Parameters of subjective well-being in conditions of psychosocial adaptation of students with visual impairment

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Abstract. Despite the positive trends in the availability of higher education for students with visual disabilities, there are problems of adaptation of students with visual impairment to the social student environment. Psychological stress resistance, social adaptation, and integration of blind students depend largely on the conditions of their own positive self-assessment development, individual characteristics, including cognitive, psychological, behavioral and social aspects. The article considers theoretical analysis of socio-psychological adaptation and subjective well-being of students with visual disabilities. The aim of the study is to analyze the subjective well-being of undergraduate students with visual disabilities within the psychosocial adaptation at the university, using the targeted methods. Twenty-two full-time students with various visual pathology willingly participated in the experiment. The average age of the participants was \( SD=20.9 \pm 1.05 \) years. The study was carried out in accessible forms of perception of information: for example, the blind students perceived information audibly; the font of the techniques presented in Google form was increased for the visually impaired students. The carried out analysis of the existing signs of subjective well-being in students with visual disabilities showed low results of socio-psychological adaptation, which manifested more expressed psycho-emotional instability compared to the comparison group. The students of the experimental group had the most psycho-emotional instability. According to scale of well-being, activity, and mood (WAM), the students perception of own health was statistically lower.

1 Introduction

The processes of humanization of social life that are emerging at the present stage of the development of human civilization require the urgent solution of an important tasks such as the search for ways to improve the quality of life, adaptation and psychosocial integration of persons with disabilities, as well as active participation in society and the guarantee of equality with other members of society. At the beginning of 2023, about 110,000 persons...
with disabilities were registered in Russia, and it is equal 7.5 percent of the total population. Until 2014, Russia did not keep current statistics on persons with visual disabilities. According to statistics, at present there are currently 240,000 persons with visual disabilities. In accordance with the Federal Law of 29.12.2012 273-FL «On Education in the Russian Federation», the article 79 lists all categories of students with disabilities, and it indicates the possibility of vocational education of persons with disabilities together with other students. And if it is necessary, there are also educational programs adapted for students with disabilities.

The development of adaptation, accessibility, social integration of persons with disabilities and their interaction with the healthy population is the very important area of research in developed countries. In Russia, only in recent decades the government and society have paid attention to the large social stratum of the country’s inhabitants, who have expressed health disorders. That is why, at present, state structures are actively trying to create equal opportunities for all members of society, not only through treatment, rehabilitation and recreation measures, but also through a complex social relationship, for example, such as the provision of benefits of education, employment, pensions, and other benefits [1].

For young people with disabilities, the prospect of a decent education through an accessible and inclusive educational environment is considered to be one of the most important life priorities [2]. Special attention should be paid to the population with limited mobility, including the blind, who need to create an inclusive learning environment such as adaptive educational environment, individual pedagogical approach, social security, psychological and pedagogical support for the adaptation process and integration into the educational and social environment [3,4].

In this case, inclusive education is considered to be one of the main directions of the special education system transformation, the purpose of which is implementation of the right to education without discrimination. The socio-psychological adaptation of young people with visual disabilities is very difficult because before entering university they are in a closed space for a long period of time, and that is why the visually impaired younger generation is not able to integrate into society [5]. Impaired vision, whether congenital or early acquired, makes it difficult to organize social networks and relationships. However, in late blind persons with certain professional skills, individual abilities, habits in social behavior this defect progresses deviation and break of established communications [6]. Thus, in both cases of visual impairment, a person is excluded from the group, which affects his or her position in society.

The adaptation of the first and second year students with visual disabilities at the university is relevant due to the great influence on their further professional self-determination, motivation to study, degree of satisfaction in the chosen direction, quality of teaching, level of socio-psychological support, and socio-cultural and physical activity [7]. The individual and group trajectories of organizational, psycho-emotional and behavioral components of the elements of adaptation of students with visual disabilities proposed by the university administration, of course have a significant impact on their satisfaction with the quality of the educational process and in the future their ability to compete in the labour market [8].

Communication skills of students will be most effective due to their involvement in the student environment, which is rich in diverse verbal and tactile relationships and cooperation with social environment. It is also necessary to note the important role in the psychophysiological adaptation of all first-year students with disabilities the presence of qualitative values of personal characteristics [9].

