

Features of Interpersonal Interaction of Blind and Visually Impaired Youth with Student Group

Vytautas Gudonis¹, Yevhenii Klopota²

¹ Šiauliai University, Faculty of Education Science and Social Welfare, Department of Special Education, P. Višinskio St. 25, LT-76351 Šiauliai, Lithuania, gudonis@su.lt

² Zaporizhzhia National University, Faculty of Social Pedagogics and Psychology, Department of Pedagogics and Psychology of educational activities, Zhukovsky St. 66, 69600 Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine, klopota-ea@ukr.net

Abstract. The paper presents outcomes research of features of interpersonal relationships, the level of perception and motivational orientations interaction of those who can see with blind and visually impaired students of higher educational institution. The attention is focused on the specifics of the social and psychological training as a means of improving communicative competence of blind and visually impaired students and optimization of their social status in the student body.

Keywords: *blind and visually impaired students, interpersonal interaction, adaptation.*

Introduction

Transferring from school to higher educational institution is a crisis period for the individual with profound visual impairment. Blind and visually impaired person is in completely new living conditions, and on how well he or she adapts to them will depend on his or her further integration into the society. Higher educational institution is a trial branch of life that determines further professional growth of the individual with visual impairment.

Adaptation of students to the learning environment at the university today has a greater significance. This is due to the following reasons.

Firstly, the success of overcoming learning difficulties largely determines the direction of further professional development of the young man.

Secondly, the success of adaptation of students to the learning environment at the university depends largely on the effectiveness of their education.

Thirdly, if the student is well adapted to the learning environment at the university, he might be adapted to the future profession.

Society demands from student as the existing individual initiative, independence and high individual responsibility. Student years are distinguished by intense transformation of motivation, all system values, formation of special skills due to the professionalization, as it is this age period becomes a central in the formation of character and identity. Generally, the age of students is characterized by achieving the best results based on all previous processes of biological, psychological and social development. Forming such of quality as the character (tenacity, determination, perseverance, independence, initiative, ability to control himself), and enhanced conscious behaviour motives.

Factors that affect the social and psychological adaptation and integration of students with profound visual impairment in terms of higher education analysed Ukrainian scientists (Grebeniuk, 2008; Kobilchenko, 2009; Klopota, 2012; Kolupaieva, 2009; Siniova, 2012) and foreign (Bloemers & Hajkova, 2006; Gudonis, 1995, 1999; Hunt & Marshall, 2005; Zarubina, 2006; Murashko, 2007; Nikulina, 2006) Based on their research can be distinguished general psychological specially-personal and social reasons.

General psychological reasons include the level of formation of socially important of blind and visually impaired youth, willingness to keep an independent life, possession of elements of high school learning activities; communication and lack of emotional and volitional disorders.

Specially, personal reasons include awareness of own visual impairment and attitudes to it; presence settings on social integration, positive motivation to continue learning, confidence in the possibility of further professional fulfilment.

Among the social causes is the level of readiness of the higher educational institution to create optimal conditions for professional education of students with visual impairments; availability of barrier-free environment for blind and visually impaired people; the level of awareness of their capabilities and features of professional self-realization; state guarantees stability of employment and social and psychological support for people with visual impairments.

The increasing complexity of the learning process at higher educational institution is caused by the fact that school education for blind and visually impaired students in developing a range of negative security before those who can see, which gradually goes into a steady stereotype behaviour. All this affects the communication features of blind and visually impaired youth in student body. Terms of coexistence with a large group of those who can see and have different experience of learning and communication for persons with profound visual impairment creating new complex social situation connected with the contradictions between conventional images interacting with visual impairment people and learning in new conditions among those who can see.

V. Kantor (2008) experimentally proved that students with visual impairments and their group mates who can see, in training actively contact only within the educational process. In the student body, unofficially divided into two groups – blind and visually impaired and those who can see, there is a lack of any student's ties between these groups and their complete dissociation. So, as the subjects of the educational process, blind and visually impaired are isolated in terms of interaction with their peers in various activities. The cases, when students with profound visual impairment together with the other students are actively involved in all spheres of student life, such as academic, social, sports, entertainment, etc., there are rarely enough.

