

Responsibility in the Hierarchy of Values of the Polish Youth with Hearing Impairment

Abstract

The goal of upbringing is affirmation of the student, self-development within the system of values that is recognized by a group and eventually interiorized. A correctly shaped hierarchy of values, which fulfills a regulatory and motivating role, provides favorable conditions for maturation of a young person, gaining autonomy and at the same time integration with society.

In the article the results of the research conducted to identify the system of values of youth with hearing impairments are discussed. The position of responsibility, whose essence consists in regulating one's free conduct, was identified within the hierarchy of values.

Responsibility is an instrumental value that is relatively highly valued by youth (rank 3 for hearing youth and rank 4 for youth with hearing impairment), which is a rewarding fact.

Keywords: *values, responsibility, youth with hearing impairment*

Introduction

Responsibility, understood at the most general level as a predisposition for assuming results of one's own actions undertaken as a result of autonomous (free) decisions, whose essence consists in regulating one's free conduct, is currently becoming an important subject of considerations, not only among theoreticians (e.g., philosophers, sociologists), but also practitioners, including pedagogues, psychiatrists (e.g. Malatesti, McMillan, 2010).

Responsibility is contemporarily perceived as a value but it is not at the same axiological level as freedom or truth. Responsibility is rather a specific kind of ability which is used to create and defend the values that are perceived as indispensable; this is the feature of personality which determines the way a person responds to the world of values (Zawadzki, 1982) and in this sense it assumes the character of an instrumental value (Rokeach, 1973, Drwal, Brzozowski, 1989; Jaworowska et al., 2011).

The significance of responsibility in the contemporary world is indisputable. It determines the psychic and personal maturity of a person and simultaneously it is a basis for conscious, active and independent participation in social life. Participation of persons with disabilities in the mainstream of social life assumes relationships between people in the common ideological, normative context, in the context of the system of values in which the individuality and uniqueness of every participant of this relation are respected. The condition of normalization of the social life of persons with disabilities is their responsibility.

Based on the analyses of theoretical concepts (cf., Zaborniak-Sobczak, 2013) it was assumed that responsibility in the individual dimension supports personal development, whereas responsibility in the group dimension facilitates building and maintaining partner relationships with people. In this context, identifying a degree of a sense of responsibility in youth with hearing impairments has become an interesting subject¹. An indicator of this sense is a position of responsibility in the preferred system of values.

With high probability it can be assumed that the hierarchy of values in the overall belief system of a person is rather constant but not universal, the same for all people (Rokeach, 1973), and a distribution of individual values can result from social determinants, mainly changes (which are still taking place in Poland and concern, among other things, the possibility of participation of persons with hearing impairments in social life) and personality determinants. Thus, the hierarchy of values of youth, including youth with different disabilities, is an interesting subject and a diagnosis of the system of values is important for the course of the upbringing.

¹ The aim of the research undertaken by the author of the article within the project "Psychosocial determinants of a sense of responsibility in youth with hearing dysfunction" (the National Science Centre, Agreement No. 4275/B/H03/2011/40) was to recognize a sense of responsibility (a dependent variable) in youth with hearing impairments and to indicate the factors (independent variables) which differentiate this sense. This article presents only a description of the system of values and responsibility in this system of the youth examined, the detailed cause and effect analyses were omitted (I do not indicate determinants of the systems of values for both groups of the youth examined).

ing process. The moral or psycho-social development of youth is an important area of investigation and it is of both practical and theoretical interest as to whether deaf youth develop value systems that are identical to, similar to, or different from those of hearing people. Similar questions may be raised as to possible similarities and differences across gender, race, or sexual orientation. On a national level, for example, do individuals who have grown up in Slovakia have the same value systems as those who have grown up in the Czech Republic or in Poland?

Research methodological assumptions. Characteristics of the youth examined

The comparisons of the systems of values of both groups of the youth examined (i.e. youth with hearing impairments and hearing youth) will show if a hearing impairment is the variable that makes a system of values peculiar, characteristic of deaf and hard of hearing youth.

The article attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What is the hierarchy of values of youth with hearing impairments?
- Does youth with hearing impairments have a different system of values than able-bodied youth?
- What is the position of responsibility in the system of values examined?