When entering the university, the process of adaptation is essential for all freshmen. It is particularly significant for students with disabilities and the students with visual disabilities
In the recent past, the adaptation of these students after a total education of all students in a distance format with pandemic COVID-19 did not contribute to the growth of social communication and optimal accessible conditions for studying at the university. According to Tashcheva A.I. (2021), the social and psychological adaptability, as an individual trait, reflected person’s ability to adapt to variable circumstances, thereby adapting his or her priorities to real need.

However, in spite of some progress in order to solve problems of equal access to higher education for all social groups in society, at present, the criteria for the adaptation of students with disabilities to an integrated educational space are not well understood and defined. This is because there are few effective technologies to support students who have different nosological forms of psychophysiological diseases in which the adaptation process would be more successful.

The adaptive ability of students with disabilities is often determined by a number of factors, which are formally divided into external and internal. External factors relate to ensuring, for example, architectural accessibility of educational institutions, supportive technologies; socio-psychological educational environment, corresponding to individual characteristics of the requirement to learning, trust relationships and individual approach to the student. Internal factors include the disability group, physiological and psycho-emotional characteristics of students, personal qualities, attitude of the blind to their own primary defect and related behaviour.

Therefore, the main task of the entire university staff rehabilitation work among students with visual impairment is the students’ social and pedagogical adaptation. When communicating with parents and young students with visual disabilities, in order to plan the psychology-pedagogical and social support it is important to understand their personal potential because the effectiveness of the proposed forms of adaptation largely depends on the presence of specific characteristics.

The social and psychological adaptation planning includes two important directions: 1) to handle with depression associated with the presence of a defect by increasing stress tolerance and the level of trust to university teachers and other students; 2) to overcome frustration, which appears during the start of studying because of the problems with spatial orientation and psycho-emotional stress. According to V. S. Merlin, psychological conflicts consist of personal interests, motivations, goals, etc., which are represented in the person’s consciousness by the respective experiences, and they have got a gradual character.

Ditterline et al. (2008) believe that adaptive behavior is the ability of a person to successfully use his or her abilities and realize the needs of others. In other words, social behavior can be a response to the skills that a person puts in adapting to the different life requirements that comes to face in everyday life. The results of the study of the subjective well-being level of the students with visual disabilities, who went in for sport and who didn’t go in for sport, showed that they were statistically higher among physical active young people, because sport has got a positive impact on the quality of life, social activity, ensuring students’ psycho-national sustainability.

Blind students receive the tactile and auditory information, so long as the hearing, smell and touch are their main sources of information. The form of verbal learning for the students with visual disabilities includes description and explanation of behavior, practical preparation for which is considered to be one of the learning models through observation. This model was formed by A. Bandura (1977).

The professional thinking formation is closely related to the characteristics of the personal development of persons with disabilities in this nosological group. Visual deformations make it difficult to develop personal qualities, impairing mental health. In the norm, abstraction and generalization originate at the level of sensory knowledge, and
based on this it can be concluded that in this sphere defects affect all thought operations, to some extent negatively influencing on the development of the blind people thinking.

Not only the degree of visual impairment, but also the conditions for the development of positive self-esteem have an important role in psychological stress resistance, social adaptation and integration in the blind [22]. It is necessary to take into account the results of research done by L. Zittel et al. [23] when there is already diversity of views on the development of motor, psychosocial and social spheres in the blind.

The socialization prospects of people with this pathology depend on individual characteristics, including cognitive, mental, behavioral, scientific, and social development. Self-assessment dominates the psychology of the blind. This means that the process of personal development needs to be analyzed on the basis of individual self-assessment and gender and age.

The importance of studying the problem of the active life position development, through the timely adaptation of students with visual disabilities is determined by its importance for the formation of professional competencies, development of personal qualities and formation of subjective well-being. The process of these students’ adaptation and socialization has good opportunities to achieve results, both in the educational process and in integration into society.

The aim of the study is to analyze the characteristics of subjective well-being of students with visual impairment in conditions of psychosocial adaptation at the university.

2 Materials and Research Methods

Twenty two students (an experimental group) having various pathology of the visual organs voluntarily participated in the empirical research carried out at Trans-Baikal State University (TBSU). As for the group of disability, (there were the blind in the 1-st group, there were visually impaired students were in the 2-nd and the 3-d groups) they were confirmed by the medical and social examination report. The control group included 40 students without disabilities. The average age of all respondents was 20.9±1.05 years. As for gender, there were 44 females (64.6%), and 28 males (35.4%) in the control group.

