

THE PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL PROFILE OF THE WINNER WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract: *This paper intends to present a psychological analysis (based on data obtained through tests, interviews, systematic observation, autobiographies analyses, study of documents etc.) of five case studies of people with disabilities who have managed to obtain success in different areas of activity, on personal, social and professional levels, despite their documented handicaps. The main objective of the paper is to shape a psycho-pedagogical profile of “the winner with disabilities”, showing what different individuals with different handicaps have in common (in terms of functional levels of personality factors, self-esteem, motivation) that might have facilitated their achievements in different professions. Also, the paper refers to the support of social groups as an active factor in attaining positive results for people with disabilities.*

Keywords: *disability; personality factors; achievement despite disability; support groups; psycho-pedagogical profile;*

Introduction

The present paper aims at studying the cases of extraordinary people, who, although suffering from an infirmity that limits their performance in certain activities, succeed in rising above their disabilities through their results and accomplishments. Thus, they become a model for society and a possible reference point in educating disabled children. Their life stories, their experience, their personalities, the manner in which they relate to the surrounding reality, may generate a series of information regarding intervention in the case of people with disabilities. Through the example of those who have conquered the battle with their deficiency, intervention plans may arise for the development of disabled child in terms of the factors considered by the researcher as having the greatest influence in reaching success. In the current society, a higher interest for disabled people may be observed, through mass-media promotion of people with physical or sensory infirmities who manifest a remarkable potential and perform intellectual, artistic, technical etc. activities which would normally be prevented by their disability. Apart from the appreciation and amazement that people manifest toward them, mentalities and attitudes are beginning to change. The challenge of such a change would definitely improve the situation of disabled people, who are often the victims of a deficient system, of prejudice, or marginalization and exclusion.

The object of research

The present study aims at providing a possible common portrait of the winner with disabilities to the specialists in the domain. This portrait took shape in terms of personality factors, self-esteem, motivation, involvement of educational influencers (family, social environment, school), and also regarding the compensation process. We believe that these are the main aspects that permit educational intervention in order to determine the success of disabled people, especially children.

To this purpose, the cases of five disabled people were analysed, five people who have remarkable achievements or accomplishments in various domains. They were subjected to tests, interviews and observations, so that the portrait would be a holistic one. Based on individual portraits, a comparison was made, considering similarities and differences concerning motivational, attitudinal and personality aspects, from which a common portrait of the winners with disabilities might result.

The present paper may serve for psychology specialists, psycho-pedagogues in special learning or therapists who work with disabled people, as a reference point in outlining a customized intervention plan, the main objective of which will be: transforming the disabled child into a winner.

Coordinates of the research

The first objective aims at identifying representative personality factors for the winner with disabilities. *The second objective* entails measuring the level of self-esteem in successful disabled people. *The third objective* refers to identifying the attitude-motivational aspects that led to obtaining the success. *The fourth objective* wishes to capture the influence of support groups on the general development of the disabled winner. *The fifth objective* entails identifying the deficiency compensation methods that determined success in the case of disabled winners. A final *objective* aims at identifying a common portrait of the winner with disabilities.

In order to complete the profile of the winner with disabilities, the most adequate approach was considered to be the case study, since the present study is included in the model of the phenomenological paradigm. The phenomenological paradigm regards the subjective experience of the individual in relation to the social environment and the personalized significance of life events. Therefore, our approach to this research was discovering and signifying the personal, specific, human experience step by step, without hypotheses that could be formulated in an a priori manner.

The research design

For this research, we opted for a descriptive research design that would enable us to access a better understanding level of the potential of people with disabilities that would eventually lead us to think and craft better ways of managing the education, in its inclusive sense.

The research sample is consistent of five participants for this study: four men and one woman. These participants were selected in a convenient manner, depending on their success on a personal, social, educational or professional level. All participants have a severe form of handicap, two of them being blind, two – locomotor impairments, among which one suffers from spastic quadriplegia, and the other has the upper left limb and lower limbs amputated, and one subject who is deafblind. All participants gave their consent to using the data only in the purpose of research, their identity remaining confidential.

The research aimed at collecting data referring to opinions, interests, facts, behaviors, attitude-motivational aspects, collected through qualitative methods, and data regarding personality traits and aspects of self-esteem, collected through quantitative methods. The actual data collection took place throughout 30 days and required travels to different cities in the country, such as Braşov, Constanţa and Timişoara.

