

Understanding Oppression

Oppression: The unjust exercise of power over another.

Oppressive ideologies and beliefs can be expressed through the following:

Isolation: the state of being separated or withdrawn from others.

Emotional Abuse: derogatory actions, assumption or words imposed on an individual.

Economic Abuse: actions or systems which restrict and/or limit access to resources and opportunities which result in economic consequences.

Sexual Abuse: any sexual activity that is unwanted or coerced. Assumptions and stereotyping of a social group often results in inadequate protection from and advocacy for the given group against sexual abuse and violence.

Privilege and Status: manipulation of the definition of 'norm' to assert power and control over those who do not fit within that definition and thereby categorizing them as inferior.

Threats against individuals/groups: Use of threats as a coercive tactic for non-compliance with 'norms'.

Exploitation and Manipulation of Children: Use of relationship to one's children as a negotiating tool in conflict. Capitalizing on their vulnerability.

Intimidation: Asserting power/control by physically or verbally harassing a group/individual to reinforce vulnerabilities and insecurities.

Violence: Including physical and systemic violence; harm done due to economic, political and social nature of society (Poor live in destitute housing which is more vulnerable to fire due to poor maintenance, lack of political voice in community, economic limitations of inhabitants, etc.)

The following are defined beneath a framework of Oppression:

Ableism: The belief that the non-disabled experience is the "normal" and positive way of living, while the experience of disability is negative, abnormal and something to be feared.

Sexism: The type of oppression whereby one gender holds power and control over another. Men are in the position of control and dominance over women (patriarchal).

Racism: The belief that one group of people is superior to another, with differences among groups being based on physical appearance. Physical traits are used to label one's culture (beliefs, food, dress, values), language and country and are categorized as inferior to that of the dominating group.

Classism: This is when the economic groups in society who own capital, assets and education believe that they are superior to those who do not have (or have access to) these things.

Heterosexism: the belief that the heterosexual lifestyle, experience and culture is the right, 'normal' and moral way of life. Homosexuality and bisexuality are seen as deviant, immoral, abnormal and negative.

Ageism: The belief that the dominate age group (in terms of economic power and productivity), approximately 30-50 years of age, is superior to older and younger people.