Investigating the adaptation of students with profound visual impairment to learning environments at the university, V. Murashko (2007) defines the adequate treatment of group mates who can see to students with visual impairments as favourable social and psychological factor of integration and at the same time points to some signs of tension in the interaction by gender disability and its educational focus.

We share the view of a number of scientists (Maciej-Kwapisz & Kuczyńska-Kwapisz, 2007; Majewski, 2002; Volkova, 2009; Zarubina, 2006), who argue that the integration of young people with visual impairments in the environment of the institution requires mutual adaptation of both parties. Firstly, young people who have received secondary education in special schools, new learning environment in a mixed environment. Secondly, the educational environment to the needs of university students, including the development of special technologies and training, and implementation of educational, social and psychological support.

Problems of communication young people with visual impairments that affect the formation of social and perceptual expertise, acquire a distinct character due to its training in a special educational institution.

R. Banziavychene (1988) in their study shows that emotionally meaningful situations in individuals with impaired dominated behavioural responses that do not match the intentions arising impulsively, not allowing them to fully integrate into the social and cultural environment.

Unfavourable effects on interpersonal relations between those who can see and blind and visually impaired have social perception difficulties (establishing social contact, adequate perception and understanding of the communication partner). At the same time the important role of the team, because of the nature of interpersonal relations depends on attitude to work, to themselves and others (Lotareva, 2010).

The key idea we believe that blindness is not the main obstacle to successful social interaction. This is confirmed by examples of people who acquired the social and professional success in the presence of profound visual impairment (Gudonis, 1999).

So a big impact on the effectiveness of integration into the society of man with visual impairment makes his status in the team and features of relationships established with others. Therefore, understanding the formation of the system of interpersonal relation-

ships mediated joint training activities requires students as members overcome stereotypes communication, behaviour and the input of partners, regardless of their level of vision.

The object of the research: interpersonal interaction of blind and visually impaired youth with student body.

The goal of the research: identifying features of interpersonal interaction of those who can see with blind and visually impaired students of higher educational institution.

The methods of the research. In the research used the following methods: "Defining index of group cohesion (Sishor)", "Evaluation of the student's group microclimate (Zavialov)", "Sociometrics", Diagnostics of "Motivational orientation in interpersonal communication (Ladanov, Urazaieva)" and "Diagnostics of interpersonal relationships" (Rukavishnikov)" (Fetiskin, Kozlov, Manuilov, 2005) as well as psychological experiment, individual interviews with students, social and psychological training; mathematical and statistical analysis using Mann-Whitney test.

The sample of the research. The sample consisted of subjects with students who can see (210 girls and 60 boys) and blind and visually impaired students (7 boys and 5 girls with the vision level below V 0.04 %) aged 18–21 years.

The procedure of the research. Experimental research was carried out between 2013–2015.

At the ascertaining stage of the experimental research involved 12 student groups Zaporizhzhya National University from different specialties. In each group studied one blind and visually impaired student. In ascertaining stage implemented the following methods: "Defining index of group cohesion (Sishor)", "Evaluation of the student's group microclimate (Zavialov)", "Sociometrics" and individual interviews to identify features of interpersonal interaction for blind and visually impaired and students who can see.

At the forming stage of the research we have developed and conducted social and psychological training of 12 blind and visually impaired students in order to improve the social and psychological competence and their self-presentation in the student body. The training program consisted of 4 classes of 5 hours each. Training work has been done in an intensive mode for four days. 12 blind and visually impaired people were divided into two training groups, which included 4 students who can see in order to reinforce a psychological effect. To identify the effectiveness of the social and psychological training at the ascertaining stage and monitoring stages of the experimental research we have carried out diagnostics on 12 blind and visually impaired students "Motivational orientation in interpersonal communication (Ladanov, Urazaieva)" in order to determine the basic communicative orientations of harmony in the formal communication and identify the level of acceptance of others and "Diagnostics of Interpersonal relationships (A. Rukavishnikov)" to assess the typical ways of treating people and real behaviour in fact (Fetiskin, Kozlov, & Manuilov, 2005).