The research methodology

The main method used for investigating the object of the research is the case study, more precisely the case study. In performing the case study, the following methods were used:

- ❖ Quantitative methods (tests);
- ❖ Qualitative methods (interviews, observations, the biographical method, the study of documents, the analysis of products of one's activity. For the collection of family, medical, professional data, an anamnesis guide consisting of 18 items was elaborated. The first six items correspond to family data, the following six to medical data, and the last six to professional data. The items are grouped as follows: objective with multiple choice (I. 3a, 4, 5; II. 2a, 6; III. 6), and semi-objective with filled out answer (I. 1, 2, 3b, 6; II. 1, 2b, 3, 4, 5; III. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). This instrument was created with the purpose of finding out a series of general data regarding family situation, state of health and diagnosis and professional direction, so that an overview of the subject might be formed.

For the investigation of opinions, attitudes, beliefs, clarifications, significances, an interview guide was created for the winners with disabilities. The interview is semi-structured, constructed around 20 predefined specific themes, giving the interviewer freedom to add relevant questions throughout the conversation. Also, the interview guide is created according to five dimensions, in accordance with the objectives of the research. Thus, items regard: personality traits that subjects attribute to themselves through self-characterization; aspects pertaining to self-esteem; attitude-motivational aspects; the subject's relation with support groups and their influence on him/her and the compensation process.

In order to better know the subject and his/her relation with the support groups, the interview guide for support groups was created. The interview was applied to a total number of six people pertaining to the support group mentioned by each subject as representing a significant support. The semi-structured interview guide contains seven predefined themes/questions meant to capture the influence of support groups on the general development of the winner with disabilities.

The observation grid was elaborated with the purpose of recording the subject's behaviour during the interview. It is composed of 16 objective items with dual choice (yes/no). By referring to objectives, the observation grid supplies data in accordance with objectives 1 and 2, contributing to the identification of personality traits and reference points regarding the level of self-esteem. Moreover, it comes to verify if what the subject states during the interview is in accordance with certain physiological behavioural, attitude etc parameters. Thus, the reliability of the subject's statements could be verified.

Another instrument used in the present research is Cattell's 16 PF (16 Personality Factors) questionnaire. "The questionnaire in itself is conceived with the purpose of supplying essential information regarding the structure of the personality of the investigated subjects. It has 187 items that seek to highlight 16 personality traits. The questions are formulated so that they allow three answer options (affirmative, negative and undecided), except for factor B, which requires a single answer, the correct one. Each item of the questionnaire matters for a single personality factor.

A last instrument used in the research is the Rosenberg test, which measures the level of self-esteem. The questionnaire consists of 10 items measured on a Likert scale, ranging from "I completely disagree" to "I completely agree". The test has an alfa Cronbach coefficient equal to 0,89, and the test-retest accuracy is between 0,86-0,88.

Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the subjects' achievements, in specific areas

Comparison criteria	Subject C.P.	Subject R.V.	Subject V.A.	Subject A.T.	Subject C.Z.
Type of disability	Locomotor disability	Sensory disability (visual)	Sensory disability (deaf blindness)	Locomotor disability	Sensory disability (visual)
Personality	The highest scores were obtained for personality factors H (parmia) and C (strong Ego).	The highest scores were obtained for personality factors H (parmia) and C (strong Ego).	The highest scores were obtained for personality factors H (parmia) and C (strong Ego).	The highest scores were obtained for personality factors H (parmia) and C (strong Ego).	The highest scores were obtained for personality factors H (parmia) and C (strong Ego).
	The lowest scores were obtained for personality factors O (anxious distrust)	The lowest scores were obtained for personality factors O (anxious distrust) and Q4 (ergic tension)	The lowest scores were obtained for personality factors O (anxious distrust), L (alaxia), (Q4 (ergic tension)	The lowest scores were obtained for personality factors N (cunningness) and O (anxious distrust)	The lowest scores were obtained for personality factors O (anxious distrust), Q4 (ergic tension)
Self-esteem sine	- High self-esteem. - The deficiency did not affect his self-image, in fact he couldn't imagine what life would be life without having this deficiency.	- High self-esteem. - The deficiency did not affect his self-image, in fact he is taking into consideration that in its absence, very bad things might have happened to him.	- High self-esteem. - The deficiency did not affect his self-image, being very satisfied of what he has accomplished under these circumstances.	- High self-esteem. - The deficiency did not affect his self-image, believing that this is what put him on the right track.	- High self-esteem. - The deficiency did not affect her self-image, believing that it gave meaning to her life.

