

For the first time, the term sociological imagination was coined by C. Wright Mills in 1959.

Throughout this term, he aimed to convey a message about how our personal problems are intricately linked to broader societal issues (Mills, 1959). Using this idea, whenever I look at my life, I start considering my professional life as a “Direct Support Professional (DSP)” to be one major challenge, which I am not only the foremost victim of. They have a strong connection with the most significant financial changes in the United States. These challenges are known as “runaway inequality” (Leopold, 2015). Runaway inequality is a chasm between the rich and the poor, which is enlarging day by day. Here, the victimised worker, like us, struggles every single day to survive. Here, I will elucidate how this vast economic turmoil helps us to shape our health, life, family, and future.

When I first joined DSP, all that played a bigger role was my background and culture, which has a strong link with the care industry. I am Nigerian, and I have been brought up helping sick people and the elderly. Not only that, I have cared for other people from my community who were in need. Afterwards, I have shifted to America, and for my best interest, I have chosen the caregiving profession. I have never thought working as a DSP would be tough. I thought I would love to sustain in this profession. The first and foremost issue I have faced is that my job is underpaid, though this job has a high demand in America. Many times, I had to undergo biting, scratching, and getting hurt by my clients. I also have to run after clients who try to escape. Mostly, this part of my job is very hectic, as in our facility, we do not have many workers.

Working in this low-salaried profession, I cannot depend on one job alone. To pay my medical expenses, bills, and for my family support, in addition to this job, I work for other jobs too.

Indeed, I am a full-time DSP; apart from that, I work at another caregiving agency. Working for both jobs simultaneously feels so stressful and tiring. As a consequence, I do not get much time

to rest. Every time I come home injured, my children start worrying. Sometimes they suggest that I stop working in such a tiring, dangerous field. Since I care for people who need my support, I continue with this profession only.

This issue with overworking and underpayment is not my personal problem, as they have a strong bond with the larger economic system. Over the years, as the cost of living has been pushed up, the wages of American workers have remained low. Concurrently, the companies and the wealthy people remained wealthy as they were, by making more profit (Leopold, 2015). The American government does not have a strong budget for disability services, thus the agencies working for them cannot pay a handsome salary to the workers like me. Due to this issue, workers like us are facing massive stress, unstable working conditions, and inadequate staffing. Due to this, DSPs mostly take on multiple jobs, and it does not mirror our irresponsibility, yet portrays the broken system.

This work culture has also impacted my health. Recently, I fell very sick due to exhaustion, stress, and constant burnout. I was admitted to the hospital and ran through some vigorous treatment. Working in my hectic schedule, managing two jobs simultaneously, dealing with multiple injuries, and tolerating emotional stress affected my body. After reading through the course and gaining a vivid knowledge of sociological imagination, I could feel that my sickness and trouble are not a personal issue. It also has a connection with the way workers in my industry are treated. Many of them get sick, burned out, and injured due to this unfair treatment.

Now, I would delve into the next challenge that I face as a DSP, though many of our colleagues have faced the same. Many people in America are of color or immigrants. As there are limited job opportunities for immigrant people, jobs in the care industries seem easier to get (Ho, 2020). As I am a Nigerian, my background has already pushed me toward the caregiving profession.

Though this vicious cycle of low payment, exploitation, and health issues makes this field a complete mess. This story is not my personal; it shows the actual scenario of the care economy.

In a nutshell, while applying sociological imagination, I found my professional journey as a DSP to be challenging. Sociological imagination helps me to consider my issues from a vast societal dimension. Numerous DSPs like me get injured at work, chase after clients, work under low pay, try to sustain with multiple job roles, and even get hospitalised due to high stress. Working as a DSP, numerous people get into trouble. Runaway inequality impacts millions of DSPs like us. Through this perception, I have gotten the help to raise my voice on the real change required in the care system.

References

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