

SELF-ESTEEM OF ADOLESCENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AS A PREDICTOR OF HARDINESS

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Abstract

The paper discusses the problem of visually impaired adolescents' hardiness and its predictors. The results show that adolescents with visual impairments do not differ from "healthy" peers in terms of hardiness, however, their self-esteem is different from adolescents with normal vision. Predictors of hardiness are: idealized representations of one's own health and well-being for blind adolescents; actual self-esteem of happiness and perspective self-esteem for adolescents with low vision; actual self-esteem of happiness and mirrored self-esteem for "healthy" adolescents.

Keywords: *hardiness, self-esteem, blind adolescents, adolescents with low vision.*

Introduction

Visual impairments are usually considered as the factor which is complicating the personal adaptation, especially in the aspects of spatial orientation, self-service and communication with other people (Solntseva, 2000) and requiring personal efforts for productive overcoming of occurring hardships. This problem is especially important in critical periods of life, including adolescence. Adolescents with visual impairments must cope with hardships due to visual limitations and typical difficulties of their age, which are related to increasing needs in autonomy and independence (Samokhvalova & Kryukova, 2017). Therefore, the study of personal and behavioral overcoming resources of adolescents with visual impairments is an important task.

The question about psychological resources of coping with the situation of disabilities in general and visual disabilities in particular today is debated, and one of these resources is psychological hardiness. Hardiness is characterized as a pattern of attitudes and skills which ensures the success of overcoming hard life circumstances and turns stressful occasions into opportunities of personal growth (Maddi, 2002). The structure of hardiness includes such interrelated elements as commitment, control and challenge. Commitment refers to the tendency towards staying involved with life events and communication in contrast to isolation. Control is described as a belief in the ability to influence one's own life. Challenge characterizes the tendency to examine hardships as opportunities for growing. Different researches show that hardiness is related to lower rates of physical and psychical strain (Leontiev & Rasskazova,

2006; Maddi & Khoshaba, 1994; Sandvik, Bartone, Hystad, Phillips, Thayer, & Johnsen, 2013), to more effective coping behavior (Maddi, 1999; Williams, Wiebe, & Smith, 1992), to psychological well-being (Saxena, 2015). Psychological hardiness provides transformational coping, which allows to convert stressful events and circumstances into less stressful ones (Kobasa, 1982). Generally, individuals with hardy personal attitudes might be better in adaptation.

The psychological studies of hardiness have existed around for several decades. Today world psychology shows great interest in the search for personal correlates of hardiness and factors which influence its formation. Adolescence is one of the periods when the formation of hardiness is particularly intensive, consequently, the study of hardiness and its predictors in adolescence has a great practical importance (Zeer, Yugova, Karpova, & Trubetskaya, 2016). Unfortunately, this question was studied in fragments in Russian psychology, especially hardiness of adolescents with visual impairments. Some information about adolescents with typical development was published (Petrosyants, 2011; Petrova, 2015; Fominova, 2015). Studies of hardiness of adolescents' with disability found that their hardiness is generally lower than hardiness of healthy peers, primarily in the parameters of control and challenge (Shchipanova, Tserkovnikova, Uskova, Puzyrev, Markova, & Fomin, 2016). Information about hardiness of adolescents with visual impairments is not represented in Russian psychological literature.

Accordingly, the present study focuses on the analysis of the hardiness of adolescents with visual impairments and searching for its predictors. In this article, the hardiness of adolescents with visual impairments is examined in the context of their self-esteem. This research problem is determined by the importance of the formation of identity and new life perspective in adolescence in the context of hardiness development. We assumed that self-awareness (and self-esteem as one of its elements) is a predictor of hardiness in adolescence.

Self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments in the context of the formation of hardiness

The development of self-awareness and self-esteem is a critical task in adolescence. Adolescents' self-esteem forms during intracommunication, when they compare themselves with their peers, assimilate assessments of other people. This period is important for the formation of general self-esteem, partial self-esteems of individual characteristics and also the ideas about prospective changes in self-esteem (perspective self-esteem). Perspective self-esteem has a great adaptive value, allowing adolescents to cope with the current hardships.

