stakeholders. They must work to implement programs addressing these challenges.

- **Training:** Six training sessions were organized in partnership with the International Disability Organization for national center trainers and educational inspectors. The training focused on the following topics:
  - ✓ Methodology and Tools for Analyzing Professional Practices.
  - ✓ Methods and Tools for Developing and Assessing Institutional and Personalized Projects.
  - ✓ Specifics of Disabilities and In-depth Knowledge of Impairments and Support Protocols. ([Qacentini, 2013, p. 221](#))

## **5. Towards a Societal Strategy for Supporting Individuals with Disabilities:**

### **5.1 Activating the Role of the Family in the Psychological and Social Support of Individuals with Disabilities:**

The care provided within specialized institutions complements the prior role of the family. Specialized institutions do not replace the family or the social environment.

The family is a fundamental structure in the educational process, playing an important role in social integration. Therefore, it is essential to involve the family actively and positively in care programs and raise awareness of its crucial role.

Family participation is evident through the following stages:

- Establishing a moral contract between the family and the specialized institution.
- Raising parents' awareness of the necessity of contributing effectively to the care process and continuing it at home.
- Clearly and cautiously presenting the diagnostic findings.
- Establishing a moral contract between the family and the specialized institution, raising parents' awareness of the necessity of contributing effectively to the care process and continuing it at home, clearly and cautiously presenting the diagnostic findings.

- Presenting the Family Care Program: To support the family throughout all phases of the educational project.

The family also participates in selecting suitable educational methods and tools for their child. They have the right to know the goals of educational and rehabilitation processes and to be continuously informed about all stages of care, focusing on the child's achievements to reinforce and encourage them.

The evaluation process involves all parties concerned with care, with the family present to identify strengths and weaknesses, this enables setting future goals to refine, adjust, and reinforce the planned objectives, and it occurs periodically and consistently.

By doing so, the family's role in care is restored, which varies depending on the social, economic, cultural, and psychological circumstances of each family.

To achieve effective involvement, sessions of parental guidance should be organized at the institution or within the family environment.

For families severely affected psychologically due to their child's disability, psychological treatment should be sought before involving them in the educational plan.

It should be noted that the family's role in early detection and disclosure of any disability among its members is crucial. Specialized institutions should work diligently to achieve this goal, which is a responsibility that the entire society must bear.

## **5.2 Activating the Role of Society:**

Despite the efforts made by relevant organizations in the social and professional integration of individuals with disabilities, the effectiveness of this is only achieved when society fully embraces the principles of protecting and promoting individuals with disabilities, this includes recognizing their full fundamental rights, which leads to their integration into professional and social life.

Awareness-raising and informational efforts toward society are expressed through various measures, methods, and tools, which can be summarized as follows:

- Specialized institutions play a crucial role in informing and raising awareness across various segments of society using different media. Their objective is to disseminate information about individuals with disabilities, their rights, how to provide care and social integration, and ways to prevent the spread of disabilities in society.
- Specialized institutions organize information days, awareness campaigns, and open houses for sector workers, families, community groups, and the general public.
- A collection of publications should be prepared and distributed, specializing in the field of disability to inform individuals with disabilities, their families, and different social groups about the importance of supporting this segment of society and ensuring their social integration.
- There should be strong connections between specialized institutions and various social organizations (schools, youth centers, vocational training centers, associations, etc.).
- National centers for specialized training participate in the media and awareness sector by organizing national and international conferences, scientific seminars, and study days that bring together professionals and those interested in disability issues.
- Various sectors (healthcare, education, vocational training, associations, private and public institutions, etc.) must be involved in developing and implementing preventive programs, as well as professional and social integration programs.
- Research and studies related to the phenomenon of disability in society, its causes, impacts, and methods of prevention, must be encouraged through collaboration with research centers, universities, and regional and international organizations active in this field.
- It is essential to mobilize various types of media (radio, print, and television) to raise awareness about the problems facing individuals with disabilities and emphasize the importance of focusing on their visible and hidden capabilities that can be utilized for their professional and social integration.

All of this demonstrates the vital role of society in preventing and ensuring the professional and social integration of individuals with disabilities. This role must be supported and emphasized by specialized institutions and national centers for specialized training.

### **5.3 Enhancing Preventive Measures:**

Research in developmental psychology and education shows that the potential for early improvement in children with disabilities increases with early diagnosis and rapid intervention by the educational team.

In addition to specific preventive measures conducted before marriage, during pregnancy, childbirth, and immediately after, there are other essential measures that should be taken before and during schooling. These measures include medical and psychological assessments conducted by multidisciplinary school health teams and various interventions, summarized as follows:

- Regular immunization following established scientific protocols.
- Monitoring and following up on children with psychological or functional disorders.
- Speech therapy for those with speech and language impairments.

Preventive programs include the following stages:

- Diagnosing disabilities at birth.
- Diagnosing disabilities within the first few months after birth.
- Diagnosing disabilities resulting from overall developmental delays.
- Referring individuals with disabilities to specialized medical-psychological services.
- Providing care within specialized institutions through the prescription of specific treatment, such as psychological and motor rehabilitation, aiming to reduce stress or impairments, prevent the disability from worsening or becoming more complex, and avoid the development of additional disabilities.

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**Conclusion:**

The primary purpose of supporting individuals with special needs is to elevate their humanity and dignity, enabling them to contribute to the development and progress of society. Given that disability issues are growing social problems, both in causes and effects, and closely linked to developmental challenges, the task becomes arduous and demanding.

This requires prioritizing policies and strategies across all levels and fields to provide necessary care and rehabilitative services for this group. Special attention should be given to the immediate social environment, starting with family upbringing, which must be more conscious of accommodating this individual. The societal framework should ultimately incorporate people with disabilities as genuine participants in development by involving them in employment, education, and vocational training programs.

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