



Review Article

## Scoping review of instruments measuring attitudes toward disability

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### Abstract

**Background:** Negative attitudes toward disability cause difficulties in integrating persons with disabilities (PWDs) into society and limit their access to health care, education, employment, and leisure. Being aware of societal attitudes toward disability may help explain discrimination against PWDs and draw attention to the solutions needed to address these. Good measures of attitudes are vital for this purpose.

**Objective:** The aim is to synthesize published information, including evidences on psychometric properties and overall utility on instruments that measure attitudes toward disability.

**Methods:** A two-tiered search process was performed to identify instruments that measure attitudes toward disability and retrieve articles that describe their development and/or validation. The CanChild Outcome Measures Rating Form was utilized to determine the overall utility of the instruments. Results were synthesized using a self-constructed data extraction form.

**Results:** Thirty-one instruments were included in the study. Five measured attitudes toward communication disability, 7 toward intellectual disability, 4 toward mental illness, and 15 toward disability in general. Target respondents ranged from children to adults, and included respondents from different occupations and cultural backgrounds. Twenty-three were found to have adequate overall utility, while 8 have poor overall utility.

**Conclusion:** Several instruments are available in literature and all may be used for their intended purposes as long as their limitations are considered. Many still require further validation to ascertain their validity and responsiveness to change. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**Keywords:** Communication disability; Intellectual disability; Mental illness; Persons with disability; Questionnaire

Persons with disabilities (PWDs), especially in developing countries, still face difficulties in achieving full social participation.<sup>1</sup> Their failure to fully participate in social roles often results in a cycle of marginalization – it leads to poverty, deterioration of health, and further decrease in the ability to take part in social roles.<sup>2</sup>

Social factors like negative attitudes toward disability augment physical barriers to the integration of PWDs in society.<sup>1</sup> PWDs tend to be denied their rights to education, occupation, and domestic life because they are viewed

negatively. The full rightful acceptance of PWDs is unlikely as long as negative attitudes persist.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, when attitudes are supportive of PWDs, they encourage acceptance by family, neighbors, and potential employers.

Social barriers need to be addressed to allow PWDs to exercise their rights and to improve their quality of life. There is a need for awareness about how people with and without disability think and feel about disability because this may help in explaining the discrimination against PWDs. It may also aid in drawing attention to the measures that should be taken to eliminate social barriers.<sup>3</sup> One way to understand the social constructions of disability is to measure the attitudes of the society and of PWDs themselves toward it.<sup>2</sup>

There are various instruments that measure attitudes toward disability. It is the aim of this study to present published information regarding these instruments including their psychometric properties and overall utility. Reviews previously done were limited to instruments measuring

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attitudes of health care students and professionals,<sup>4</sup> attitudes of children,<sup>5</sup> and attitudes toward a specific impairment.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this study is to map out all instruments that measure attitudes toward disability regardless of the target respondents or type of disability. This may provide information regarding existing evidence on available instruments that may aid researchers, clinicians, PWD advocates and service providers in identifying the most appropriate and valid instrument for their purpose.

## Methods

This study is a review of existing data which was exempted from an ethics review. Instruments used to measure attitudes toward disability were mapped out through a systematic search and data extraction process. The characteristics and overall utility of each instrument were determined. For the purpose of this study, overall utility was based on the clinical utility, availability, reliability, validity, and responsiveness of the instrument to change.

A two-phased electronic search was done: the first was to search for instruments that measure attitudes toward disability, and the second was to search for articles that described the development and psychometric properties of the instruments found. The search was limited to published articles.

### *Search process: phase I*

The authors searched for studies that measured attitudes toward disability. The following criteria were used for the search: 1) should be about attitudes toward disability; 2) must have utilized instruments that measure attitudes toward disability, and; 3) must be written in English or has an English translation. The search included articles published until December 2014.

Databases used for the search were Pubmed, Medline, Highwire, Cochrane Library, and CINAHL owing to their large collection of articles related to health, rehabilitation, and other disability-related studies. The key words “attitude,” “disability,” “questionnaire,” and their combinations were used for searching. Ancestral search was also done for all reviews found.

The name of the instruments used in the included articles were recorded and used as search terms for Phase II of the search process. Instruments without definite names were excluded because the absence of an instrument name will impede the search process due to the lack of a specific search term to use.

### *Search process: phase II*

The authors searched for articles that described the development and psychometric properties of the instruments found in Phase I. These articles were used as bases in describing the characteristics and overall utility of each

instrument. The criteria for inclusion of articles were the following: 1) must describe the development of the instrument and/or its validation and other psychometric properties; 2) must be written in English or has an English translation; and 3) the full text of the article must be available. As in Phase I, the search included articles published until December 2014. Ancestral searching was also done to cover articles not found in databases. An instrument was excluded if it did not measure attitudes toward disability per se or if no articles describing its development and/or psychometric properties could be found.

### *Determining overall utility*

Pertinent data about the instruments were extracted and recorded in a data extraction form to organize the data for easier reference and data auditing. These data were used as bases for evaluating the overall utility of the instruments.

Overall utility was determined using the CanChild Outcome Measures Rating Form. The form contains items that check for the clinical utility, availability, and psychometric properties of an instrument.<sup>7</sup> Clinical utility was assessed based on the level of difficulty in administering the instrument, scoring, and interpreting the results. Availability was based on whether the instrument and its manual are accessible in literature. Rating of the psychometric properties was based on the amount and strength of evidence on the reliability, validity, and responsiveness to change of the instrument. The evaluation was done in groups of three. Two members appraised the articles, while the third member made the final decision when the two failed to reach a consensus. Interpretations for all psychometric properties were based on the criteria specified in the form.

## Results and discussion

Phase I of the search process yielded 92 instruments. After Phase II, 31 instruments were included for review in the study. The other 61 were excluded either because they did not measure attitudes toward disability or because no supporting articles could be retrieved. Fig. 1 illustrates the results of the search processes. The included instruments were grouped depending on the type of disability they focused on, particularly: 1) communication disability; 2) intellectual disability; 3) mental illness; and 4) disability in general. Table 1 shows the characteristics of each instrument.

### *Instrument characteristics*

#### *Communication disability*

Five of the included instruments are used to measure attitudes toward communication disability. Specifically, these instruments determine psychosocial issues leading to refusal to use hearing aids,<sup>8</sup> attitudes toward people who

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