

MENTALLY DISABLED YOUNG ADULTS: ATTITUDES TO THEIR WORK ABILITIES

**Juodraštis Adolfas
Radzevičienė Liuda**

Šiaulių universitetas

Faculty of Social Welfare and Disability Studies

Department of Social Pedagogy and Psychology

Social environment is one of the most important factors for the societal acceptance and education of mentally disabled adults. The concept of social environment is rather multi-meaningful and in the aspect of work ability it is described as the interaction of institution, family of the disabled and community. Work abilities and possibilities of mentally disabled adults in the situation of market economics is still quite problematic link in the industrial and educational reality. 689 participants took part in research, aim of which was to set particularities of social attitudes on the work abilities of mentally disabled. To reveal the aim of the research the questionnaire was prepared and occasionally selected adults from 20 to 80 took part in this activity. We found out that in general societal attitude to the work possibilities of mentally disabled is rather positive, in opposite to the possibility for high – level work. People who participated in the research agree, that mentally disabled can be useful for society. Women are more confident in this position and it might have several reasons: probably, they have more contacts with mentally disabled during their life, and having more experience they could better assess work possibilities of disabled. Other reason that a woman has more experience in everyday routine work, that doesn't need high skills, that's why they can find ordinary works that are suitable for mentally disabled. We can do premise, that society is welcoming attempts of mentally disabled to participate in the labor market relationships, and in this situation became important type of the work, but not considerations about possibility to work. So, labor market must be more flexible for the job needs of mentally disabled, because society is open to meet them.

Key words: Mild mentally disabled adults, “friendly environment”, job relationships, social attitude.

Participation of mentally disabled in the labor market is important integration activity and at the same time it is useful form of social rehabilitation. Work activity of mentally disabled we can assess as increasing processes of self-confidence, as well. Successful integration to the labor market and maintenance of job skills of mentally disabled in many cases depends on the societal attitudes, type of the offered work, and individual characteristics of mentally disabled person. These factors are significant determinants of person's efficiency. The job skills of mentally disabled is stable; before disability they might have high level of work skills but it doesn't mean that they can use them in the situation of mental disease. Work skills are going to get poor and it creates a lot of problems for employers, colleagues, depends and for mentally disabled person, as well. For the forming of positive attitudes of society to mentally disabled and for successful integration to labor market there are important three factors: Level of disability, Social environment, and Type of work activity. This complex of mentioned factors must be developed in the socio-educational activity, in which experience and professional competences of social pedagogue is significant.

Relationship is a dimension that might stimulate openness of mentally disabled and creating of „friendly environment“. Communication skills are a problematic sphere of interaction behavior for mentally disabled people. We can say that job is always connected in close relationships with

other people and that's why particularities of interaction determinate societal attitudes on mentally disabled.

Efficiency is a individual's capacity to work productively for a certain time. Operating abilities of mentally ill persons has some specific features that are not common for people having other kinds of disabilities. Work abilities of mentally ill are not stable, first of all. In the period of flare-up work capabilities could became lower or even be lost, and in periods of remission persons work capability may correspond to general requirements for work quality. That's why psychological attitudes of employers and other members of society on such uneven characteristics of operating capabilities of mentally ill persons influence negative social attitudes, as well. These attitudes directly connected with the problems and successful processes of professional rehabilitation and integration.

Work is multiplex activity in which even minimal abilities of analysis, synthesis, sense of responsibility, sequential activity, skills of planning and intercourse are needed.

Workload and particular conditions of work environment forms some specific societal attitudes, also. Because of some other type of attention, reaction, endurance, weariness, tend to conflicts with environment, the quality of work may suffer. These specific characteristics indicate that some other kind of ergonomic requirements (workplace and whole environment) must be shape.

Communication is this particular dimension that can influence individuals or societal openness for the creating of "friendly environment". But communication particularities of mentally ill persons is the most problematic sphere of there everyday participant. As a rule, work is always conjunct with collaboration processes that are why behavioral characteristics shaped by communication abilities forms negative attitudes through mentally disable worker.

