

**СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ СТИГМАТИЗАЦИЯ И ЕЁ ВЛИЯНИЕ НА СЕМЬИ, ВОСПИТЫВАЮЩИЕ ДЕТЕЙ С  
СИНДРОМОМ ДАУНА В НИГЕРИИ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ШТАТА ЛАГОС)**

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**SOCIAL STIGMA AND ITS IMPACT ON FAMILIES RAISING CHILDREN WITH DOWN  
SYNDROME IN NIGERIA (CASE STUDY OF LAGOS STATE)**

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Annotation

This paper examines the impact of social stigma on families raising children with Down syndrome in Lagos State, Nigeria. Particular attention is paid to the forms of stigma, its consequences for the psychological and social well-being of families, and their coping mechanisms. The aim of the study is to identify the main forms of stigma, determine their impact on families, and suggest ways to overcome them.

Keywords: Down syndrome, social stigma, families, disability, Nigeria, Lagos.

Relevance of the study

Down syndrome is one of the most common genetic causes of intellectual disability and is caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21 [1; 2]. It occurs in approximately one in 700–1000 live births, but rates vary depending on the level of diagnosis and medical infrastructure [2].

In Nigeria, the problem is compounded by limited access to healthcare services and low public awareness [3]. Persistent cultural stereotypes persist in society, whereby disability can be perceived as a social deviation or even a punishment, which reinforces the stigmatization of families [3].

Social stigma manifests itself in various forms: discrimination, social exclusion, societal bias, and limited access to education and healthcare [3; 4]. As a result, families experience not only material difficulties but also psychological pressure, which negatively impacts quality of life.

It should also be noted that stigma can be subtle, manifesting itself in the form of avoidance, lack of support, and limited social contact. This leads to social isolation and reduced levels of family social integration.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study is to analyse the impact of social stigma on families raising children with Down syndrome in Lagos State and to develop practical recommendations to reduce stigma and improve the quality of life of these families.

Research methods and tools

The study utilizes a qualitative approach based on the phenomenological method [5]. This method allows for a deeper understanding of parents' subjective experiences and identifies key aspects of their daily lives.

The main data collection tool is semi-structured interviews, which allow for obtaining detailed information about the perception of stigma, the forms of its manifestation, and methods of adaptation.

The selection of participants is carried out purposefully, using the “snowball” method, which allows respondents with relevant experience to be included in the study [3].

Data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis, which identifies key themes: social pressure, access to services, parental psychological well-being, and coping strategies.

#### Theoretical and practical significance

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its expansion of understanding of social stigma in the context of developing countries. The use of a comprehensive approach allows us to consider disability not only as a medical problem but also as a social phenomenon [5].

The practical significance lies in the potential application of the study’s findings in the development of social programs and public policy. The data obtained can be used to improve the effectiveness of family support and their living conditions.

Of particular importance are recommendations aimed at raising public awareness, developing an inclusive environment and reducing discrimination.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

A study found that social stigma has a significant negative impact on families raising children with Down syndrome. It manifests itself in the form of social isolation, limited access to services, and psychological pressure [3; 4].

Families are forced to cope with emerging difficulties on their own, which increases the burden and reduces their level of well-being.

In order to solve the identified problems, it is proposed:

- conduct educational and information campaigns aimed at raising public awareness;
- develop an inclusive education system;
- provide access to psychological assistance for parents;
- strengthen state support for families;
- involve public organizations in solving the problem of stigmatization.

Implementation of these recommendations will reduce the level of social stigma and improve the quality of life of families.

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