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SUBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF DISABLED TEENAGERS

Subjective dimension of moral responsibility

The idea of responsibility is intuitionally understood by most of people. However, 'responsibility' is not only carrying consequences of breaking binding rules and regulations. What is more meant by that is far more deep in meaning. Responsibility is understanding of the rules, acceptance and treating as one's own. If it has no elements of agreement and free will, it is nothing more than usual compulsion¹. The analysis of the problem and its sense was taken up by Maria Nowicka-Kozioł². I accepted the understanding of 'moral responsibility' and its subjective dimension after the author.

Responsibility within common understanding is as well as somebody's self assessment and self control and feeling responsible for given duties (for example legal responsibility) as the appraisal of some conduction made by other people³. Maria Nowicka-Kozioł understands responsibility as: (I) readiness to hold responsibility for someone's own choices, decisions and behaviour, (II) feeling of obligation as necessity to undertake determined choice or act in a defined way and (III) feeling of guilt which assigned to one's self or other people in the situation, in which no actions or negatively assessed actions are undertaken⁴.

Taking into account executors of moral responsibility there can be several types pointed out: a) subjective responsibility or self responsibility – for one's own identity and development. It is the most narrow scope of responsibility connected with self-awareness, self-reflection. b) social responsibility – in allo-central and socio-central aspect, executor of which is the other person. In allo-central aspect the responsibility concerns other people

¹ B. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, *Odpowiedzialność podmiotowa dzieci. Jak rozumieć i inspirować jej rozwój?*, Kraków 2007, p. 10., por. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Kraków 1985, K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Lublin 1992;

² M. Nowicka-Kozioł, *Odpowiedzialność w świetle alternatyw współczesnego humanizmu*, Warszawa 1993;

³ J. Homplewicz, *Etyka pedagogiczna*, Rzeszów 1996;

⁴ M. Nowicka-Kozioł (red.), *Poczucie odpowiedzialności moralnej jako aspekt podmiotowy*, Warszawa 2000, p. 8.;

directly, interpersonally. It is the responsibility for other people. The socio-central responsibility concerns the responsibility for people, who are wider social groups, social macrostructures; c) historical responsibility understood as some kind of feeling of responsibility for the past and the future, such abstract categories as humanity or mankind.

The categories of moral responsibility pointed out above can be divided, however, usually they overlap, combine and result one from the other⁵.

The categorization of moral responsibility accepted allows for more precise research on its sense. However, the studies on sense of responsibility are on the edge of examination of social attitude, declarations and opinions. What has to be taken into account is that not only declaration of responsibility is essential but most importantly responsible actions.

Basic methodological assumptions of examining the sense of moral responsibility among disabled teenagers

The sense of moral responsibility felt by disabled teenagers is a very important indicator of the effectiveness of psycho-social integration with other people. The essence of psycho-social integration is conscious and subjective, responsible participation of disabled people in social life of local environment.

The idea of moral responsibility is namely closely connected with the process of psycho-social integration of disabled people. The sense of moral responsibility is necessary condition for the integration to exist and is the main asset of disabled people's autonomy.

The aim of the research was an attempt to diagnose the sense of moral responsibility among chosen groups of disabled teenagers (aim-random attempt). The subject of the research, defined in such way, is so far unknown that an explicit answer for the research question is difficult in a form of hypothesis: 'What is the condition of self-responsibility among the examined group of disabled teenagers?'

The method of the empirical research was a diagnostic survey within the 1st quarter of 2007 made with the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire "The sense of moral responsibility among teenagers" allows to figure out the all three dimensions of moral responsibility.

The questions used are connected with cafeteria or stories describing precise situations for the people examined to take a position on⁶.

⁵ M. Nowicka-Kozioł, jw., p. 8–11, por. Z. Bauman, *Moralność w niestabilnym świecie*, Poznań 2005;

⁶ The research tool came into being as the result of work of the research team during workshops conducted in Applied Social Theories Institute at Warsaw University, under the supervision of professor Maria Nowicka-Kozioł in academic year 1998/1999.

The research included disabled teenagers studying in different types of special needs schools in Podkarpacie province. During the selection of the research group the sort of disability was taken into account. The questionnaire was directed to those with hearing impairment and mild mentally retarded. What has been assumed is that the shared characteristic of the people examined are problems with processing incoming information from social environment. The whole statistic record was collected personally which allowed to control appropriate course of the research work. It was acceptable to explain the content of the questions.

