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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTATION AMONG PEOPLE WITH LOCOMOTOR DISABILITIES

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Adaptation and inclusion of individuals with special needs represent a constant challenge in contemporary society, being closely related to the level of self-esteem and the capacity for psychosocial adaptation. Therefore, the present research aims to analyze these dimensions, as well as the relationship between them, among individuals with locomotor disabilities in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, the research results indicate the presence of average and high levels of self-esteem, alongside relatively good psychosocial adaptation. Furthermore, it was found that professionally employed individuals demonstrate a greater capacity for psychological and emotional adaptation, highlighting the importance of labor market inclusion and social support in the integration process. A significant correlation between self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation was also identified among individuals with locomotor disabilities, confirming the proposed hypothesis. Thus, active participation in professional life significantly contributes to strengthening self-esteem, increasing personal autonomy, and improving the quality of life of individuals with locomotor disabilities.

Keywords: *self-esteem, psychosocial adaptation, psychological adaptability, emotional adaptability, motor disabilities.*

RELAȚIA DINTRE STIMA DE SINE ȘI ADAPTAREA PSIHOSOCIALĂ LA PERSOANELE CU DIZABILITĂȚI LOCOMOTORII

Adaptarea și incluziunea persoanelor cu nevoi speciale reprezintă o provocare constantă în societatea contemporană, fiind strâns legate de nivelul stimei de sine și de capacitatea de adaptare psihosocială. Studiul de față își propune să analizeze aceste dimensiuni, precum și relația dintre ele, în rândul persoanelor cu dizabilități locomotorii din Republica Moldova. Rezultatele cercetării indică existența unor niveluri medii și ridicate ale stimei de sine, alături de o adaptare psihosocială relativ bună. De asemenea, s-a constatat că persoanele încadrate profesional manifestă o capacitate mai mare de adaptare psihologică și emoțională, ceea ce subliniază importanța incluziunii pe piața muncii și a sprijinului social în procesul de integrare. S-a constatat și o corelație semnificativă dintre stima de sine și adaptarea psihosocială la persoanele cu dizabilități locomotorii, ce confirmă ipoteza propusă. Astfel, participarea activă în viața profesională contribuie semnificativ la consolidarea stimei de sine, la creșterea autonomiei personale și la îmbunătățirea calității vieții persoanelor cu dizabilități locomotorii.

Cuvinte-cheie: *stima de sine, adaptare psihosocială, adaptabilitate psihologică, adaptabilitate emoțională, dizabilități locomotorii.*

Introduction

In the contemporary context, self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation of individuals with motor disabilities represent a highly relevant issue. Considering that self-esteem is described as a “discreet” phenomenon, difficult to observe directly, its manifestations often go unnoticed. Consequently, individuals with motor disabilities may experience significant fluctuations in self-esteem, which negatively influence their social interactions and can generate heightened feelings of isolation. Thus, managing motor disability becomes more complex, creating additional obstacles in the process of psychosocial adaptation.

Disability affects not only the physical functioning of the individual but also has a significant impact on self-esteem as well as psychological and emotional adaptability, particularly reflected in the quality of interpersonal relationships. In this context, the process of integration into the educational system, the

labor market, and social life becomes more challenging. From this perspective, self-esteem constitutes an essential factor in psychosocial adaptation, determining how individuals with motor disabilities assume social and professional roles. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the levels of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation, as well as the relationship between these variables among individuals with motor disabilities.

Conceptual Aspects of Self-Esteem and Psychosocial Adaptation

Self-Esteem it represents the evaluative and affective dimension of self-image, reflecting how an individual appraises their own value and competence in relation to personal standards and the social environment [2, 7]. In the psychological sense, it expresses the relationship between the perception of personal success and the level of aspirations, being determined by the congruence between the real self and the ideal self. From a contemporary perspective, self-esteem is conceptualized as a two-dimensional construct that includes self-worth and the perception of personal competence, constituting an essential factor for psychological balance and social adaptation [6].

Self-concept according to Lelord, F., and André, C., is "the opinion we have about ourselves," which does not have a specific objective basis rooted in "our qualities and flaws," because what matters is our subjective perception of "possessing those qualities and flaws" [6, pp. 15]. These subjective opinions later become the solid foundation of an individual's personality. In this context, Andreas asserts that the self-concept is formed from personal experiences, which remain stored in memory and become a kind of "nourishment for the personality" [1, pp. 26-27]. Thus, it is not only having an opinion about ourselves that shapes the self-concept, but also the way we react to life events, which are retained in memory.