Due to the fact that the theoretical knowledge concerning the system of values and the sense of responsibility of persons with hearing impairments is limited so far – the lack of research in this scope (cf., Easterbrooks, Scheetz, 2004), formulating accurate and exhaustive hypotheses to the research questions stated turned out to be impossible. However, it was assumed that the understanding of responsibility and its position in the system of values may be specific to youth with hearing impairments. Such factors as a lack of sufficient linguistic competence, difficulties with the process of abstract thinking, disturbances of the cognitive, emotional and social sphere and also often growing up in the outside-family environment may play an important role in shaping this system (Dryzalowska, 1990) and deaf children manifest remarkably more problems with overall mental health, including significantly more problems with hyperactivity and inattention, as well as with peer relationships, in comparison to hearing children and youth. The incidence of the child's mental health problems in parental assessment is about twice as frequent as in the case of hearing children. This value corresponds to such incidence in other European countries (cf., Leigh, Anthony 1999; Steinberg 2000; Wallis et al. 2004; Gent Van et al. 2007; Hintermair, 2007, Leigh 2009).

Persons with hearing impairments may have difficulties in adequate assessment of causes and effects, which most frequently results from insufficient development of linguistic competence. A lot of situations of everyday life require understanding of the situations, which are complemented with language communication, most frequently verbal, and making quick decisions, which determines the course of events. Development of the skills of critical thinking is a necessary element of the socialization and upbringing process because critical thinking consists in the ability of observation, logical thinking and adequate responding to information. Critical thinking, whose part is also understanding of values, is a means of independent monitoring of one's own thoughts, feelings and actions. The role of a tutor (a teacher) is to help students to understand values, an attempt to arrange them in a hierarchy by youth with hearing impairments, which ensures their further social, emotional and also cognitive development (Easterbrooks, Scheetz, 2004). Only someone who acts consciously, makes conscious decisions, can assume consequences of their own actions; thus, can be responsible.

The description of Milton Rokeach's theory of values, their essence and systems have been presented in detail in the Polish literature, mainly by Brzozowski (Drwal, Brzozowski, 1989) and the authors of the Polish normalization of the Rokeach Value Survey /RVS/ (Jaworowska et al., 2011). The RVS makes it possible to identify the hierarchy of values in two systems: of terminal and instrumental values. The first part of the scale examines the system of terminal values: eighteen terminal values are put in a priority order from the most important one (rank 1) to the least important one (rank 18). Instrumental values (also eighteen) are ranked analogously (Drwal, Brzozowski, 1989).

The statistical analyses, carried out using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Science), made it possible to identify the hierarchy of terminal and instrumental values of the youth with hearing impairments and the hearing youth. Using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, the consistence of ranking values by the persons with hearing impairments and the hearing persons was checked (Dodge 2008).

The research was conducted in the 4th quarter of 2011 and the 1st quarter of 2012. Teachers – tutors of youth with hearing impairments were designated to conduct the survey. Their task was, assigned based on contracts of mandate, to take care of the correct process of the survey, to explain possible doubts during the research. The project manager (the author of the article) distributed among teachers a procedure for conducting research and a template to be filled in after conducting the research.

The selection of the group of persons examined was intentional. Thus, the following criteria of selection of the primary sample (hearing-impaired youth) were assumed: a) having an official certificate of disability due to a hearing impairment; b) the age from 16 to 25 (students of post-junior high schools), due to the adaptation of the research tools. The comparative sample (control group) included students of generally available, post-junior high schools, who were 16 years of age and were not hearing-impaired. In order to reflect the social environment and the age structure, the research on the comparative group was conducted in dormitories inhabited by students of different post-junior high schools, coming from different social backgrounds.

Failure to reach youth with hearing impairments who attend generally available schools – inclusive and integration schools – undoubtedly should be recognized as a limitation of the research. A lot of students refused to take part in the research, which indicates that young people are not interested in the research subject undertaken, among other things, in the world of values. Because the selection of persons examined was not random, the results obtained should not be generalized to the whole population. The data obtained during the research only show a certain tendency regarding the hierarchy of values of the youth examined and perceiving responsibility in the structure of values.