The results of the longitudinal research

At the ascertaining stage of the experimental research was obtained an average index of group cohesion by Sishor in the sample of 13.9 points of students who can see. This indicates a rather high index of cohesion (the maximum number of points – 19). At the same time, blind and visually impaired students are also trained in various training groups showed a result of 4.7 points, indicating a low level of group cohesion in perceptions of blind and visually impaired students.

Assessing the microclimate of the group, students who can see showed the following results: a high degree of favourability (10.1%) and medium-high degree of favourability (18.4%). At the same time, blind and visually impaired students showed 2.4% and 7.6% respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1. Assessment of student's group microclimate of those who can see and blind and visually impaired students (in %)

The degree of favourability	Students who can see	Blind and visually impaired students
The high degree of favourability	10.1	2.4
Medium-high level of favourability	18.4	7.6
Average degree of favourability	41.5	22.8
Some low degree of favourability	15.7	37.2
Minor favourability	14.3	21.6

The findings suggest that blind and visually impaired students don't feel a high degree of comfort in the student group.

The average level of favourability detected in 41.5% of those who can see and in 22.8% of blind and visually impaired students. The microclimate of their own group 15.7% of students who can see assessed as medium-low and 14.3% – as having a minor favourability. At the same time, blind and visually impaired students showed 37.2% and 21.6% respectively. It was also detected in 8.4% of blind and visually impaired students' insignificant level of psychological climate favourability of student group.

Obtained results suggest that blind and visually impaired students, unlike their group mates who can see, to a greater extent don't feel comfortable in the student group.

This is confirmed by the results of the sociometrics research. For the purpose of measuring interpersonal relationships in groups where study blind and visually impaired students, respondents were asked to make three positive election for each issue: "Who would you like to perform individual work", "Who would you like to invite to your birthday party", "Who would you like to prepare a university event», «Who would you like to work after graduation".

It is worth noting that 56% of blind and visually impaired students was difficult to choose specific members of the student group, that they called the same names on all questions. 44% of blind and visually impaired students in general could not name someone from the group to the question "Who would you like to invite to your birthday party", "Who would you like to work after graduation". The easiest choice for blind and visually impaired students as to "Who would you like to perform individual work". At the same time, 26% of students who can see chosen blind and visually impaired students on this subject.

Then we offered to students to make their own question by negative or positive sign. Interestingly, 65% of students chose the choice for a negative sign. It should be noted that 42% of group mates who can see suggested the following question: "Who I would like to take away from the group". 34% of blind and visually impaired students were in this category. In this regard, we conducted individual interviews with students who can see on the topic: "Why were blind and visually impaired in this situation". In our opinion, secondary causes, which are caused by the lack of vision leading to such a negative situation in the student body.

In the course of individual interviews with blind and visually impaired students found that their relationships with group mates are mostly characterized from the point of confrontation and rigidity, which use such phrases as: "I don't want to communicate with them", "Let themselves to establish contact with me" etc. In the process of observations, it was noted that they often treat their fellow students from the position "they owe me", inadequate interpersonal interaction, the total life of estrangement with student body, etc.

In view of the above mentioned in a forming stage of the research we have developed and conducted the social and psychological training with 12 blind and visually impaired students in order to improve social and psychological competence and self-presentation in the student body. The training program consisted of 4 classes of 5 hours each (Klopota, 2014). Training work has been done in an intensive mode for four days. 12 blind and visually impaired people were divided into two training groups, which included 4 students who can see, to reinforce a psychological effect.

Group communication in our research was based on the following principles:

1. Communication on equal terms.
2. Communication based on humanity and benevolence.
3. Dialogical communication aimed at mutual understanding in the group.
4. Communication aimed at non-stereotypical perception and desire to realize the identity of the partner.
5. Communication considering and analysis of feedback in interaction.