Social Adaptation it represents the process through which an individual integrates into the system of social relationships, adjusting their behaviors and personal resources to the demands of the environment. According to Paladi, this constitutes a stage of socialization and has a relative and multidimensional character, reflecting the person's capacity to function effectively in various areas of social life.

Psychosocial adaptation It involves a continuous interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment. In this process, psychological and emotional adaptation become indispensable components of effective social integration, while maintaining a psycho-emotional balance represents the individual's response to the constant adjustment to environmental demands.

Recent research [4, 10] confirms that psychosocial adaptation is significantly influenced by personality factors such as emotional stability, self-regulation, and resilience. Current studies indicate that these traits directly contribute to social participation, mental health, and quality of life for individuals in vulnerable contexts, including situations of disability. Additionally, adaptation is described as a staged process oriented toward functional integration, involving initial emotional reactions, cognitive restructuring, and the development of adaptive behavioral strategies [9].

Consequently, psychosocial adaptation is no longer viewed exclusively as a reaction to the environment, but as a complex self-regulatory process that contributes to the formation of social identity, the strengthening of self-esteem, and effective community integration. Several authors-Paladi, Drugus, and Știrbu-identify psychological adaptability and emotional adaptability as key components of psychosocial adaptation. Based on these considerations, we employed two questionnaires designed to measure these components.

In individuals with disabilities, psychosocial adaptation is conceptualized as a dynamic process of interaction between the individual and the social environment [3]. According to the World Health Organization [8], disability represents an impairment that limits activities and social participation, being influenced not only by health status but also by contextual factors. In this regard, the biopsychosocial model explains disability as the result of the interaction between biological, psychological, and social dimensions, going beyond strictly medical approaches [3].

Disability has an impact not only physically but also psychologically, being frequently associated with social marginalization [2]. Similarly, social stigmatization and labeling can lead to anxiety and a reduction in self-esteem, and the label of disability can come to dominate an individual's identity [5].

According to various authors, adaptation to disability involves an evolutionary process of psychological adjustment through stages such as the initial impact, defensive mechanisms, and eventual acceptance. Psychosocial integration is influenced both by social barriers and stereotypes and by the manner in which the individual constructs their self-image in relation to the environment [5]. Thus, psychosocial adaptation entails the integration of disability into one's personal and social identity [3].

In the case of individuals with disabilities, psychosocial adaptation involves a gradual process in which the person progresses through distinct stages of adjustment, such as confrontation, acceptance, and integration of the disability. This process is significantly influenced by the level of social inclusion, the support provided by the family, and society's attitudes toward disability, as the psychosocial adaptation of individuals with motor disabilities depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships and their involvement in social life.

Methodological Aspects

Research Aim is to determine the levels of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation, as well as the relationship between these variables among individuals with motor disabilities in the Republic of Moldova.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant correlation between self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation in individuals with motor disabilities.

2. There are significant differences in the expression of self-esteem, psychological adaptability, and emotional adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities depending on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce.

Participants

This study involved 51 individuals with motor disabilities from the Republic of Moldova, aged between 21 and 56 years. Participants were selected randomly, and their participation was voluntary. Before the study, they were informed about the study's purpose, how the results would be used, and were assured of the confidentiality of their personal data.

Methods

In the present study, three scales were used: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Chestionarul adaptabilității psihologice Н. П. Фетискин was used to measure participants' psychological adaptability [9, pp. 57]; Chestionarul Autoaprecierii adaptabilității emoționale Н. П. Фетискин [9, pp. 58] was used to measure participants' self-assessment of emotional adaptability.

Statistical and Mathematical Methods: Bravais-Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) and Student's t-test.

Rezults and discussion

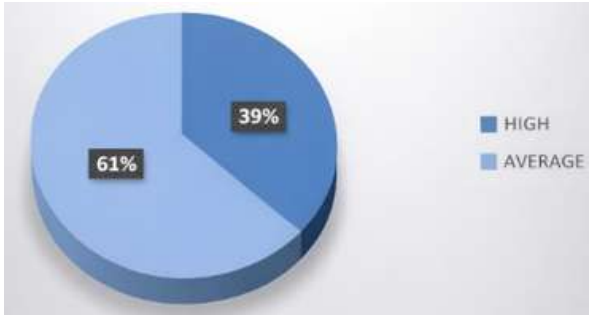


Fig. 1. Graphical Representation of Self-Esteem among individuals with Motor Disabilities

In the present study, the levels of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation were analyzed in the experimental group of 51 individuals with motor disabilities from the Republic of Moldova. According to the data on self-esteem levels, the results indicate that the majority of participants (61%) have a average level of self-esteem, which suggests a balanced perception of their own value and good adaptation to the social environment. Interestingly, none of the participants exhibited a low level of self-esteem. Therefore, individuals with motor disabilities are able to maintain an optimal level of self-esteem while successfully achieving psychosocial adaptation. Additionally, 39% of the participants demonstrated high self-esteem (see Fig. 1).