Adolescents with visual impairments experience hardships during the process of developing self-esteem for several reasons. Firstly, they are more dependant on their parents and other adults and therefore they are less unaided in assessing their personal characteristics and capabilities (Adenzato, Ardito, & Izard, 2006). Secondly, adolescents with visual impairments often have limited experience of socialization with peers which is important for the development of self-esteem by comparing themselves with peers (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2013). Thirdly, adolescents with visual impairments have low intracommunication, and internal dialogue reduces with the increasing of visual impairments (Anisimova, 2008). Therefore, the self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments is different from the self-esteem of their conditionally healthy peers.

An important question is the dependence of adolescents' self-esteem on the degree of visual impairments. Several researchers report about the lack of relations between self-

esteem and the degree of visual impairment in childhood and adolescence (Lifshitz, Hen, & Weisse, 2007; Griffin-Shirley & Ness, 2005). Results of other studies argue that the degree of visual impairment might have a great impact on self-esteem, contributing to its decline (Soulis & Christodoulou, 2010; Fotiadou, Christodoulou, Soulis, Tsimaras, & Mousouli, 2014; Zhuravleva, 2016).

For example, the psychological literature presents actual data that blind adolescents estimate other people's attitude towards them quite low, in contrast to visually impaired adolescents, but tend to have high perspective self-esteem and to overestimate their health (Golikova, 2015; Golikova & Kuchinsky, 2015). Authors interpret such data as compensatory differences in the ideas about life prospects and potential possibilities between blind and sighted adolescents. Similar conclusions were obtained in the study of adolescents' self-regard: visually impaired adolescents do not refer to the presence of visual limitations in their self-description, which may be an indicator of some dissociation with the visual impairment, performing the function of psychological protection (Kornilova, 2003).

The relation between compensatory possibilities of the adolescents' self-esteem and coping with hardships is stated by several studies which examine the coping behavior of adolescents with visual impairments. Visually impaired adolescents use effective coping strategies rather frequently (Hallemani, Kale, & Gholap, 2014), they have a relatively high level of subjective life well-being (Gorkovaya & Miklyaeva, 2017) and psychological adaptation (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2012). They often activate the efforts which are associated with understanding of the hard situation and the attitude towards their role in it, rather than the actions of overcoming hardships (Mastunak, 2008), thus contributing to the development of hardiness. Accordingly, the main research question is whether self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments might be a predictor of their hardiness.

Present Empirical study

The study *aim* relates to the investigation of self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments as a predictor of their hardiness. The following *hypothesis* has to be verified: self-esteem is a determinant of adolescents' hardiness regardless of their visual status; however, the compositions of the relations between self-esteem and indicators of hardiness are different, the impact of self-esteem on hardiness has compensatory implications for the adolescents with visual limitations. The *objectives* of the study include: 1) comparative analysis of hardiness which is typical of visually impaired adolescents with different vision status (low vision or blind) and their conditionally healthy peers; 2) comparative analysis of self-esteem in samples of visually impaired and healthy adolescents; 3) identification of the relationship between hardiness and self-esteem of visually impaired adolescents and their peers without visual limitations and estimation of the impact of self-esteem on hardiness of adolescents with visual impairments of varying severity and healthy adolescents.

Method

Sample and Procedure

173 adolescents aged 13-16 took part in the study (average age 14,02; SD=0,69). 61 of them were adolescents with visual impairments (40 boys and 21 girls). This sample was divided into two groups, according to the severity of visual impairments: group 1 – adolescents with low vision (n=39), group 2 – blind adolescents with residual vision less than 0,05% (n=22).

The control group included 112 conditionally healthy adolescents with typical development (53 boys and 59 girls).

Data were collected individually during the conversation with adolescents. The research design implied the comparative study of self-esteem as a factor of hardiness in groups of visually impaired and conditionally healthy adolescents. At first, each group of visually impaired adolescents was compared to a control group, then they were cross-compared to each other to identify relations between hardiness, self-esteem and severity of visual impairments (Mann-Whitney U-test). Secondly, these relations were refined by correlation analysis (Spearman coefficient) and regression analysis. Empirical data were processed with Statistica 12.0.