Features of the group training people with profound visual impairment characterized in particular by the presence of disorders of communication processes related to non-verbal means of communication. There are also difficulties in perception and understanding partner and obtaining feedback by means of non-verbal interaction during

group work. Perception and reflection of reality due to the lack of visual perceptions of its main components is often inadequate. The actual standards and patterns of interpersonal transactions replaced by imagined one, which is formed on the basis of inadequate perception of the image of the world and their own «Self-image» in it.

To identify the effectiveness of the social and psychological training at ascertaining and control stages of our experimental research was carried out diagnostics on 12 blind and visually impaired students “Motivational orientation in interpersonal communication (Ladanov, Urazaieva)” and “Diagnostics of interpersonal relationships (Rukavishnikov)” (Fetiskin, Kozlov, & Manuilov, 2005).

Obtained low results of 56.35% by blind and visually impaired students at ascertaining stage of research and 24.36% in the control stage by the scale “Focus on the partner’s decision” demonstrates the positive trend on the desire to engage in interpersonal relationships (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative characteristics of motivational orientation in interpersonal communication for blind and visually impaired students (in %)

Scales	Levels	Ascertaining stage	Control stage
Focus on the partner acceptance	low	56.35	24.36
	average	34.26	41.15
	high	9.39	34.49
Focus on the adequacy of the partner perception and understanding	low	49.25	25.17
	average	38.31	48.61
	high	12.44	26.22
Focus on the compromise achievement	low	39.28	28.32
	average	36.57	53.19
	high	24.15	18.49
Total cumulative index	low	44.39	21.51
	average	38.27	48.17
	high	17.34	30.32

After conducted social and psychological training significantly increased in blind and visually impaired students at the control stage focus on the adequacy of the partner perception and understanding. The level of desire to reach a compromise in the process of communication was enhanced. It was also determined the overall summary index characterizing harmonious communication preferences, which shows the positive trend on interpersonal communications motivation of blind and visually impaired people in the student body. It also confirms the significant differences of mathematical and statistical analysis $p < 0.03$ between samples of blind and visually impaired students at ascertaining and control stages.

To estimate the typical ways of attitude towards people and real behaviour in fact respondents was conducted “Diagnostics of interpersonal relationships (Rukavishnikov)”.

At ascertaining stage scale research “Inclusion” only 19.31% of blind and visually impaired students showed an average level and 6.18% of high, and at the control – 44.37% and 23.51% respectively (see Table 3).

Table 3. Comparative characteristic features of the attitude of blind and visually impaired students to group mates (in %)

Scales	Levels	Ascertaining stage	Control stage
Inclusion	low	74.51	32.12
	average	19.31	44.37
	high	6.18	23.51
Control	low	49.24	24.15
	average	17.42	53.41
	high	33.34	22.44
Affect	low	61.23	29.17
	average	25.18	47.26
	high	13.59	23.57

Positive dynamics of the results at the control stage of the research confirms mathematical and statistical analysis $p < 0.02$. It can be argued that blind and visually impaired students have the desire to expand their social circle and increased comfort in interpersonal interactions. By the scale of “Control” an average level of 17.42% at the ascertaining and of 53.41% at the control stage of the experimental research as well as significant differences of mathematical and statistical analysis $p < 0.02$ indicates positive dynamics.

By the scale of “Affect” at the ascertaining stage blind and visually impaired students showed an average level of 25.18% and a high – 13.59%, and at the control – 47.26% and 23.57% respectively. These differences are confirmed by mathematical and statistical analysis, which showed that blind and visually impaired students have become more confident and open in interpersonal relationships.

So, in blind and visually impaired students increased level of responsibility for decision-making and control over their actions in interpersonal interactions.

Conclusions

Based on the results it can be argued that the characteristics of interpersonal interaction in blind and visually impaired students in the student group characterized by such features as negativity, lack of friendship, unwillingness to communicate in an informal setting. Blind and visually impaired students feel uncomfortable in an ordinary student group.

