**Background**

* After my discharge from a psychiatric hospital, I started to face intensifying stigmatization that affected my reintegration into work and social life.

**Themes of Stigmatization and Examples**

Devaluation and Perceived Inferiority

* **Treatment as Lesser:** I was seen as inherently inferior and less capable by others.
* **Condescension in Skill Recognition:** My intelligence and skills were often underappreciated.

Exclusion and Isolation

* **Social Avoidance:** Individuals who were previously friendly showed discomfort or avoided me, fearing the social repercussions of being associated with me.
* **Professional Rejection:** I consistently faced exclusion from job opportunities, with businesses clearly trying to avoid further engagement with me.

Invalidation and Dismissal

* **Undermining Achievements:** My successes were dismissed as luck or attributed to external factors rather than my own efforts.
* **Dismissive Interactions:** Even basic social exchanges were often ignored or minimally acknowledged by others.

Dehumanization and Objectification

* **Reduction to Mental Health Status:** I was treated more as an object of scorn or curiosity rather than as an individual, with my personal boundaries frequently violated.
* **Demeaning Service Encounters:** My attempts to engage in normal commercial transactions, like ordering food, were met with demeaning responses.

Patronization and Overcompensation

* **Superficial Kindness:** The occasional kindness I received felt insincere and emphasized a perception of me as helpless.

Fear and Mistrust

* **Contagion Perception:** I was treated as if my mental health history was a stigma that could tarnish others' social standing through association.

Social Contagion Stigma

* **Perceived as Contagious**: I was avoided and excluded as if my stigmatized trait (mental health history) was something others could 'catch' or be negatively affected by through mere association.

**Concrete Examples**

* **Pool Hall Dynamics**: The owner actively worked to undermine my achievements and spread misinformation about me.
* **Employment Challenges**: I faced systematic rejections from potential employers, which highlighted the stigma's impact on my employment prospects.
* **Shift in Social Interactions**: Initially positive engagements with others turned to withdrawal and condescension once they learned of my mental health history.
* **Experience of Being Treated as Contagious**: This manifested in visible discomfort and avoidance by community members, further isolating me.