All participants were full-time 1-2 year students of humanities and natural science faculties. The study was carried out within the work plan of the scientific and educational center «Inclusion and Human Health» TBSU. The task was to identify psychological problems of psychosocial adaptation of students with visual disabilities and without disabilities.

In order to identify the problems preventing the successful processes of social and psychological adaptation at the level of each respondent’s personal characteristics, questions were formulated and methodologies were presented. The following methods were included in the diagnostic toolkit: «Socio-psychological adaptation» (K. Rogers and R. Diamond), «Scale of subjective well-being (M. V. Sokolov), «Self-assessment according to the scale WAM» (V. A. Doskin, N.A. Lavrentiev, V. B. Sharai, M. P. Miroshnikov).

To study the success of the socio-psychological adaptation, we developed a questionnaire and conducted a survey of project participants using Google Forms. Visually impaired students were presented with an enlarged font. For blind students, questions were read aloud at a face-to-face interview. All respondents were given an explanation of the conditions and objectives of the pilot study.

The results of the survey became the basis for statistical analysis using Pearson’s Chi-squared test. To prove the anxiety indicators differences between two groups, the Student Criterion calculations were carried out. A 95% level of faultless prognosis was considered to be minimally sufficient (p<0.05). The resulting criterion value was compared with the critical value (according to the Table). To compare the mean values, Student’s t-
test was used with a normal distribution of values. Licensed versions of programs (STATISTICA 10.0, MS Excel 2010) were used for data processing.

3 Results

In the study it was necessary to find out what the socio-psychological climate was in students' groups, and if there were accessible and adapted conditions of educational process. Statistically significant difference for all variants of responses in the studied groups was not found ($\chi^2=0.201$, $p=0.613$, $p>0.05$). Friendly atmosphere, favorable climate were noted by 54, 4% of students and 70% of students in 2 groups. The more favorable climate rather than not was noted by more than 25,7% in 1-st and 21,3% of students in the 2-nd group. The hostile climate of the group was noted by 19,9% of students with visual disabilities and 8,7% of the healthy students, and this was 2,3 times less.

While continuing to investigate the situation in the student groups, according to the question how often in your student group there were obvious and hidden conflicts, no significant difference in the responses were noted ($\chi^2=4.775$, $p=0.106$, $p>0.05$), 72,7% and 77,5% of respondents of the 1-st and the 2-nd groups answered that conflicts happened, but these conflicts were very rare. Students with visual disabilities were 3,5 times more likely to respond to the absence of conflicts as such.

However, the above-mentioned results show that there are smaller numbers obvious contradictions leading to potential, in most cases. The decrease in the number of blind students participating in intra-group conflicts can be explained by the decrease of their active life position, limitation of initiative and readiness for open discussion.

A statistically significant difference was found when researching the importance of additional support for students in unstable psycho-emotional states during exams, tests and other borderline emotional situations. The ratio of those who needed consultations was 2,5 times higher in the 1-st group ($\chi^2=7.438$, $p=0.029$, $p<0.05$). As for 30,5% and 70% of respondents from two studied groups, they did not need the help of the specialist. The presence of a complex of emotional experiences, behavioral reactions and impressions, in relation to the emotional-cognitive, value-motivated and behavioral components of the structure of personality, fully shows the realities and integrity of self-perception of the students with disabilities.

During the period of study at the university the inability to express feelings and emotions is one of the problems of psychological adaptation. In spite of the existing psychophysical defects, the need for internal restructuring and motivation to the intensive training mode, as well as stresses leads to a slowdown of cognitive processes, to the mood and emotional well-being changes. There is no significant difference between the two mood variability groups ($\chi^2=4.01$, $p=0.48$, $p>0.05$). However, students from the 1-st group statistically more often noted the deterioration of health and the need to plan compensatory and rehabilitation measures ($\chi^2=6.413$, $p=0.011$, $p<0.05$).

A comparative analysis of the elements of socio-psychological adaptation in the samples examined revealed differences in the examined groups for some data: adaptation, acceptance of others, internality, self-perception, emotional comfort and desire for dominance. Thus, in the 1-st group the most results are recorded on such topics as adaptation, acceptance of others, self-perception and internality ($p = 0.038$, $p<0.05$). There are no reliable statistical differences in the indicators of emotional comfort and tendency to dominate in the comparison groups ($p = 0.562$, $p>0.05$).

In our opinion, the differences between the groups indicate that the students in the experimental group have a lower level of adaptation. It manifests itself in more expressed psycho-emotional adaptability. The student demonstrates emotional isolation, alertness and
alienation from fellow students and shows his/her inactivity in solving his/her own problems.