However, although the lack of vision imposes certain restrictions on the ability of the individual to establish interpersonal interaction, but these restrictions are not in-

surmountable. Required for affirmation in the student group skills of blind and visually impaired people can be successfully acquired in the course of direct communication with their peers who can see, as well as through social and psychological training.

It is proved that social and psychological training is an effective means of interpersonal communication optimization in the student group where blind and visually impaired students taught. Training resources promotes social and communicative capabilities of blind and visually impaired youth and their successful integration into society.

References

- Bloemers, W., & Hajkova, V. (2006). *Towards Inclusion in Europe*. Berlin: Frank & Timme Verlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur.
- Hunt, N., & Marshall, K. (2005). *Exceptional children and youth*. Boston: New-York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Maciej-Kwapisz, J., & Kuczyńska-Kwapisz, J. (2007). Education and Rehabilitation System for Visually Impaired People Aged 6 to 24 – Special, Integrated and General. In Apostolos D., Czerwińska K., Kuczyńska-Kwapisz J. *Good Practices in Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities* (pp. 98–117). Warszawa: Academy of Special Education Press.
- Majewski, T. (2002). *Tyflopsychologia rozwojowa: Psychologia dzieci nievidomych i słabowidacych*. Warszawa: Redakcja Wydawnictw Tyflogicznych PZN.
- Banzyavychene, R. (1988). *Stresogennye situatsii i distressovyie reaktsii u lic s priobretennoi slepotoi* (dis. kand. psikh. nauk.). Leningrad: RGPU im. A. I. Gercena.
- Volkova, I. P. (2009). *Psikhologia socialnoi adaptatsii i integratsii liudei s glubokimi narusheniami zrenia*. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatelstvo RGPU im. A. I. Gercena.
- Grebeniuk, T. M. (2008). *Socialno-psikhologichna adaptatsia invalidiv z vadami zoru do navchannia u vishchikh navchalnykh zakladakh*. (avtoref. dis. na zdobuttia nauk stupenia kand. psikh. nauk. spec. "Specialna psikhologia"). Kiiv.
- Gudonis, V. P. (1999). *Osnovy i perspektivy socialnoi adaptatsii lic s narushenym zreniem*. Monografia. Moskva: MODEK.
- Gudonis, V. P. (1995). *Socialnye i psikhologo-pedagogicheskie osnovy integratsii litc s haryshennym zreniem*. (dissertatsia na soisk. uchennoi stepeni doktora psikhologicheskikh nauk). Moskva: RAO.
- Zarubina, I. N. (2006). *Korrekcionno-pedagogicheskaja poddepzhka studentov s narusheniami zrenia, obuchaiushchikhsia v vysshikh uchebnykh zavedeniakh*. (dis. kand. ped. nauk). Moskva: RAO.
- Kantor, V. Z. (2008). *Pedagogicheskoe soprovozhdenie socialno-trudovoi reabilitatsii invalidov po zreniu*. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatelstvo RGPU im. A. I. Gercena.
- Klopota, E. A. (2012). *Socialno-pedagogichni umovi integratsii starshoklasnikov z vadami zoru v socium*. (diss. na zdobuttia nauk stupenia kand. ped. nauk spec.). Zaporizhzhia.