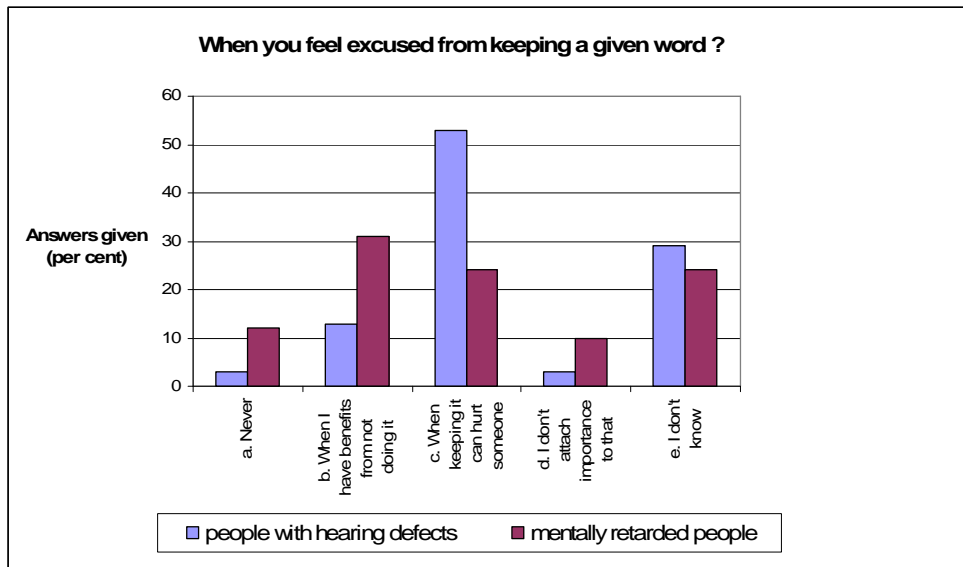
Self-responsibility of disabled teenagers

The examination of the sense of moral responsibility among disabled teenagers concerned 89 people aged 17 to 23, within which there were 38 female and 51 male. People with hearing impairment constituted 42,7% of the whole and 57,3% of disabled teenagers examined are people mild mentally retarded.

The teenagers with hearing defects are foster children of Special Needs School and Childcare Centre in Przemyśl, students of post-gymnasium schools, mostly subject oriented lyceum (47,4%). The teenagers in small degree mentally retarded are students of Special Needs Schools in Rzeszów – subject oriented lyceum (54,9%) and vocational school (45,1%).

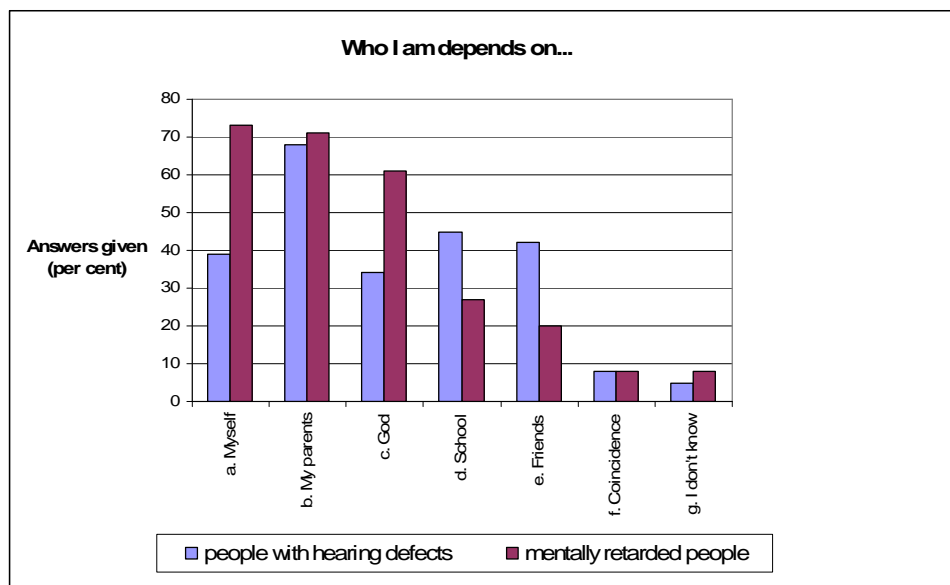
Four questions, among fifteen, within the questionnaire used were connected with the problem of subjective aspect of moral responsibility.

