

**GLOBAL COMPETITION ON THE MARKETS FOR LABOR,  
EDUCATION AND INNOVATIONS**

Research articles

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**GLOBAL COMPETITION ON THE MARKETS FOR LABOR,  
EDUCATION AND INNOVATIONS**

*Science editor: A. Burkov*

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## **NORMIDENTITY AS A CONDITION OF SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF TEENAGERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

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### *Abstract*

The article is a generalized result of the research of visually impaired teenagers' normidentity considered as treating themselves to one of the subcategories: norm or anomaly. There are no differences between the visually impaired teenagers' normidentity rate and the rate of normidentity of their standard developing contemporaries. The representatives of both groups treat themselves to the subcategory "norm". A comparative analysis of the concept "normality" in the experimental and control groups allowed to reveal the leading mechanism of maintaining positive social identity in adolescents with visual impairments – social creativity.

*Keywords:* social identity, normidentity, visual impairments, social creativity, compensatory mechanism.

In the scientific literature, mass media and other sources the necessity of purposeful socio-psychological activity for increasing the level of adaptedness and social integration of people with visual impairments is even more often staticized. They allocate three most typical groups of the questions that visually impaired teenagers face with: mutual relations with people around, vital prospect and the self-relation. There are two basic aspects of the activity directed to the aid in their socialization: formation of an adequate, realistic image of a blind person in a modern society and the support of the blind and visually impaired in overcoming the feeling of isolation from other people.

Thereupon the researches of mutual relations between people with visual impairments and the social environment and in particular, researches of their ability to join various surrounding social systems at the level of the subject of social activity get special value.

In modern social psychology there is no settled definition for the concept describing mutual relations between the subject and its social environment. The use of various concepts for definition the given phenomenon is a vivid example (an accessory, participation, identification, occurrence, an inclusiveness etc.).

Studying of a phenomenon of a social inclusiveness in foreign psychology has received a special development in researches of social identity (V. Allen, D. Bruner, V. Duaz, D. Kodol, P.Ouks, J. Turner, G. Tedzhfel, L. Festinger, etc.). As well as in foreign researches, in works of russian authors the inclusiveness of the subject is connected with its motivational-requirement sphere (V.G. Aseev, I.A. Dzhidarjan, E.P. Ilyin, N.L. Karpova, B.D. Parygin, S.L. Rubinshtejn, V.A. Jadov, P.M. Yakobson, etc.).

Often discussing the question of social identity, scientists address to its attributive party which is expressed in respondents accessory to religious, political, ethnic and other social categories, ignoring psychological aspect of

the self-identification process. Such analysis assumes that the researcher has some data on social accessory of examinees. On the basis of these data the allocation of criteria of reference to this or that community is formulated. Such an approach can lead to a divergence of research and subjective criteria that, in turn, reduces reliability of results and leads to groundlessness of conclusions (Ivanova, 2006).

Self-identification of the person is closely connected with self-categorization process. The problem of a self-categorization of the person as perception of in social space subjectively organized by consciousness.

Self-identification is closely connected with self-categorization process. The problem of self-categorization as the perception of itself in social space subjectively organized by consciousness hasn't lost the urgency for some decades. Not only in psychology, but also in other sociohumanitarian disciplines the question of the person experiencing of himself in a system of social relations is actively discussed. To create the model reflecting the strategy of self-categorization process, it is necessary to answer the question of criteria that a man uses for differentiation of social groups. Researches in the field of social psychology have shown that the bases for allocation of groups in subjective categories can be not only minimum significant, but also casual.

It would be logical to assume that there are age distinctions in the quantity and the name of such categories. Our research has been devoted studying of social identity of teenagers. This age is characterized by sharp changes in consciousness and the self-relation. Communication with people around, first of all, with contemporaries, is the defining factor in the course of self-determination of the teenager. Building "I-concept", on the one hand, teenager is guided by the adult, simulating its behavior and habits, on the other hand, he constantly looks back at the group of contemporaries and searches for their approval and support. The tendency to underlining the uniqueness in parallel with aspiration to conformism is traced. The second tendency forms normidentity of a person, appealing to a question "Am I normal?" brightly characterizing the given age. Normidentity is a process of treating oneself to one of subcategories of normality: norm or anomaly (Dyakov, Martysevich 2010). Alongside with gender, ethnic, religious identities it can be considered as a component of social identity of a person. In our opinion, the process of normidentity formation plays a special role in case of psychophysical impairments.

The given work represents generalized results of visually impaired teenagers normidentity research. 110 persons took part in our investigation (86 normally seeing teenagers – control group, 24 visually impaired teenagers – experimental group). The age of participants was 13-14 years.

For normidentity research we used the experimental technique presented at several stages. At the first stage for the purpose of revealing their representations about a normal person the questioning of 13-14 year old teenagers was conducted. Teenagers were offered to create a description of a "normal person". On the basis of the received answers fragments from the works of art including descriptions of fictional heroes have been selected. One of the brightest characteristics of these heroes was one that is opposite to the criterion named by teenagers as normal. Thus, stimulating material was represented with the descriptions of fairy tales and stories heroes. Examinees were offered to define "normality" of the given heroes according to

a scale from 0 to 3 (0 – not normal, 1 – is rather not normal, 2 – is rather normal, 3 – normal). Then teenagers were offered to estimate themselves according to the same scale. To do the given task it was necessary for respondents to carry out the transition from a choice of the model of importance points of "normality" in the field of standards broadcasted by a society to the search and fixing of these points in the field of phenomenology of each hero and themselves. The indicator of normidentity was calculated as the difference between the average index of "normality" of a hero and the average index of "normality" concerning the personality of respondents. In case of negative normidentity indicator it is possible to speak about treating oneself to "abnormal" category, in case of positive normidentity indicator – about a tendency to treat oneself to a "normal" category.