- Klopota, E. A. (2014). *Psichologichni osnovi integracii v suspilstvo osib z vadami zoru*. Zaporizhzhia: Vidavictvo ZNU.
- Kobilchenko, V. V. (2009). *Socialno-psichologichni osnovirozvitku ta korekcii osobisnosti pidlitka v normi i patalogii zoru*. Kiiv: Osvita Ukraini.
- Kolupaieva, A. A. (2009). *Inkliuzivna osvita: realii ta perspektivy*. Kiiv: Samit-Kniga.
- Lotareva, E. V. (2010). *Osobennosti sotsiokulturnoi adaptacii nezriatsikh liudei v rossiiskom obshchestve*. (dis. kand. sots. nauk). Moskva: Ros. gos. sotsial. un-t.
- Murashko, V. V. (2007). *Socialno-psikhologicheskie factory adaptacii studentov s narusheniiami zreniia k usloviiam obuchenii v uze*. (avtoreferat dis. na soisk. ych. stepeni kand. psikhol. nauk Korrektsionnaia psikhologiiia). Sankt-Peterburg: RGPU im. A. I. Gercena.
- Nikulina, G. V. (2006). *Formirovanie kommunikativnoi kultury lic s narusheniiami zreniia: teoretiko-eksperimentalnoe issledovanie*. Sankt-Peterburg: KARO.
- Siniova, E. P. (2012). *Osoblivosti rozvitku ta vikhovania osobistosti pri glubokikh porusheniakh zoru*. Kiiv: NPU imeni M. P. Dragomanova.
- Fetiskin, N. P., Kozlov, V. V., & Manuilov, G. M. (2005). *Socialno-psikhologicheskaiia diagnostika razvitiia lichnosti i malykh grupp*. Moskva: Izdatelstvo Instituta psikhoterapii.

Jaunuolių, turinčių regos sutrikimų, bendravimo ypatumai studentų grupėje

Vytautas Gudonis¹, Yevhenii Klopota²

¹ Šiaulių universitetas, Ugdymo mokslų ir socialinės gerovės fakultetas, Specialiosios pedagogikos katedra, P. Višinskio g. 25, 76351 Šiauliai, gudonis@su.lt

² Zaporožės nacionalinis universitetas, Socialinės pedagogikos ir psichologijos fakultetas, Pedagogikos ir edukacinės psichologijos katedra, Žukovskio g. 66, 69600 Zaporožė, Ukraina, klopota-ea@ukr.net

Santrauka

Straipsnyje pristatyti aukštųjų mokyklų studentų, turinčių regos sutrikimų, bei reginčių kurso draugų tarpusavio santykių tyrimo rezultatai. Tyrime dalyvavo 270 reginčių studentų (210 merginų ir 60 vaikinių) ir 12 studentų, turinčių regėjimo sutrikimų (5 merginos ir 7 vaikinai, visų regėjimo aštrumas su korekcija buvo žemesnis nei V 0,04 proc., tai sutrikimų klasifikacijoje įvardijama *aklumas su regėjimo likučiu*). Tiriamųjų amžius 18–21 metai. Tyrime buvo taikyti tyrimo metodai: Sišoros grupės sutelktumo indeksas, Zavjalovo studentų mikroklimato vertinimo bei Ladanovo ir Urazajevo motyvacinės orientacijos tarpusavio komunikacijoje diagnostika, Rukavišnikovo tarpusavio santykių diagnostika (Fetiskin, Kozlov ir Manuilov, 2005), psichologinis eksperimentas, individualūs pokalbiai, socialinis-psichologinis pasirengimas. Gautų

duomenų patikimumas buvo tikrinamas pasitelkus matematinę-statistinę analizę bei Mano ir Vitnio (angl. *Mann-Whitney*) kriterijų. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad jaunuolių, turinčių regos sutrikimų, ir kitų studentų bendravime grupėje vyravo negatyvumas, draugiškų santykių stoka, nenoras bendrauti neformalioje aplinkoje. Studentai, turintys regėjimo sutrikimų, studentų grupėje jautė psichologinį diskomfortą. Studentams, turintiems regėjimo sutrikimų, pritaikius socialinį-psichologinį pasirengimą, minėti negatyvūs, bendrauti trukdantys veiksniai buvo neutralizuoti, tai lėmė sėkmingą adaptaciją akademinėje grupėje.

Esminiai žodžiai: *studentai, regėjimo sutrikimai, tarpasmeninis bendravimas, adaptacija.*

Gauta 2016 07 12 / Received 12 07 2016
Priimta 2017 01 05 / Accepted 05 01 2017