The youth at the age from 16 to 25, attending educational centers for the deaf located in the south-eastern part of Poland were studied. A small percentage of the group examined were hearing-impaired students of higher schools. In total, 271 persons with hearing impairments, including 142 females (52.4%) and 129 males (47.6%), were examined. According to the research assumptions, the participants in the research were mainly students of post-junior high schools; thus, the most numerous group were youth at the age from 17 to 20 (178 persons, 65.7%).

In the comparative research, 195 persons (131 females, 67.2%, and 64 males, 32.8%), hearing students of post-junior high schools: technical high schools, comprehensive high schools and vocational schools, located in Rzeszow, took part.

The youth examined most frequently indicated a village or a small town (under 50 thousand inhabitants) as a place of residence.

Characterizing the group of youth with hearing impairments, I will pay attention to a cause of the hearing impairment, the onset of the hearing loss, the degree of the hearing loss and the preferred method of communication.

Specifying the cause of their hearing defect, the majority of the persons examined (89 persons /32.8%/ of the youth with hearing impairments examined) pointed out its acquired pre-lingual or peri-lingual character (before the age of 5).

When specifying the onset of hearing loss, over a half of the persons examined (143 persons, 52.8%) answered that they had been deaf since birth.

Taking into account the degree of the hearing loss, the following hearing impairments can be distinguished: mild, moderate, severe and profound (by the International Bureau for Audiophonology /BIAP/). The detailed information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Degree of hearing loss in the group of youth examined

How deep is your hearing loss?	Group size	%
20–40 dB (mild)	15	5.54
41–70 dB (moderate)	44	16.24
71–90 dB (severe)	71	26.20
More than 91 dB (profound)	77	28.41
I don't know	60	22.14
No answer	4	1.48
Total:	271	100.01

The youth examined preferred total communication as a method of communication with the closest social environment. 142 persons (52.4%) chose available means of communication in the form of the national spoken language and sign language.

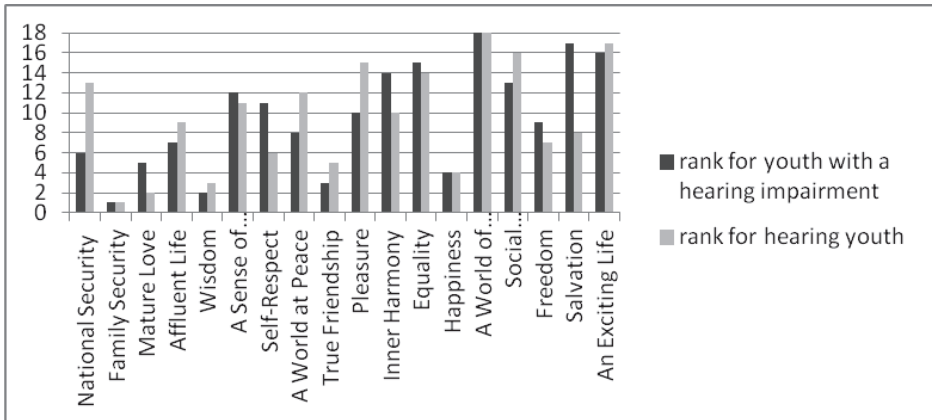
Analysis of the research results. The system of terminal values of the youth examined

In the examined group of the youth with hearing impairments, personal values, such as family security (rank 1), wisdom (rank 2), true friendship (rank 3), happiness (rank 4) and mature love (rank 5), were highly valued among the terminal values. The lowest valued values included the world of beauty (rank 18), salvation (rank 17), an exciting life (rank 16) and equality (rank 15).

On the other hand, the hearing youth valued the highest such terminal values as: family security (rank 1) and mature love (rank 2). The subsequent highest ranked values were: wisdom (rank 3), happiness (rank 4) and true friendship (rank 5). The values ranked by the hearing youth as valued the lowest were: the world of beauty (rank 18), an exciting life (rank 17), social recognition (rank 16) and pleasure (rank 15).