Measures

The following procedures were used for the study: *Hardiness Test* (adapted by Leontiev and Rasskazova, short form (Osin & Rasskazova, 2013)); *Self-esteem Scale by Manaster and Corsini* (adapted by Sidorenko (Sidorenko, 1993)); *Self-esteem Scale by Dembo and Rubinshtein* (modified by Prikhozhan (Prikhozhan, 1988)).

Hardiness was assessed in accordance with the structure of *Hardiness Test* parameters, such as commitment, control and challenge, with the subsequent calculation of the general index of hardiness.

Self-esteem was explored by its general characteristics and partial self-esteems. General characteristics of self-esteem were revealed with *Self-esteem Scale by Manaster and Corsini*. We asked adolescents to evaluate themselves using a percentage scale by following questions:

1. *Evaluate your personality in comparing with the other people of the same group* (actual self-esteem);
2. *How would the other people evaluate you as a person in general?* (mirrored self-esteem);
3. *What would your absolute maximum be, if your life includes all possibilities and tools to achieve your goals?* (maximum self-esteem);
4. *What will your self-esteem be 5 years later, in your opinion?* (perspective self-esteem);
5. *In which point would you like to be now?* (ideal self-esteem).

For the evaluation partial of self-esteems we used *Self-esteem Scale by Dembo and Rubinshtein* and asked adolescents about self-assessments (with percentage scale) of their health, intelligence, character and happiness in three different frames:

1. *"I am now"* (actual partial self-esteem);
2. *"I would like to be"* (ideal partial self-esteem);
3. *"I can achieve"* (possible partial self-esteem).

Results

The results show the similarity of values according to the scales of the *Hardiness Test* between the groups of adolescents with visual impairments and their "healthy" peers (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of adolescents' hardiness ($M \pm \sigma$)

Parameters	Blind adolescents (n=22)	Adolescents with low vision (n=39)	"Healthy" adolescents (n=112)
Commitment	30,3±4,26	30,5±5,06	29,81±6,47
Control	22,5±4,71	22,8±4,41	23,10±4,71
Challenge	16,7±3,66	16,3±3,68	16,87±3,83
General hardiness	69,6±11,11	69,6±10,17	69,78±13,56

Adolescents with visual impairments and “healthy” adolescents reveal the same level of resistance to stressful situations, activity in their overcoming, beliefs about the possibility to influence their life and the choice of a way of life. In contrast to the indicators of hardiness, self-esteem of visually impaired adolescents has some specific characteristics (Table 2).

Table 2. Analysis of adolescents’ self-esteem ($M \pm \sigma$)

Parameters		Blind adolescents (n=22)	Adolescents with low vision (n=39)	“Healthy” adolescents (n=112)
<i>General self-esteem</i>				
Actual self-esteem		64,10±26,56	63,74±20,29	63,81±13,42
Mirrored self-esteem		66,87±28,16	59,63±18,57	63,75±22,54
Maximum self-esteem		93,75±14,22	89,03±14,15	88,43±18,14
Perspective self-esteem		82,20±21,29	79,01±15,51	70,16±26,90
Ideal self-esteem		88,65±16,20	82,97±18,04	81,26±22,55
<i>Aspects of self-esteem</i>				
Health	actual	76,09±21,57	72,47±24,55	76,62±22,66
	ideal	95,86±9,17	90,39±14,48	91,48±15,36
	possible	83,32±14,52	80,84±19,02	79,90±21,81
Intelligence	actual	73,91±21,19	67,71±20,23	69,19±22,93
	ideal	94,14±12,61	90,76±11,60	92,42±12,53
	possible	83,95±17,51	82,74±13,14	76,90±23,99
Character	actual	71,59±22,52	58,82±19,75	67,89±24,33
	ideal	84,73±20,38	80,76±19,55	85,38±18,58
	possible	82,23±21,24	74,32±22,08	73,76±24,68
Happiness	actual	83,41±19,82	76,37±22,45	74,53±27,03
	ideal	99,05±2,94	92,50±13,39	90,73±18,89
	possible	91,76±14,54	80,24±21,15	80,24±24,00

Actual self-esteem varies slightly in the groups of adolescents with visual impairment and the control group. However, the parameters of general self-esteem which are associated with the adolescents’ claims (the maximum self-esteem, ideal self-esteem, perspective self-esteem) are higher in the group of blind adolescents than among adolescents with low vision and “healthy” adolescents (Table 3). Partial self-esteem show a similar pattern, excluding self-esteem of health (aspects of ideal Self and possible Self). Mirrored self-esteem of blind adolescents is also higher than in the other groups.

