

Social inclusion in the experiences of adults with a mild intellectual disability

SUMMARY

Key words: ecological model of social inclusion, social inclusion, intellectual disability, psychosocial functioning of people with mild intellectual disabilities, early adulthood.

Theoretical assumptions

The theoretical basis of own research are the findings on the psychosocial functioning of people with mild intellectual disabilities in early adulthood, the state of research on social inclusion and the ecological concept of social inclusion in the individual, interpersonal, organizational, social and socio-political sphere. The paper explains the terms: intellectual disability, early adulthood and social inclusion, and describes the biopsychosocial concept of disability as the basis for understanding intellectual disability. It was assumed that social inclusion is a system of community interactions that enables each individual to have equal access to goods, resources and roles, various activities, participation, opportunities to establish social relationships, and the right to autonomy and self-determination (Silver 2015; Simplican et al. 2015). The assumptions of the social concept of mild intellectual disability were adopted, according to which a person's intellectual disability is shaped both under the influence of the surrounding reality and the internal experience of various situations, events and phenomena (Gajdzica 2017). It was recognized that people with a slight degree of intellectual disability, despite cognitive limitations, can learn, acquire new skills and fulfill themselves in various social roles.

Problems

The subject of the undertaken research is social inclusion in the experiences of adults with mild intellectual disabilities. The research was focused on finding answers to the following main research problems: (1) what are the manifestations of social inclusion of adults with mild intellectual disabilities in the individual sphere? (2) what are the manifestations of social inclusion of adults with mild intellectual disabilities in the interpersonal sphere? (3) what are the manifestations of social inclusion of adults with mild intellectual disabilities in the organizational zone? (4) what are the manifestations of social inclusion of adults with mild intellectual disabilities in the social sphere? (5)

what are the manifestations of social inclusion of adults with mild intellectual disabilities in the socio-political sphere?

The aim of the research was to learn, describe and understand the social inclusion of people with mild intellectual disabilities in early adulthood in the individual, interpersonal, organizational, social and socio-political spheres, and to develop recommendations for pedagogical practice.

Method

The work uses a phenomenological-hermeneutic perspective, which is within the orientation of qualitative research and is rooted in the interpretive paradigm. Embedding the conducted research in the qualitative trend made it possible to learn about the experiences of the research participants, and thus to describe and understand the experiences of adults with mild intellectual disabilities related to social inclusion. In-depth interviews were used in the research to obtain empirical material. The analysis of the collected empirical material was based on interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The research group consisted of adults with mild intellectual disabilities. The study involved 15 people who lived in the districts of Zielona Góra, Żagań, Żary, Krosno, Nowa Sól and Wschowa.

Results

The research allowed to show social inclusion from the perspective of people's experiences with a mild intellectual disability. The participants of the study are self-satisfied, positively disposed to life, resourceful, independent, socially active and planning their future. They function in the environment as independent and self-empowered individuals and treat themselves as full members of the local community, as they perform various social roles. Thanks to this, they experience social inclusion in the individual sphere.

The research results allow us to assume that the surveyed people with mild intellectual disabilities experience social inclusion in the interpersonal sphere, because they establish various interpersonal relationships and are not limited only to members from the closest environment. In addition, they declare ease in establishing social contacts and do not feel any signs of discrimination on the part of the social environment.

Participants of the study experience social inclusion in various aspects of the organizational zone. Many interviewees declare full social participation. Not all people participating in the study experience full inclusion in all aspects of the adopted model of social inclusion. The lack of a profession, insufficient housing conditions or the difficult financial situation of several interviewees

prove that social inclusion is a complex process and should be considered in relation to the individual situation of each person.

The research results show that people participating in the research have access to services and goods offered by the local community. However, not everyone uses them. Participants of the research choose for themselves those environmental resources that they consider appropriate, for example, financial services, digital technology services, health care services. The respondents are the least interested in cultural resources. The experiences of the survey participants testify to their social inclusion in many aspects of the social sphere. The conducted research has shown that social inclusion is possible, but it is conditioned by the individual life situation of a given person. Studies have shown that adults with mild intellectual disabilities are not very active in the socio-political sphere. It is worth noting, however, that the respondents consciously resign from socio-political participation. The interviewees emphasized that they are not interested in local and national politics.

Adults with mild intellectual disabilities participating in the research are independent, self-reliant people who consider themselves full members of their local community. The social environment does not know about their intellectual limitations, therefore they do not perceive them as individuals deviating from the norm. The respondents are not perceived in the environment through the prism of stereotypes related to intellectual disability. The results of the research show that a mild intellectual disability does not have to be an obstacle to social inclusion, if the individual is properly prepared for an independent and independent life in the earlier stages of life.

Recommendations for teaching practice concern, among others: supporting parents in the process of preparing children with intellectual disabilities for adulthood and social inclusion, the need to equip teachers of mainstream vocational schools with competences to support students with mild intellectual disabilities, conduct career counseling for this group of students, and counteract their stigmatization by implementing inclusive education.