For question “When you feel excused from keeping a given word?” almost 36% of all questioned people answered that one should keep a given word unless keeping it harms someone. More than a half of the teenagers hearing impaired thinks in the same way. Whereas, most of the teenagers mentally retarded feel excused from keeping a given word, if they benefit from not doing it. (graph no 1)



Graph 1.

The task within the next question was to point out three categories which are most influential in life. The most of the teenagers questioned indicated that who they are depends on their parents (about 70%). More than a half of the teenagers examined consider that they are responsible for their actions themselves (58%). A little less people indicated that who they are depends on God (49%).

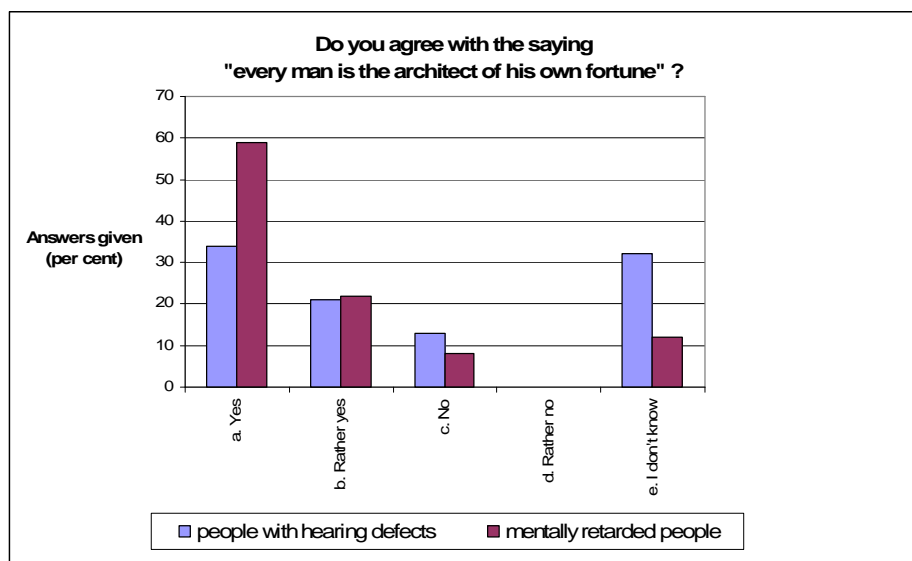


Graph 2.

The teenagers with hearing impairment most often indicate that who they are depends on their parents, whereas, the teenagers mentally retarded indicate themselves. (graph no 2)

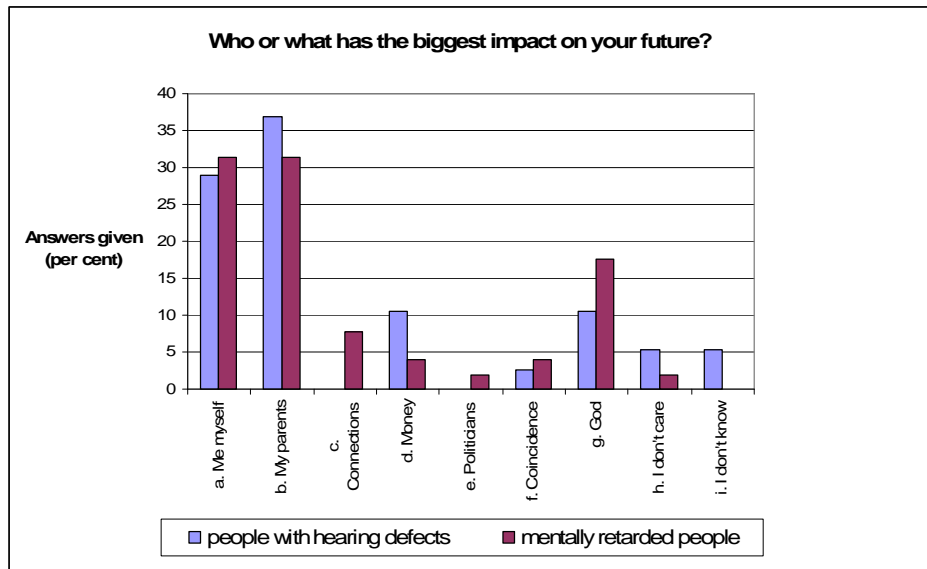
The disabled people examined agree with a saying that “every man is the architect of his own fortune”. 48% agree absolutely with the quoted saying, 21% - quite agree, 20% do not agree at all and 10% was not able to take a position. Based on that, it is possible to state that the disabled teenagers want to decide about their life on their own.

