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The disability paradox: high quality of life against all odds

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Abstract

This paper builds on the work of Sol Levine to examine a disability paradox: Why do many people with serious and persistent disabilities report that they experience a good or excellent quality of life when to most external observers these individuals seem to live an undesirable daily existence? The paper uses a qualitative approach to develop an explanation of this paradox using semi-structured interviews with 153 persons with disabilities. 54.3% of the respondents with moderate to serious disabilities reported having an excellent or good quality of life confirming the existence of the disability paradox. Analysis of the interviews reveals that for both those who report that they have a good and those who say they have a poor quality of life, quality of life is dependent upon finding a balance between body, mind and spirit in the self and on establishing and maintaining an harmonious set of relationships within the person's social context and external environment. A theoretical framework is developed to express these relationships. The findings are discussed for those with and without disabilities and directions are given for future research.



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Keywords

Disability; Quality of life; Body; Mind; Spirituality

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