One of the most realistic ways to integrate mentally disabled persons to the work relationships is to create "friendly environment". Problems are not discussed enough of "friendly environment" concerning mentally ill persons in the context of professional integration (Salzberg, Lignugaris-Kraft, McCuller (cit. Hallagan, Kauffman); 1991, Baranauskienė, 2002). Social environment is one of the most important factors for the societal acceptance and education of mentally disabled adults. The concept of social environment is rather multi-meaningful and in the aspect of work ability it is described as the interaction of institution, family of the disabled and community. Work abilities and possibilities of mentally disabled adults in the situation of market economics is still quite problematic link in the industrial and educational reality.

So, it's obvious the situation of mentally ill person as a member of whole ergo system is rather problematic, that's why activities towards forming positive psychological attitudes in whole levels of society are important. Vocational competence of mentally ill, as a present reality of labor

market, anyway, sometimes we don't know the expectations of mentally ill persons. We say that mentally ill persons can live partly independently, go to vocational training and work. Environmental aspects are important for both: of mentally ill persons and of employers; environment motivates for collaboration or not. In this research concept of environment we understand as multiplex phenomenon, including exterior factors (type of work, relationships with co-workers, length of work activities) and interior aspects of nearest environment (family members of mentally ill persons, their level of education, status of employment, ext.), as, well. Generally, environment we describe as institutional and community interaction in order to get environment more friendly for mentally ill persons. In present conditions of economic market, professional rehabilitation of mentally ill persons is still question, which requires a lot of different specialists' attempts. That's why we would like to look more carefully in present situation of mentally ill persons concerning their possibilities to optimize their life quality.

Object of the research: Societal attitudes on the mentally ill person as a participant of labor market.

Aim of the research: to reveal societal attitudes to the capabilities of mentally ill persons to participate in the work relationships.

Extent of research: 698 citizens of Siauliai city from 20 to 68 years of age.

Method of the research: questionnaire prepared by specialist's team of Siauliai mental Hospital. Research data was computed using methods of descriptive statistics.

The hypothesis of independent variables was checked by non-parametric man-Whitney test. Datum hypothesis rejected at the level of significance of $p < 0,05$. Linear statistical link between attributes assessed using method of correlation (correlation rank of Pearson).

Analysis of research data

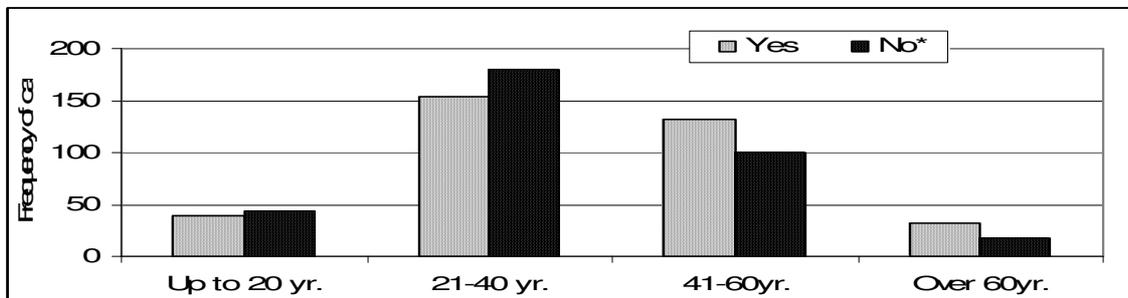
People who took part in this research by coincidence were selected in Siauliai city. It was pilot research done in various public places of the city. Representative number of participants guaranteed sure results that reflect societal attitudes on vocational capabilities of mentally ill persons.