Nearly 60% of the mentally retarded teenagers agree absolutely with the saying. Among the hearing impaired teenagers defects 55% agree with the saying, however, 32% is not able to take a position at all. (graph no 3)



Graph 3.

What confirms the opinions above are the answers for the last of the questions connected with self-responsibility. The people questioned had to indicate what, in their opinion, has the biggest impact on their future. Their answers correspond with the results shown in graph 2. In the consciousness of the people examined the biggest influence on their future have their parents (33%) and themselves (30%), less often God (13%). Detailed results are presented on graph number 4.



Graph 4.

Because of limited opportunities only part of this wide research was presented, which is section concerning self-responsibility.

Subject responsibility vs. the process of psycho-social integration of disabled people

“We” is not a collection of many “I”, but arrangement of mutual, merging many various “I”, relations and connections. “We” is the name for what joins me with other people: is the name for being – one-for-another human, who is ashamed of imperfection, incompleteness of one’s humanity and for an honour understands aspiring to its fulfilment and supporting others in the same aspiration. “We” is the name of the field covered by moral responsibility which I have undertaken and the same undertaking I am expecting from others.

(Z. Bauman, Moralność w niestabilnym świecie, Poznań 2005, p. 29)

Basic conditions for responsibility to exist are consciousness and freedom of a man, who constantly makes choices. The idea of subjectivity is an assumption that “man is a being, which not only means existence, but also, or perhaps, most of all means the necessity of choice one’s own existence”⁷

Within the context of traditionally understood subjectivity, man constantly takes responsibility for: one’s own identity, one’s self, others – in the past, the present and the future. The range of sense of responsibility changes within the consciousness of the individual depending on the context of experience⁸.

From the research above it appears that disabled teenagers are mostly convinced about their influence on their life, who they are and who they will be in the future. It is also

⁷ M. Nowicka-Kozioł (red.), Poczucie..., Warszawa 2000, p. 14.;

⁸ M. Nowicka-Kozioł (red.), j.w.;

important for them to keep a word given and only well-being of other people can make them to fail to keep a promise. The teenagers examined emphasise the importance of their parents in shaping their life.

The way in which disabled person perceive one's own disability seems to be connected with how one understands one's own subjectivity. Aspiring to subjectivity understood as "aspiration to achievement of objective opportunities to control one's own destiny and influence on environment"⁹ requires dealing with many outer restrictions (barriers, prohibitions) and inner limitations (lack of appropriate competences). Aspiring to subjectivity is not homogeneous process, its intensity and areas in which it is realized are different for different people. There are always conflicts present connected with subjectivity: internal conflicts, which concern aspirations directed in the opposite ways and becoming dependent, and external conflicts defined as a clash of different people's aspirations to control and influence, which in the end leads to various limitations of subjectivity¹⁰.

Only when a disabled person feels the sense of responsibility expressed in the idea of subjectivity that is, namely, effectiveness, sense and identification with social reality, one can speak of psycho-social integration of disabled people. In this kind of situation "one's activity is conscious, initiated and sustained by oneself according to one's own values and standards. It constitutes the rule of regulating relations with environment by an individual person. Being the subject means to control the reality, but it has to be conscious and, what has to be emphasised, such kind of and as considerable control as a man has decided"¹¹.

What becomes important is appropriate understanding and accomplishing the idea of subjectivity within social activity, which leads to psycho-social integration of disabled people and acceptance of the fact that a disabled individual is a responsible subject of such actions, which results in treating the one as the originator. The success or failure of psycho-social integration depends on the attitude towards one's self and the way in which disabled people decided to function in life.

⁹ J. Reykowski, Podmiotowość – szkic problematyki, w: P. Buczkowski, R. Cichoński (red.) Podmiotowość: możliwość, rzeczywistość, konieczność, Poznań 1989, p. 201.;

¹⁰ J. Reykowski, Podmiotowość – szkic problematyki, w: P. Buczkowski, R. Cichoński (red.) Podmiotowość: możliwość, rzeczywistość, konieczność, Poznań 1989, p. 201.;

¹¹ K. Korzeniowski, Poczucie podmiotowości – alienacji politycznej, „studia Psychologiczne”, t. XXV nr 2, 1987, p. 83;

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