The comparison of the hierarchies of terminal values in the groups of youth with hearing impairments and hearing youth is presented in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1. The way of ranking terminal values by the comparative groups examined



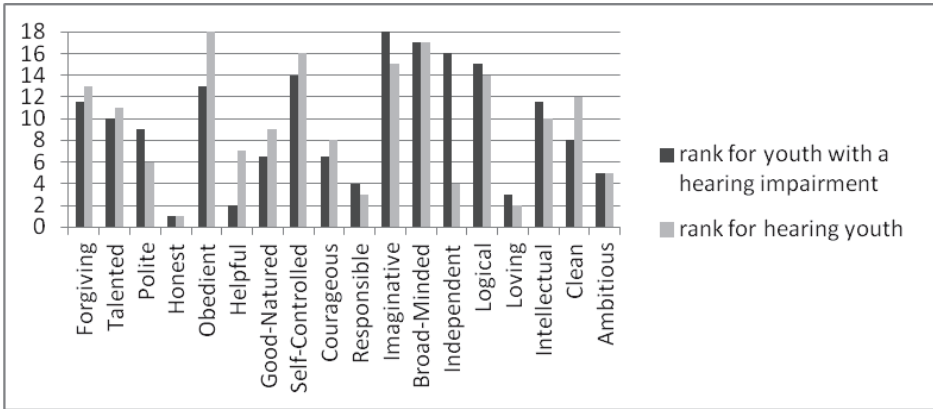
The consistence of the ranks of terminal values, and analogously of instrumental values, in the groups of youth with hearing impairments and hearing youth examined was measured with the use of Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient. Basically, it should be stated that the hearing-impaired persons and the hearing persons examined ranked terminal values similarly. The statistical analyses did not reveal any statistically relevant inconsistencies in this scope.

The system of instrumental values of the youth examined

In the case of instrumental values, the persons with hearing impairments valued the highest moral values, such as: honest (rank 1), helpful (rank 2), loving (rank 3), responsible (rank 4) and ambitious (rank 5). The instrumental values ranked low by the youth with hearing impairments included: imaginative (rank 18), broad-minded (rank 17), independent (rank 16) and logical (rank 15).

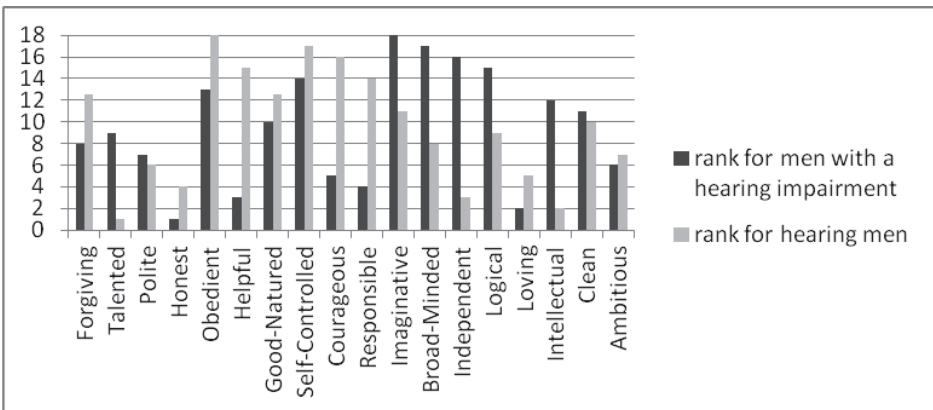
The hearing youth valued highly such instrumental values as: honest (rank 1), loving (rank 2), responsible (rank 3), independent (rank 4) and ambitious (rank 5). The least valued were: obedient (rank 18), broad-minded (rank 17), self-controlled (rank 16) and imaginative (rank 15). Diagram 2 presents the results of the comparative analyses conducted in both groups of the youth.

Diagram 2. The way of ranking instrumental values by the groups of youth with hearing impairments and hearing youth



The detailed statistical analyses revealed that in the scope of the evaluation of instrumental values, the persons' gender is of importance. The men with hearing impairments and hearing men ranked individual values with statistically significant differences, which is presented in Diagram 3.