Table 3. Differences in adolescents’ self-esteem (Z by Mann-Whitney U-test)

Parameters		Blind adolescents (n=22) and adolescents with low vision (n=39)	Blind (n=22) and “healthy” (n=112) adolescents	Adolescents with low vision (n=39) and “healthy” (n=112) adolescents
<i>General self-esteem</i>				
Maximum self-esteem		2,15*		
Perspective self-esteem			2,07*	2,09*
<i>Aspects of self-esteem</i>				
Character	actual	2,11*		2,14*
Happiness	ideal		2,16*	
	possible		2,08**	

Note: * – $p \leq 0,05$; ** – $p \leq 0,01$

The self-esteem of adolescents with low vision is similar in many aspects to the same indicators in the control group. Their claims are commensurate to the control group and generally lower than the claims of blind adolescents. The exceptions are the indicators of perspective general self-esteem and perspective self-esteem of intelligence, which are significantly higher in the sample of adolescents with low vision than in the control group. In general, adolescents with low vision tend to underestimate themselves, primarily along such dimensions as “self-esteem of character” and “mirrored self-esteem”.

Comparative analysis of the relations between hardiness and self-esteem shows various correlations in groups of adolescents with visual impairments and “healthy” adolescents. Inasmuch the components of hardiness are related to each other and the general index of hardiness by close positive correlations (in all groups), we provide only correlations of self-esteem with general hardiness (Table 4).

Table 4. Correlations of self-esteem with general hardiness (r_s by Spearman coefficient)

Parameters	Blind adolescents (n=22)	Adolescents with low vision (n=39)	“Healthy” adolescents (n=112)
<i>General self-esteem</i>			
Actual self-esteem	0,72**	0,41**	0,52**
Mirrored self-esteem			0,47**
Maximum self-esteem			0,50**
Perspective self-esteem	0,68**	0,47**	
Ideal self-esteem	0,49*		
<i>Aspects of self-esteem</i>			
Health	actual		0,40**
	ideal	0,58**	
	possible		0,28**
Intelligence	actual		0,59**
	possible		0,39**
Character	possible		0,43**
Happiness	actual	0,59**	0,67**
	ideal	0,59**	
	possible	0,53*	0,42*

Note: * – $p \leq 0,05$; ** – $p \leq 0,01$

The correlation analysis shows that hardiness positively correlates with actual general self-esteem and self-esteem of happiness (actual and possible) in all groups, while there are a lot of positive correlations between indicators of hardiness and self-esteem (general and partial) in the control group and ideal self-esteem in the group of blind adolescents. The group of adolescents with low vision occupies an intermediate position.

The results of correlation analysis were refined by regression analysis (Table 5).

Table 5. The regression model of the influence on self-esteem on the summary indicator of hardiness

Parameters	Blind adolescents (n=22)	Adolescents with low vision (n=39)	“Healthy” adolescents (n=112)
<i>Summary</i>			
<i>r</i>	0,77	0,70	0,88
<i>r</i> ²	0,59	0,49	0,77
<i>Predictors (β)</i>			
Health (ideal)	0,32*		
Happiness (ideal)	0,42*		
Happiness (actual)		0,27*	0,31**
Mirrored self-esteem			0,25**
Perspective self-esteem		0,26*	

Note: * – $p \leq 0,05$; ** – $p \leq 0,01$; *** – $p \leq 0,001$

The represented results confirm that the relationship between self-esteem and hardiness of adolescents with visual impairments differs from the control group. Predictors of hardiness are ideal self-esteems of happiness and health in the group of blind adolescents, actual self-esteem of happiness and perspective self-esteem in the group of adolescents with low vision, actual self-esteem of happiness, maximum self-esteem and mirrored self-esteem in the group of “healthy” adolescents.

