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Architectonics of personality resources of physically disabled students



Problem and background

Living in the conditions of chronic limitations leads to distortions of emotional background, but also consumes vital resources of psychological resilience. In traditional psychology it is known that, disability leads to negative psychological consequences for the individual such as a feeling of inferiority. At the same time A. Adler considered inferiority to be a natural feeling and claimed that it is the cause of all the improvements in the state of humanity (Adler, 1928).

Lev Vygotsky (1929) discussed person's reaction to the disability: "... always and under all circumstances the development, complicated by a defect, is a creative process (organic and psychological) reconstruction of the child personality based on the adjustment of all functions adaptation, and formation the new... processes generated defect and making new circuitous paths".

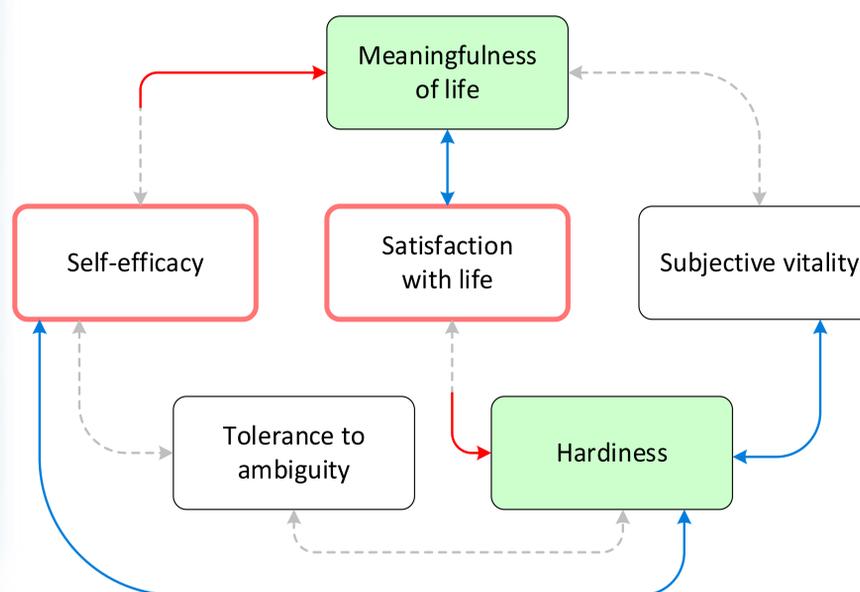
The chronic injury (in the broadest sense) thus becomes the structural center around which the resources of resilience are organized (Leontiev, Aleksandrova, 2010). The structure of these resources would depend on the particular health restrictions, and on the capacity to find an alternative way of overcoming the disability effects.

Study Design

We hypothesized that the existential situation of the physically challenged students would result in the structural peculiarities, rather than just quantitative measures of their resources of positive functioning.

We compared physically disabled (N=58) and non-disabled (N=93) participants (college and undergraduate students studying in an inclusive setting). All of them studying in inclusive educational settings. **The aim** of the current study was revealing the specifics in the structural organization of personality resources of the physically disabled. **Method.** We applied stepwise multiple regression analysis to check the predictive capacity of each resource variable in physically disabled and physically intact participants.

Structure of personality resources



Explanatory notes

- ← - - - - - Invariant structural patterns
- ↔ Structural patterns specific for non-disabled participants
- ↔ Structural patterns specific for physically disabled participants
- ... (red box) - Variables becoming personality resources in physically disabled only
- ... (green box) - Variables becoming personality resources in both groups

Results & Discussion

We found both invariant and group-specific structural patterns. *Invariant patterns* included bilateral connections between meaningfulness and vitality, meaningfulness and hardiness, tolerance for ambiguity and hardiness, tolerance for ambiguity and self-efficacy, as well as unilateral predictions from hardiness to life satisfaction and from meaningfulness to self-efficacy.

In the physically intact participants the variables were more strongly interrelated, while in the physically disabled ones the connections were more specific and selective. Hardiness and meaningfulness made the most important structural nodes in both groups, while life satisfaction and self-efficacy were apparently more important as a resource only in physically disabled participants.

Specific patterns for the physically disabled included only reversed predictions from life satisfaction to hardiness and from self-efficacy to meaningfulness; in this group all the significant associations were bilateral. In the group of non-disabled participants specific patterns included bilateral connections between meaningfulness and satisfaction with life, hardiness and vitality, hardiness and self-efficacy.

Satisfaction with life in students with disabilities emerges both as a DV, an effect of life meaningfulness and as an IV, a predictor of hardiness.

Conclusion

The system of personality resources in students with disabilities is organized in a specific way based on alternative circuitous paths of overcoming disability (Lebedeva, 2012). *"Circuitous paths of cultural development [author's note: in the situation of multiple restrictions] create special forms of behavior as if the latter were constructed deliberately for experimental purposes"* (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 25). Indeed, it is a natural experiment the disabled participants make over the psychological consequences of physical (and mental) health restrictions.

Methods

- 1) *Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)* – E. Diener et al. (1984), adopted by D. Leontiev, E. Osin (2008);
- 2) *Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)* – S. Lyubomirsky, H. Lepper (1999), adopted by D. Leontiev, E. Osin (2008);
- 3) *Subjective Vitality Scale* – R. Ryan, C. Frederick (1997) adopted by D. Leontiev, L. Aleksandrova (2011);
- 4) *Meaningfulness of life test* by D. Leontiev (1992) – the author's modification of Maholick's test "Purpose in Life" (Crumbaugh, Maholick, 1981);
- 5) *Hardiness scale* – S. Maddi (1998), adopted by D. Leontiev, E. Rasskazova (2006);
- 6) *Multiple Stimulus Types Ambiguity Tolerance (MSTAT-I)* – D. McLain (1993), adopted by E. Lukovitskaya (1998);
- 7) *General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)* – M. Jerusalem, R. Schwarzer (1992), adopted by V. Romek (1996).