Next, our aim is to identify the level of psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities. Following data analysis, the results obtained are presented (see Fig. 2):

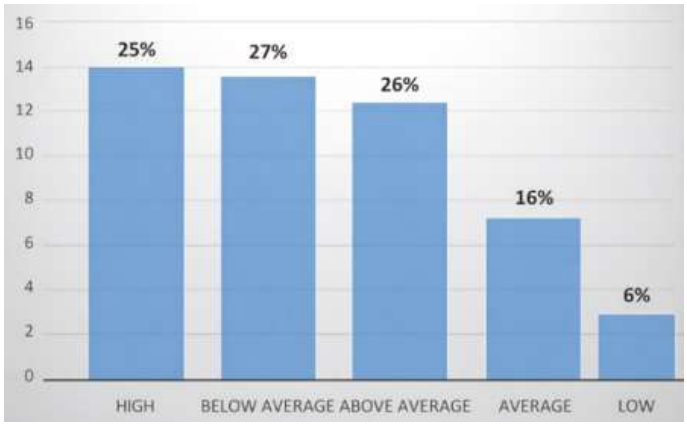


Fig. 2. Graphical Representation of Psychological Adaptability among Individuals with Motor Disabilities

The results indicate that the majority of individuals with motor disabilities exhibit above-average psychological adaptability (26%) and high levels (25%), which suggests that these individuals are generally able to manage their emotions in unexpected situations, remain calm, and find effective solutions. They are optimistic and confident in their ability to face challenges. However, 27% of individuals with motor disabilities display below-average adaptability, which manifests as difficulty adjusting to new rules and conditions in stressful situations, challenges in finding solutions, or a tendency to avoid confronting problems directly, relying heavily on the opinions of others. Sixteen percent of participants demonstrate an average level of psychological adaptability, characterized by discomfort in the face of change, yet they are able to cope with challenges. Finally, 6% of the participants exhibit low psychological adaptability, finding it difficult to adjust to new situations, often avoiding them or showing resistance.

Regarding emotional adaptability, the following results were identified (see Fig. 3):

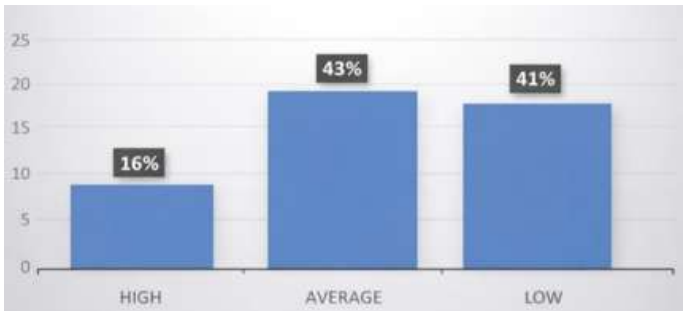


Fig. 3. Graphical Representation of Emotional Adaptability among Individuals with Motor Disabilities

The majority of individuals with motor disabilities exhibit high (16%) or average (43%) levels of emotional adaptability, indicating an optimal capacity for emotional regulation. Those with high levels are able to manage stressful situations effectively, as they have developed emotional intelligence over time through various coping and self-regulation techniques. However, 41% of individuals with motor disabilities demonstrate low emotional adaptability. These individuals are unable to manage their emotions effectively in stressful situations, often reacting excessively and aggressively to sudden challenges in their lives. They experience difficulties in decision-making, making them vulnerable to change and more likely to avoid confronting it. Consequently, problems arise in their interpersonal relationships, which are often dysfunctional and accompanied by anxiety, stress, and significant emotional pressure. In this context, these individuals face challenges in psychosocial adaptation, as they frequently prefer social isolation.

What encourage is the fact that, no individuals with motor disabilities demonstrated very low emotional adaptability. This suggests that, despite the emotional challenges they encounter, they retain at least a basic capacity for emotional adjustment. Nevertheless, they need support from both family and community to provide a safe space that fosters emotional development and strengthens their emotional intelligence.