Discussion

The findings show some equal and specific points in personal development of adolescents with visual impairments in comparison to their “healthy” peers.

According to the first objective of the study, we found that the hardiness of visually impaired adolescents and its components (commitment, control and challenge) do not differ from similar indicators in the sample of their “healthy” peers. Probably, the development of ideas about one’s own life and relationships with the world happens in accordance with the universal laws of personal formation regardless of the vision status in adolescence. Adolescents revealed nearly the same level of vulnerability/invulnerability to stressful situations, activity in their overcoming, belief about their own autonomy in making choices in life. These details do not coincide with the results of the study presented by Shchipanova, Tserkovnikova, Uskova, Puzyrev, Markova, & Fomin (2016), which evidence lower hardiness in the sample of adolescents with special needs. Possibly a mismatch of results is due to the fact that the mentioned study was performed on the analysis of hardiness in adolescents with other (not visual) disabilities (epilepsy, encephalitis effects, birth trauma, neuroinfection, cerebral infantile paralysis, diabetes), and each disease has a unique effect on the trajectory of the hardiness development in adolescence. According to our data, visual impairments do not have a considerable influence on the adolescents’ hardiness.

The second objective of the study was to analyze the self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments and their healthy peers. The empirical data revealed that the self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments is significantly different from self-esteem of “healthy” adolescents, and the degree of visual impairments has great importance. This fact corresponds to the results of several studies (Soulis and Christodoulou (2010); Fotiadou, Christodoulou, Soulis, Tsimaras, and Mousouli (2014); Zhuravleva (2016) etc.).

The blind adolescents have the highest indicators of self-esteem. It is reflected in actual and perspective self-esteem. In contrast to the study of Golikova and Kuchinsky (2015), we can say that blind adolescents ascribe significantly higher estimations of their personality to the others than adolescents with low vision and “healthy” adolescents. Other results coincide with Golikova and Kuchinsky’s study: blind adolescents have high self-esteem of the future and generally overestimate their health. The greatest differences between blind adolescents’ self-esteem and self-esteem of their “healthy” peers are traced in the aspects of ideal Self and possible Self, which are discernibly higher in the sample of blind adolescents. We explain this fact as a manifestation of compensatory potential of blind adolescents’ self-esteem.

The self-esteem of adolescents with low vision is more similar to the self-esteem of their “healthy” peers. In contrast to blind adolescents, adolescents with low vision are prone to more adequate assessment of their health. In addition, adolescents with low vision give lower ratings to their character than “healthy” adolescents. Another feature of self-esteem in the sample of adolescents with low vision is high perspective self-esteem, which might be considered as a compensatory hope for improving self-esteem in the future.

Correlation and regression analysis, which we used in accordance to the third objective of our study, proved that these features of self-esteem of visually impaired adolescents are predictors of hardiness. The hardiness of “healthy” adolescents is defined by their current beliefs about themselves, their lives and relationships with the others (actual self-esteem of happiness and the mirrored self-esteem). The hardiness of blind youth has other predictors. First of all, the predictor of hardiness in this sample is the idealized beliefs about their health and happiness. The hardiness of blind adolescents is determined by idealized representations about themselves, which are not relevant to their current life situations. Predictors of hardiness in the sample of adolescents with low vision are self-esteem of actual happiness and perspective self-esteem which is related to anticipated changes.

Thus, our hypothesis was confirmed: self-esteem is a determinant of adolescents’ hardiness regardless of visual impairments; however, the compositions of the relations between self-esteem and hardiness are different in the groups of “healthy” and visually impaired adolescents.

Conclusions

The results show that visually impaired adolescents’ degree of hardiness is commensurate to that of their “healthy” peers, regardless of the severity of impairment, however, the self-esteem of the blind adolescents and adolescents with low vision have some features. The differences were also found in the correlations of hardiness and self-esteem in groups of adolescents with visual impairments and “healthy” adolescents. Predictors of hardiness for blind adolescents are idealized representations of themselves, such as underestimating the severity of their impairments. For adolescents with low vision the most important factors of hardiness are high self-assessment of actual happiness, as well as perspective self-esteem which is associated with the hope to improve themselves in the future. The hardiness of typically developing adolescents is based on the self-assessment of actual happiness as well as in the case of adolescents with low vision, and also on the high assessment of their own behavior and personality which is attributed to the other people.