Table 1. Characteristic of participants

Gender	Age				Total
	Up to 20 years of age	21–40 years of age	41–60 years of age	Over 60 years of age	
Man	36 (5,15%)	83 (11,89%)	64 (9,16%)	6 (0,85%)	189 (27,07%)
Woman	47 (6,73%)	250 (35,81%)	168 (24,06%)	44 (6,30%)	509 (72,92%)
Total	83 (11,89%)	333 (47,70%)	232 (33,23%)	50 (7,16%)	698 (100%)

The main part of participants was people from 21 to 40 years of age. Coincidence floor of the research reflects common tendencies of societal demographic characteristics: number of man is less than number of woman in all age groups and most socially active and visible part of society is

people between 21 and 60 years of age. This group of people forms a main presumptive part of co-workers and employers, as well. Age period's distribution of the research participants based on the common features of certain group socio-psychological and personality development that is not strictly defined in time (Psichologijos žodynas, 1993).



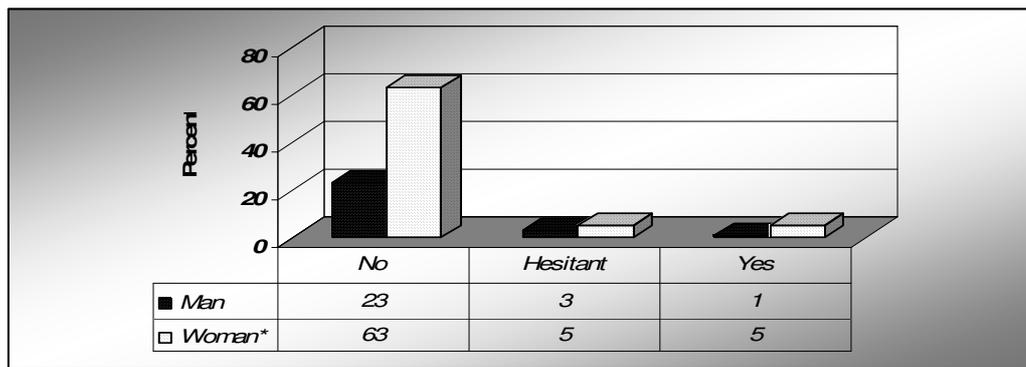
* - level of significant $p=0,03$

Figure 1. *Direct interaction experience of research quota with mentally ill persons (N=698)*

We think that it's important in forming of the whole attitudes to mentally disabled fact of direct experience in interaction processes. It is unexpected that people over 60 years of age ($p=0,03$) has no experience with mentally ill persons. It may happen so because of their health status or living conditions: may be they need care themselves. The most part of people who had direct contacts with mentally ill persons were at the age from 21 to 40. So, talking about integration activities of mentally ill persons into the labor market opinion of older people can't be taking into account. This result seems to be discussed because the life experience and social activities according gender let us do some premises: - first: older people are not active participants of present changes in social paradigms, second: attitudes and values in this age are quite resistant for changes.

Results according gender shows that woman has much more often contacts then man, and this tendency reflects gender psychological particularities and life traditions: to take care about sick and old. One detail might be interesting in point of view of research data significant. There were no significant differences (as we think to find) in man's and woman's contacts with mentally ill persons.

Societal confidence in capability of mental patients to lead important jobs can be assessed as one of the indicators of societal tolerance and sophistication. We set up (fig.2) that most of the research participants don't agree to share responsible woks with mentally ill persons.



* - level of significant $p= 0,02$

Figure 2. Societal attitude on high-job responsibility level of mentally ill persons (N=698)

Results reveal that society is against participation of mentally ill persons in the responsible work activities. Woman ($p=0,02$) disagree with proposition that mentally ill persons in the period of remission could participate in high-work position and they were much more strictly in their opinion than man were.

We found out that in general societal attitude to the work possibilities of mentally disabled is rather positive, in opposite to the possibility for high – level work (fig.2). People who participated in the research agree that mentally ill persons can be useful for society. Women are more confident ($p=0,04$) in this position and it might have several reasons: probably, they has more contacts with mentally disabled during their life, and having more experience they could better assess work possibilities of disabled. Other reason that a woman has more experience in everyday routine work, that doesn't need high skills, that's why they can find ordinary works that are suitable for mentally disabled. We can do premise, that society is welcoming attempts of mentally disabled to participate in the labor marked relationships, and in this situation became important type of the work, but not considerations about possibility to work. So, labor marked must be more flexible for the job needs have mentally disabled, because society is open to meet them.