Another objective of this study is to determine whether there are differences in the expression of self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce.

Regarding the expression of self-esteem, the following results were obtained (see Fig. 4).

The percentage data do not indicate significant differences. Both individuals who are involved and those who are not involved in the workforce exhibit an average level of self-esteem (71% and 65%). Similarly, a high level of self-esteem is also observed, with relatively close percentages: 29% among employed individuals and 35% among those not employed. In this context, it can be assumed that many individuals with motor disabilities likely receive consistent support and assistance from both family and society,

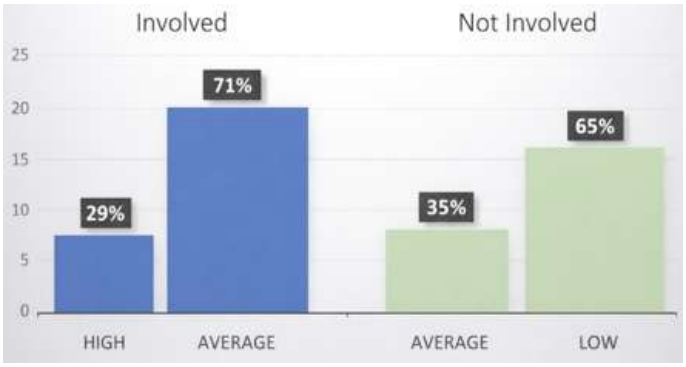


Fig. 4. Graphical Representation of Self-Esteem Among Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

which contributes to maintaining self-esteem at an optimal functional level. According to Lelord, F., and André, C., self-love is described as “emotional nourishment” that fosters harmonious self-esteem [6, pp. 13]. Therefore, interpersonal relationships and the presence of an inclusive environment act as protective factors and facilitate the psychosocial adaptation of individuals with motor disabilities.

Regarding the expression of psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce, the results are as follows (see Fig. 5):

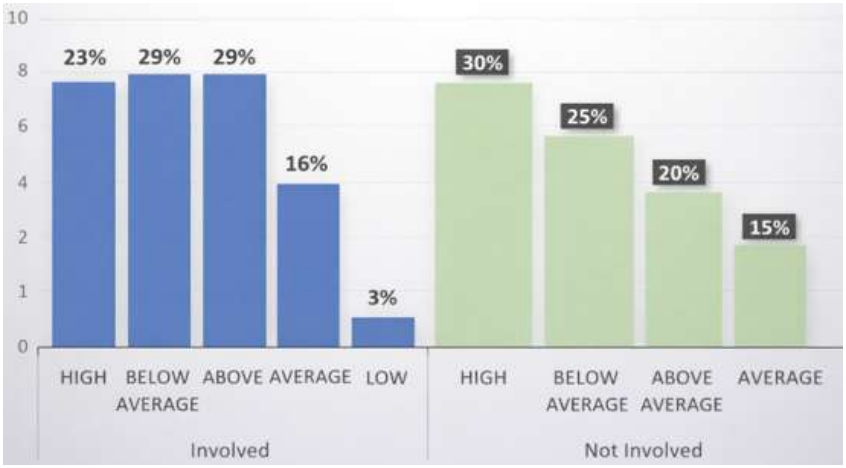


Fig. 5. Graphical Representation of Psychological Adaptability Among Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

The majority of individuals with motor disabilities who are involved in the workforce exhibit above-average (29%) or high (23%) levels of psychological adaptability. They possess internal resources to manage their emotions in crisis situations, have confidence in their abilities, and demonstrate flexible thinking, learning from mistakes—factors that facilitate their adaptation in the workplace. In contrast, individuals not involved in the workforce show a low level of psychological adaptability (10%), while 25% display below-average levels. In total, 35% of individuals with motor disabilities face difficulties when confronted with unpredictable situations, exhibiting rigid thinking characterized by avoidance behaviors and resistance to confronting problems. These individuals require encouragement and support from those around them, as they are more psychologically vulnerable, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation. Individuals with motor disabilities who exhibit an average level of psychological adaptability are present in both groups, with slight percentage differences (16% among those involved in the workforce and 15% among those not involved). They learn to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, even if they initially experience feelings of uncertainty and psychological discomfort in crisis situations. Individuals with motor disabilities who are not involved in the workforce require assistance, support, and guidance from both family and society to develop the psychological adaptability necessary for facilitating the process of psychosocial adaptation. In this context, the inclusion of individuals with motor disabilities in society will promote the formation of social identity and the assumption of social roles, which in turn will enhance psychological resilience in facing the daily challenges encountered by individuals with motor disabilities.