Motivation	<p>Relates to situations he encounters in terms of the motivation derived from the belief in God and the inner power given by his personality. He takes Jesus Christ as his mentor.</p>	<p>Relates to situations he encounters in terms of the motivation derived from the desire to exceed himself and be recognized. There were several mentors who inspired him, among whom the manager at Cisco, where he volunteered, and who taught him what project management meant, as well as a colleague and friend's father, who initiated him into the secrets of developing a successful business.</p>	<p>Relates to situations he encounters in terms of the motivation derived from curiosity, his desire for self-accomplishment and knowledge. The mentors who inspired him throughout his life are Helen Keller, a deafblind writer in America, and Florica Sandu, a teacher who succeeded in making him produce sounds and aided in his general development.</p>	<p>Relates to situations he encounters in terms of the motivation derived from his faith in his own powers, as he does not believe he is limited in any manner.</p>	<p>Relates to situations he encounters in terms of the motivation derived from her desire to be happy, to find herself, to exceed herself and to attain self-accomplishment. There is a mentor who inspires her, namely a person close to her.</p>
Support groups	<p>-Within the hierarchy of the support groups that represented the greatest aid, the subject placed his family first. - In his relation with society, he encountered prejudice and discrimination.</p>	<p>- Within the hierarchy of the support groups that represented the greatest aid, the subject placed his family first. - His relation with society was marked by prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion.</p>	<p>- Within the hierarchy of the support groups that represented the greatest aid, the subject placed his teachers first. - His relation with society continues to be a positive one, although throughout time, he has encountered prejudice and discrimination.</p>	<p>- Within the hierarchy of the support groups that represented the greatest aid, the subject placed his family first. - His relation with society is marked by a battle against the Romanian system, against prejudice and discrimination.</p>	<p>- Within the hierarchy of the support groups that represented the greatest aid, the subject placed her friends first. - Her relation with society is not at all a positive one, but rather marked by prejudice and discrimination.</p>

Education and vocation aspects	The subject's achievements are noted in the educational sphere, more precisely, the domain of psychology and the artistic domain.	The subject's achievements are noted in the educational sphere, both as pupil-student, and as adult in the domain of informatics.	The subject's achievements are noted in the educational sphere, in the beginning as a pupil-student, and then as an adult in the domain of special psycho-pedagogy, and artistic achievements in the domain of sculpture.	The subject's achievements are noted in the educational sphere, in the domain of psychology, as a student.	The subject's achievements are noted in the educational sphere, in the domain of psychology, as a student.
Compensation	Compensation was made through technical means –orthopedic prostheses. They represent the pillars without which it would have been impossible for him to continue his studies and attain his accomplishments.	Compensation was made by training his other analyzers: auditory, tactile-kinesthetic, olfactory, and gustative. His entire psychological development and professional activity took place on the basis of compensation.	Compensation was made by sharpening his tactile-kinesthetic, olfactory, gustative, vibratile and thermal senses. Moreover, he is using a tiflo-technical means typical for blind people, the white cane. In addition, through exercise, he has attained accomplishments and thus, the compensation process took place. Without compensation, the subject would have remained at the same stage as before the age of 11, when psychic processes were delayed, his movement took place on all four limbs, and his connections to the outer world were almost non-existent.	Compensation was made by using technical means, such as the wheelchair or a vehicle adapted for disabled drivers. By compensating his disability on a physical level, he succeeded in performing the activities he desired and evolving in accordance with his aspirations.	Compensation was made by sharpening her auditory, tactile-kinesthetic, olfactory and gustative senses. Based on those senses, she is also using a technical means, a laptop fitted with a software for blind people. Without compensation, her accomplishments would not have existed, due to her impossibility to adapt to college requirements.

Based on comparative analysis between the subjects of the studies, on criteria in accordance with the pursued hypotheses, a common profile of winners with disabilities emerges. Thus, the disabled winner is a person characterized by *courage, audacity, dynamism, sociability, spontaneity, wide emotional resonance and sentimental and artistic interests*. His/her ego is strong, showing emotional stability, maturity, calmness, good morals and nervous resistance. Despite difficult situations that arose together with their disability, the disabled winners continued to have a *positive self-image* and faith in their inner powers, showing limitless *perseverance*. This high self-esteem became a motivational factor in itself, along with their desires, aspirations and mentors, who inspired them in their battle against their disability. The social environment closest to them became a support and a resource that determined a change in their evolution. Society, as a whole, showed prejudice and discrimination, but the winners with disabilities learned how to fight against them, by attempting to change their mentality and their attitude. Their own model became proof for society that the disability is nothing more than a limit that man sets for himself.

Conclusion

Education has become, in the case of the winner with disabilities, not just the bridge toward self-accomplishment, but also the starting point, and then the pillar on which adaptation to new environment conditions was built. Through education, be it in the intellectual, moral, artistic or technological domain, the disabled winners evolved in their complexity and succeeded in attaining a series of extraordinary achievements. The winners with disabilities compensated their deficiency, by educating and developing their body's adaptation capacity. Either by using technical means, or by training their other analyzers through constant and intensive exercise, they eventually managed to attain accomplishments, which not only helped them in their adaptation, but ensured their success in a certain domain. Therefore, although there are particularities under the aspect of the manifestation's content or frequency or intensity, the psycho-pedagogical profile outlined above may serve as reference point in the psycho-pedagogical intervention on people with disabilities.

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