Diagram 3. The way of ranking instrumental values by the groups of men with hearing impairments and hearing men



The strength of the correlation of ranking instrumental values is not significant in this case (Spearman's coefficient = -0.02), the minus sign means that the higher a given value is valued by the men with hearing impairments, the lower it is valued by the hearing men. It is particularly visible in the case of the values: imaginative, broad-minded, independent, logical, intellectual, talented, which are valued significantly lower by the men with hearing impairments than by the hearing men. On the other hand, the hearing-impaired men prefer such instrumental values as: honest, helpful, courageous, responsible and loving, which are not that important for the hearing men.

Responsibility and its position in the system of values examined

Responsibility takes a high position in the hierarchy of instrumental values of the youth with hearing impairments (rank 4) and the hearing youth examined (rank 3).

Nearly 19% of the persons with hearing impairments examined selected it as the most important value (rank 1) among instrumental values. For nearly 4% it was the lowest valued value (rank 18).

In the group of hearing youth, more than 13% of the persons examined selected "responsible" as the most important value (rank 1), a numerous group (11%) ranked it on the high, third place. Only for 7 persons (3.6%) it is the least important value.

Data clustering made it possible to show the closeness of the value "responsible" to other instrumental values. The comparison of distances between the values allows for concluding that for the youth with hearing impairments the value "responsible" is in a close distance to the value "loving". In the case of the hearing persons examined, the value "responsible", similarly as in the case of the youth with hearing impairments, is close to the value "loving", and besides, close to the values "independent" and "honest".

In the case of the women examined, both those with hearing impairments and hearing ones, responsibility is a highly valued value, it takes the 4th rank (for the women with hearing impairments) and the 3rd rank (for the hearing women). The position of this value in the hierarchy of instrumental values looks different in the case of the men (Diagram 2). The men with hearing impairments value responsibility relatively highly (rank 4), but in the case of the hearing men the value takes the far 14th position (statistically significant differences).

Conclusions

Based on the above analyses, conclusions have been drawn which are simultaneously an attempt to give answers to the research questions:

- Both the youth with hearing impairments and the hearing youth have similar hierarchies of terminal and instrumental values, which may show that a hearing impairment is unlikely to be a variable differentiating the hierarchy of values. The youth highly value family security, wisdom, mature love, friendship and happiness among the terminal values. These values, which in theoretical assumptions are identified as personal values, are clearly prioritized over social values. The value “the world of beauty” takes the lowest position in the hierarchy of both groups of the youth compared.
- Out of the instrumental values, such values as honest, loving, responsible, and ambitious are valued the highest in both groups of the examined youth.
- In spite of the fact that detailed statistical analyses did not reveal differences in choices made by the two groups examined, it seems that gender may play an important role here – in the scope of instrumental values, the hearing men make significantly different choices from their hearing-impaired peers.
- The research shows that the men with hearing impairments can be more consistent in terms of being guided by responsibility in their personal and social life than the hearing men, for whom this value is not that important.
- Competence values, including imaginative, broad-minded, independent and logical, were ranked as valued relatively lowest, especially by the youth with hearing impairments. This fact may indicate that the youth examined do not attach significance to such personal features as self-creation, personal development, and it may result in an inappropriate self-assessment.

The research results show that the persons with hearing impairments examined value responsibility rather more highly than the hearing persons examined. Nonetheless, it should be recognized that this value is relatively highly valued in the system of instrumental values. The research results confirm the conclusions of the research conducted by other Polish (Szczupal, 2009, Cichowska, Kurkowski, 2012) and foreign authors (Franc et al., 2002, Vlah, Loncaric, 2011) according to which youth are open to the issues of other people; however, their openness is limited to the closest people, i.e., family and friends. Out of the instrumental values, whose purpose is to achieve aims and accomplish other values (terminal, final values), the youth value the moral values the most highly. It may mean that basically young people believe in morality as a method of achieving goals. The preference of such values as loving, honest, or responsible

may indicate young people's idealism, which is characteristic of the developing age of the youth examined.

The results of the research are optimistic. It should be hoped that responsibility declared will be a point of reference, of integrating and ordering information and individual and social experiences of the youth examined. Feeling responsible by youth with disabilities may be an indicator of effectiveness of the complex psycho-social integration process. On the other hand, responsibility is a basic and necessary prerequisite for the existence of real psycho-social integration.

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