We compared average values of "normality" of each of importance points. On the basis of comparison it is possible to draw a conclusion on presence of quantitative distinctions on each position between the samples. In turn, quantitative distinctions give the chance to draw a conclusion on what of the given positions appeared "more normal", and what appeared "less normal" in each of the samples. It allows carrying out a comparative analysis of a construct "normality" of teenagers with and without visual impairments.

The research of representations of normally seeing and visually impaired teenagers has shown the presence of both general tendencies and some differences among groups. The frequency of position mentioning was various. More often in both groups there were the descriptions concerning humanistic orientation. On the second place – conformity to social norms. The indicator of absence of bad habits as criterion important for definition of development normality has been allocated only by normally seeing teenagers (13%). While the criterion of health was mentioned more often by teenagers with visual impairments (26%), than normally seeing teenagers (7%) (Karbalevich, 2012).

The obtained data shows general tendency among teenagers in definition of development normality of a person. At the same time teenagers with visual impairments include criterion of health in concept "normality" more often. The presence of a visual defect conducts to the necessity of creating special living conditions concerning, for example, life and education. Constantly staticized requirement for such conditions can cause larger availability of a category "health" for consciousness. It can explain more frequent mentioning of this category by teenagers with visual impairments. At the same time the inclusion of criterion "absence of bad habits" to the representations about normality isn't typical for the given category of teenagers. Possibly, attentive and solicitous attitude to health for teenagers with visual impairments is something that is evident and is not demanding an additional mentioning.

The comparison of relative density of each position (importance points) in the structure of "normality" construct showed significant distinctions on the following positions: "absence of bad habits" (t-value=3,70253, p =0,000338), "humanistic orientation" (t-value=2,34811, p =0,020690), "conformity to social norms" (t-value=2,83552, p =0,005463), "health have been revealed: presence of intellectual infringements" (t-value=4,59818, p =0,000012), "health: presence of a hearing disorder" (t-value=3,43545, p =0,000841) (Karbalevich, 2012). Notice that during statistical analysis each component of a position "health" we considered as a separate position.

Absence/presence of intellectual impairments for visually impaired

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adolescents have higher rating in the formation of the construct "normality". While humanistic orientation, conformity to social norms, presence/absence of bad habits, presence/ absence of hearing impairments are less important.

Let's remind, that the position "health" at the first investigation phase was mentioned by visually impaired teenagers more often, that, at first sight, should lead to lower level of normidentity in the experimental group. However, further analysis allowed us to reveal the mechanisms of maintenance of high level of normidentity among teenagers with visual impairments. The position "health" for visually impaired teenagers is more differentiated and complex, than for their standard developing contemporaries. Whereas the teenagers without visual impairments gave about equal quantity of points to all the offered health impairments, visually impaired teenagers estimated intellectual impairments with lower points. It sharply differentiated a parameter of physical health and a parameter of mental health. Low points on a position «health: intellectual impairments» (Mean 1,041667) were a favorable background for high level of positions «health: hearing impairments", «health: impairments of locomotor apparatus» (Mean 2,750000 and 2,666667 accordingly).

Also the general tendency among visually impaired teenagers to credit higher points to all positions is interesting. Only one position – «health: intellectual impairments» has lower rating among visually impaired teenagers in comparison with control group. Higher points on other positions can speak about higher level of tolerance of visually impaired teenagers to abnormal characteristics of people.

Significant distinctions on an average index of normidentity between two samples have not been revealed (t-value = 1,25431, p=0,212437). Visually impaired teenagers don't feel "more normal" or "less normal" in comparison with their standard developing contemporaries.

Negative indicator of an index of normidentity has also been revealed in none of the groups. It demonstrates that representatives of both samples treat themselves to a subcategory "normal".

The results of our research are coordinated with H.Tajfel and J.Turner concept concerning the strategies of preservation of positive social identity. We will remind that the authors define social mobility and the change of the status of group by means of social creativity or a social competition as basic strategies. Social mobility represents an attempt of a subject to leave a group (physically or psychologically). The change of the status of a group can occur by means of reassessment of comparison criteria (social creativity) or by means of direct attributing of desirable characteristics to a group (social competition) (Tajfel, Turner, 1986). The result of our research is a striking example of the second strategy, when changing elements of a comparative situation (allocating, for example, intellectual violations by higher specific weight, rather than other parameters of health) visually impaired teenagers support thereby positive social identity. In this case social creativity is a compensatory mechanism promoting preservation of mental health of a person.

Summarizing the results of our research, it is necessary to note some important points. In the process of comparison of "I" with a prototype of "normal person" both normally seeing and visually impaired teenagers tend to underlining an element of similarity. It demonstrates that the representatives of both samples treat themselves to a subcategory "normal".



Thus, statistically significant distinction between normidentity indicator of visually impaired teenagers and normidentity indicator of their normally seeing contemporaries wasn't found. At the same time the structure of "normality" construct of visually impaired teenagers has some features in comparison with the structure of normally seeing contemporaries. For teenagers with visual impairments mental health of a person is of greater importance. Whereas their normally seeing contemporaries underline the importance of absence of bad habits and conformity of behavior to social norms.

The results of this research show the influence of cultural environment on teenagers' representations of norm development of a person. The presence of general characteristics of a normal person in teenagers' descriptions testifies it. In parallel with general tendencies there are intergroup differences in the prototype of "a normal person" caused by distinctions in a social situation of development and living conditions of normally seeing and visually impaired teenagers.

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