

## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SUCCESS OF BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED IN COMPARISON TO PERSONS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT, PHYSICAL DISABILITY AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

**AUTHORS: MARIAN GROMA, TÍMEA HÓKOVÁ, KATARÍNA JARIABKOVÁ**

Affiliations: 1. and 2. Faculty of Education, Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology, Comenius University in Bratislava, 3. Institute for Research in Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic

### What do the following people have in common?

Stephen Hawking  
Stevie Wonder  
Frida Kahlo  
Helen Keller



### WHAT?

The definition of success is different for everyone, whether it's personal or professional we are always looking at improving in some area of our life. Success itself is very popular, often referred to in self-help books or in the media; in contrary to that success is rarely associated with people with disabilities.

On the other hand motivation, cognitive abilities and acceptance of a disability are considered to be important factors that face overcoming various barriers and facilitate success achievement.

### WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Purpose:

- To study the phenomenon of success from the perspectives of successful people with disabilities (visual and hearing impairment, physical and intellectual disabilities).
- To analyse various factors of success related to 1) environmental; 2) social and 3) personal determinants.

### HOW?

Using semi-structured interviews reflecting the following topics: 1) individual history of a person (his/her life as a person with a disability, social and health care, schooling); 2) perception of success in general; 3) individual experience with success (specific situations and related personal experience).

### WHO?

19 participants = 5 with visual impairment + 5 with hearing impairment + 5 with intellectual disability + 4 with physical disability

Participants of the research involved on the basis of the following criteria: 1) being employed; 2) considered to be successful person by the given community; 3) representing the specific group in sport or art.

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN OUTCOMES?

In order to achieve success for a person with a disability it is necessary to overcome barriers and to adapt to various psychosocial consequences.

There are several common features (E.G. personality factors related to motivation and effort); however some determinants are understood differently: visual impairment - acceptance of the functional and social consequences of the impairment, hearing impairment – self-determination and self-realisation, physical disability – an ability to face difficult situations and self-autonomy, intellectual disabilities – social acceptance and acceptance of their performance and effort. Perception of success differs according to the type and degree of a disability as well as to subjective experience of success (positive) or unsuccessful (negative). Attitudes of the mainstream society have an important influence over the self-esteem and the opportunities for experiencing (true) success. However attitudes are strongly formed by age, gender, educational background and by a real encounter with a person with a disability.

*„Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”  
Winston Churchill*

*„The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.”*

*Vince Lombardi*

### WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

Various disabilities - different perceptions of success

#### People with visual impairment

Success is mostly linked to the acceptance of the psychosocial consequences of a disability, psychological resilience, skills needed for an independent life (mobility and orientation, daily-living skills, PC and Braille literacy).

Examples:

**Intrinsic motivation:** „If I set a goal I do my best to achieve it .. I utilize my will and all my effort.“

**Self-determination:** „I think a lot can be done if a person keeps on trying .. but sometimes I feel it is not feel as we have to put a much bigger effort into everything ..“

**Independence** (as much as possible): “When a person acquires a disability often the family tries to do everything for/instead ... it looks like you are locked in a golden cage“

**Psychological resilience:** „It has to go from inside .. no every change comes immediately – some changes might last 5 or 10 years.“

**Humour:** „Life is beautiful! Although it is a bit darker, still it is great!“

#### People with hearing impairment

Success is mostly perceived as a continuous process; in most cases even differentiating between short-term and long-term successes. Among other types of success are academic achievements, working for people with the same impairment, presence of a significant other and self-determination and self-actualisation.

Examples:

**Support** in life from the significant other: “I am very thankful to one school producer who has motivated me to work hard. .. If I had given up that time my journey would have been much different.“

**Self-determination:** „I have been always thinking about what I want; that I want to do it well ..; I have always tried to grow professionally and to improve.“

**Motivation:** „It is all about internal motivation ... If the person has it so he can achieve a lot; if he doesn't have it he can only make excuses.“

#### People with physical disability

Success is related to – fame, having a job, life-satisfaction, sport achievements, an ability to overcome barriers and fears.

Examples:

**Ability to face problems:** „A success is when sitting on the wheelchair you still have your system and what is more you are even happy.“

**Self-autonomy:** “It was a success for me to get a driving licence ... then to gather money to buy a car.“

#### People with intellectual disabilities

Success is mostly associated with integration into the activities of the mainstream population. Among important determinants are external facilitators (E.G. family support) and opportunities given by the society.

Examples:

**Persistency and effort:** „If I decide to achieve something .. a lot of effort is needed in order to achieve it.“

**Social support and open-mindedness:** „Teachers were fine – they helped me a lot.“

**Feedback and acceptance from the mainstream society:** „It is a great feeling ... I am representing the Slovak Republic.“;

„In fact it was a great success that I could work there, that those people liked me!“



References are available on demand from the authors of the study.  
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