The revealed features of visually impaired adolescents’ relations to themselves and their own lives are important aspects of psychological support. The success of social integration depends on adolescents’ personal beliefs about themselves and about their opportunities which

will be generated in adolescents with visual impairments during transition to separate life. The data about hardiness and self-esteem of visually impaired adolescents have practical implications in identifying aims of psychological support, which is directed to improve their socio-psychological adaptation.

The study indirectly showed that the trajectory of visually impaired adolescents' personal development is closer to sighted adolescents than to their blind peers. We can assume that the convergence of personal development among visually impaired and "healthy" adolescents is because of the opportunities of compensation of vision limitations, which are offered by the modern society. The blind adolescents' possibilities of compensation are much poorer, due the severity of the visual limitations, and, therefore, the formation of their hardiness occurs in the context of the reexamination of the relationship to themselves, developing idealized representations of their own health, personality, well-being.

Certainly, individual variability of personal development of adolescents with visual impairments is contributed by a lot of factors such as time (and age) of the occurrence of visual impairment, the disease which caused the impairment, the features of adolescents' social situation. The research on the influence of these factors' on the relationships between hardiness and self-esteem of adolescents with visual impairments is an important perspective of the current study.

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SELF-ESTEEM OF ADOLESCENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AS A PREDICTOR OF HARDINESS

Summary

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The paper focuses on visually impaired adolescents' hardiness and self-esteem. The personal development of visually impaired adolescents differs from that of their peers without visual limitations. This article describes such aspects of visually impaired adolescents' personal development as their hardiness and self-esteem. Various characteristics of the general and partial self-esteem are considered as predictors of hardiness. The importance of such an issue is determined by particular significance of adolescents' attitudes to themselves and to their lives as a factor of socio-psychological adaptation of adolescents with visual impairments and their successful social integration. Today Russia has little experience of psychological studies, which could be the basis for programs of support to personal development of blind adolescents and adolescents with low vision.

The aim of the study was the investigation of visually impaired adolescents' self-esteem as a predictor of their hardiness. The study verified the hypothesis that self-esteem is a determinant of adolescents' hardiness regardless of their visual impairments, but the compositions of the relations between self-esteem and indicators of hardiness are different, and the impact of self-esteem on hardiness has compensatory implications for the adolescents with visual limitations. The study included 173 adolescents aged 13-16 years, among them 22 blind adolescents (residual vision is less than 0,05%), 39 adolescents with low vision and 112 conditionally healthy adolescents. Empirical data were collected by Hardiness Test (adapted by Leontiev and Rasskazova, short), Self-esteem Scale by Manaster and Corsini (adapted by Sidorenko) and Self-esteem Scale by Dembo and Rubinshtein (modified by Prikhozhan). The statistical analysis included such methods as Mann-Whitney U-test, correlation analysis (Spearman coefficient) and regression analysis (with Statistica 12.0).

The results showed that the hardiness and its components (commitment, control and challenge) of adolescents with visual impairments do not differ from those of their "healthy" peers regardless of the severity of impairments. However, the severity of visual impairments affects self-esteem. The self-

esteem of blind adolescents is compensatorily idealized. The self-esteem of adolescents with low vision is more similar to the self-esteem of adolescents with typical development.

According to the study, the predictors of hardiness differ for the samples of visually impaired and “healthy” adolescents. The hardiness of “healthy” adolescents is determined by their actual self-esteem of happiness and the mirrored self-esteem. The hardiness of blind youth is defined by their idealized beliefs about health and happiness which are not relevant to their current life situations. The predictors of hardiness of adolescents with low vision are actual self-esteem of happiness and perspective self-esteem. Thus, the results confirm the initial hypothesis.

The perspectives of the research are to analyze the impact of such factors as the experience of visual impairment, the disease which caused the impairment, the features of adolescents’ social situation on the relations between hardiness and self-esteem of visually impaired adolescents.

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