

Self-Stigmatization of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students

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Abstract : Stigma is a significant obstacle to the successful adaptation of deaf students to the conditions of an educational institution, especially for those who study in inclusion. The aim of the study was to identify the spheres of life which are the most significant for developing of the stigma of deaf students; to assess the influence of factors associated with deafness on the degree of their self-stigmatization (time and degree of hearing loss, type of education - inclusion / differentiation) and to find out who is more prone to stigma - which characteristics of personality, identity, mental health and coping are specific for those deaf who demonstrates stigmatizing attitudes. The study involved 154 deaf and hard-of-hearing students (85 male and 69 female) aged from 18 to 45 years - 28 students of the Herzen State Pedagogical University (St. Petersburg), who study in inclusion, 108 students of the National Research Technological University and 18 students of the Aviation Technical College (Kazan) - students in groups with a sign language interpreter. We used the following methods: modified questionnaire 'Self-assessment and coping strategies' (Jambor & Elliot, 2005), Scale of self-esteem (Rosenberg et al, 1995), 'Big-Five' (Costa&McCrae, 1997), TRF (Becker, 1989), WCQ (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988), self-stigma scale (Mikhailov, 2008). The severity of self-stigmatization of deaf and hard of hearing students was determined by the degree of deafness and the time they live with hearing loss, learning conditions, the type of self-identification (acculturation), personality traits, and the specifics of coping behavior. Persons with congenital hearing loss more often noted a benevolent and sympathetic attitude towards them on the part of the hearers and less often, due to deafness, limited themselves to visiting public places than late deaf people, which indicates 'get rid of' the experience of their defect and normalization of the state. Students studying in conditions of inclusion more often noted the dismissive attitude of society towards deaf people. Individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss were more likely to fear marriage and childbearing because of their deafness than students with profound hearing loss. Those who considered themselves disabled (49% of all respondents) were more inclined to cope with seeking social support and less used 'distancing' coping. Those who believed that their quality of life and social opportunities were most influenced by the attitude of society towards the deaf (39%) were distinguished by a less pronounced sense of self-worth, a desire for autonomy, and frequent usage of 'avoidance' coping strategies. 36.4% of the respondents noted that there have been situations in their lives when people learned that they are deaf, began to treat them worse. These respondents had predominantly deaf acculturation, but more often, they used 'bicultural skills,' specific coping for the deaf, and had a lower level of extraversion and emotional stability. 31.2% of the respondents tried to hide from others that they have hearing problems. They considered themselves to be in a culture of hearing, used coping strategies 'bicultural skills,' and had lower levels of extraversion, cooperation, and emotional stability. Acknowledgment: Supported by the RFBR № 19-013-0040

Keywords : acculturation, coping, deafness, stigmatization

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