Next, we analyze how emotional adaptability is expressed among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce (see Fig. 6).

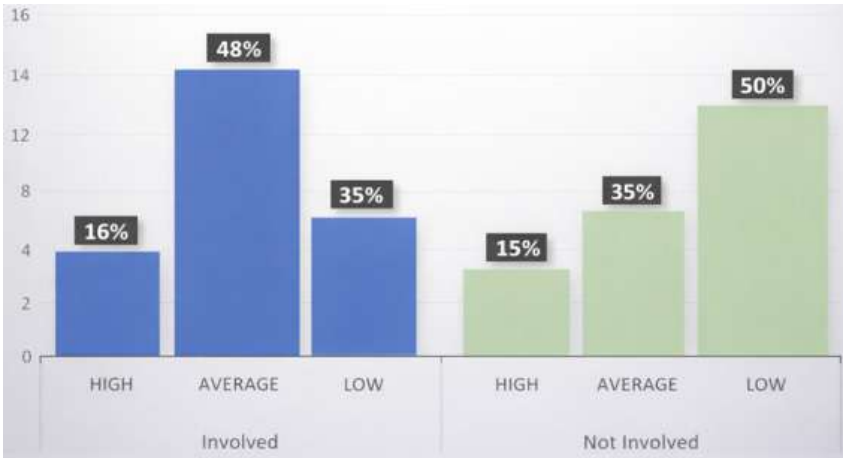


Fig. 6. Graphical Representation of Emotional Adaptability of Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

The results indicate that individuals with motor disabilities who are involved in the workforce exhibit higher levels of emotional adaptability compared to those who are not involved. Specifically, a larger proportion of individuals not involved in the workforce (50%) demonstrate low emotional adaptability compared to those who are employed (35%). These individuals experience significant difficulties in managing their emotions and are highly sensitive to stressors. It is therefore beneficial for them to participate in social activities that enhance their capacity to interact with others, learn to socialize with different people, and be included in society without experiencing marginalization or stigmatization.

To test the hypothesis that there are significant differences in the expression of self-esteem, psychological adaptability, and emotional adaptability based on the involvement or non-involvement of individuals with motor disabilities, the Student's t-test was applied. The results obtained are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Results of the Student's t-Test on Differences in the Expression of Self-Esteem, Psychological Adaptability, and Emotional Adaptability among Individuals with Motor Disabilities Based on Involvement/Non-Involvement in the Workforce

Variable	Group	m	SD	t	df	p
Self-Esteem	involved	30,03	5,480	1,104	49	0,275
	not involved	28,25	5,857			
Psychological adaptability	involved	5,77	2,125	0,524	49	0,005
	not involved	5,05	2,212			
Emotional adaptability	involved	9,19	4,942	-0,742	49	0,447
	not involved	10,35	5,724			

The results indicate significant differences in the variable of psychological adaptability, while no differences were found for the variables of self-esteem and emotional adaptability. The statistical data partially confirm our hypothesis. To determine the correlation between self-esteem and the two components of psychosocial adaptation, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The results are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Relationship between self-esteem, psychological adaptability and emotional adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities

	Self-esteem ***Pearson correlation coefficient / Significance threshold***
Psychological adaptability	r = 0,466; p = 0,001
Emotional adaptability	r = 0,642; p = 0,001

A significant positive, directly proportional correlation was found between self-esteem and psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities (r = 0.466, p = 0.001). Additionally, a significant positive correlation was identified between self-esteem and emotional adaptability (r = 0.642, p = 0.001) in the same population. This indicates that higher levels of self-esteem are associated with higher levels of both psychological and emotional adaptability. These results confirm the second hypothesis, namely that a significant correlation exists between these variables.

Conclusions

1. Self-esteem among individuals with motor disabilities is expressed at an average to high level, indicating a healthy and optimal degree of self-love, self-concept, and self-confidence, despite the presence of a motor disability.
2. No individuals with motor disabilities exhibited low self-esteem, which indicates the presence of protective factors (such as family and society) and effective adaptive mechanisms.
3. Significant differences exist in the expression of psychological adaptability among individuals with motor disabilities based on their involvement or non-involvement in the workforce, whereas no differences were found in the expression of self-esteem or emotional adaptability in relation to workforce participation.
4. Significant correlations exist between self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation, both in the psychological adaptability and emotional adaptability components. These results confirm the proposed hypothesis.

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