Comparative analysis of the elements of emotional well-being in the studied groups revealed differences in such indicators as tension, anxiety, depression, lability of mood, importance of social environment, satisfaction with daily activities, integral index of subjective emotional well-being. Thus, the above indicators were significantly lower than the results of the control group (p = 0,027, p<0,05 ) in the 1-st group.

Summarizing the results obtained, it should be noted that students with visual disabilities had the most expressed psycho-emotional instability, exposure to depressive states, phobias, anxiety. Also, uncertainty in their own potential, anxiety about real and virtual difficulties in their relationships, both with university teachers and with their groupmates, as well as irritation with themselves and their position were the most obvious subjective characteristics. The integral index of subjective well-being in the experimental group was 79.8 points. It shows emotional feelings, experiences inherent in a low level of adaptation to society. In our case, it is the studying at the university, having a high rhythm and the need to perceive and perform all the tasks received.

A correlation analysis was carried out to identify the relationship between the indicators of socio-psychological adaptation and the components of subjective well-being (verbal and sensitive) in the two studied groups. In both groups, the psychosocial adaptation index is harmonized with two parameters: the integral indicator of emotional well-being and the cognitive satisfaction index.

For students with visual disabilities, the adaptation index is close to the components of subjective well-being such as:
- the intensity r = -0,217, p<0,05;
- lability of mood r = -0,281, p<0,05;
- psychosomatic r = -0,212, p<0,05;
- the significance of the social environment r = 0,309, p<0,01;
- self-assessment of one’s own health r = 0,271, p<0,05;
- daily activity satisfaction r = 0,317, p<0,01;
- the integral indicator of emotional well-being r = -0,256, p<0,05;
- value conflict coefficient r = -0,248, p<0,05.

The analysis of the results of the perception of one’s own health mobility and mood was determined through the WAM scale. The reliably obtained health results were higher in the control group - 4,95± 0,26 points (p<0,05), the activity index of significant differences in groups did not detect: from 3,22± 0,10 in the 1-st group up to 3,87± 0,19 in the control group (p>0,5). Self-assessment of students’ mood showed a positive result in the 2-nd group 5,95±0,36 (p<0,05).

The results of the statistical processing of two samples of anxiety symptoms at the university confirmed the data of the t-critical (t=1,93) values, which are higher than the table t-empirical > t-critical (p= 0,01) values, noting significant differences in the comparison groups. Also, the self-assessment data of (t=0,22), interpersonal anxiety (t=0,36) and general anxiety (t= 1,97) revealed significant differences in the two studied groups. Thus, the anxiety results for all four indicators of the study among students with visual disabilities were statistically significant, and it indicates that such students have subjective uncertainty and anxiety, which has a negative impact on adaptive opportunities at the university.

4 Conclusion

It should be admitted that the research carried out has confirmed that students with visual impairment have a particularly demonstrated psycho-emotional instability, risk of
depressive disorders. The correlation analysis established links between socio-psychological adaptation data and the verbal-sensitive parts of subjective well-being in the studied groups. In two samples the index of socio-psychological adaptation is harmonized with the integral indicator of emotional well-being and the index of cognitive satisfaction. Health results, activity and mood were reliably higher in the control group. The level of anxiety was statistically highest among students with visual disabilities.

Thus, summarizing the results obtained, it should be noted that, in general, the socio-psychological adaptation of students with visual disabilities is the result of a complex interaction of external and internal factors. The implementation of these factors is carried out through the system of relations.

And as for our case, it is a students’ community. Therefore, it is extremely important to solve the existing psychosocial adaptation problems, which depend on effective psycho-pedagogical support. It is also very important to solve such problems as the communication abilities learning, the building of trust relationships with other students and with teachers.

This will certainly contribute to the socio-adaptive development. Subjective well-being, as a way of subjective personality relationships based on the person’s emotional and evaluative relationship to himself/herself, social reality, and the circumstances of life, is an internal factor determining the adaptation process. Also, the feeling of subjective well-being or disadvantage depends on the criteria of socio-psychological adaptation, depending on the fullness of his/her own feelings of satisfaction with various aspects of life.

The given results indicate the importance and necessity of studying the process of socio-psychological adaptation of students with various forms of disability. It is necessary to pay attention to prevention of their stress effects, and it is very important to ensure the stress resistance during the entire period of study at the university.

References

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