Other indicator that let us draw conclusions about positive societal attitudes to the work activity of mentally disabled is fact that people agree with openness concerning diagnosis of the person (fig.3). Discussing results we can say that there were no significant differences between men and woman, anyway we find out some tendencies in this attitude. Women are going to be more open and they agree that diagnosis must not be hidden from the employer. Talking about results among man we set up that they are not sure in themselves in such situation.

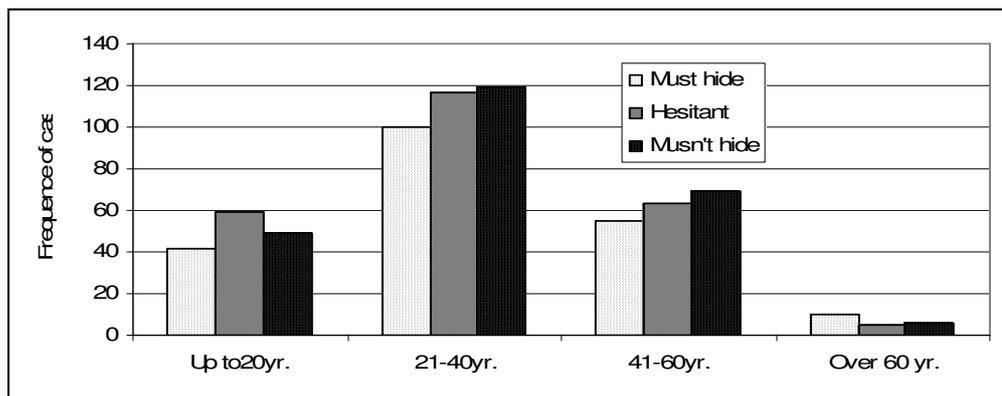


Figure 3. Attitudes on the need to hide diagnosis in getting to the work relationship (N=698)

Research data show some tendencies among different age groups concerning need to hide diagnosis in getting to the labor market. Most of people who participate in the research think that there is no need to hide mental illness, or doubt. And people who are over 60 years of age prefer to hide person's mental health situation. This fact proves once more, that older part of our society is resistant in their values and attitudes toward mental ill persons.

They think, that before starting the job, mentally disabled must inform employer about their health condition and that this fact is not a reason to get job. This is very important; knowing that attitude of environment is one of the individuals risk elements to experience psychological neglect in the group.

We set up strong Pearson correlation (0,08; level of significance $p=0,001$) of social attitudes on capability of mentally ill persons to be useful by their job activities and societal openness accepting situation of mental illness. It means that social attitudes to the phenomenon of mental illness are changing and that's why we can talk about real processes of understanding of integration processes of mentally disables persons.

There was found out that society welcomes even very sensitive viewpoints that directly connected with the fact of mental disability. Those who took part in the research agree, that it is better to inform employer about disability before starting the work. It's obvious that sometimes society is much more open-minded then disabled person and problems of interaction is likely to be inner problem of personal perception. In all investigated groups according age both men and women indicated that mental disability must not be hidden. This result we assess as positive changes in the whole perception of the phenomenon of mental health.

Conclusions

1. Social environment is one of the most important factors for the societal acceptance and education of mentally disabled adults. The concept of social environment is rather multi-meaningful and in the aspect of work ability it is

described as the interaction of institution, family of the disabled and community. Successful integration to the labor market and maintenance of job skills of mentally disabled in many cases depends on the societal attitudes, type of the offered work, and individual characteristics of mentally disabled person.

2. The most part of people who had direct contacts with mentally ill persons were at the age from 21 to 40. So, talking about integration activities of mentally ill persons into the labor market opinion of older people can't be taking into account.
3. Woman ($p=0,02$) disagree with proposition that mentally ill persons in the period of remission could participate in high-work position and they were much more strictly in their opinion than man were.
4. People who participated in the research agree that mentally ill persons can be useful for society. Women are more confident ($p=0,04$) in this position and it might have several reasons: probably, they has more contacts with mentally disabled during their life, and having more experience they could better assess work possibilities of disabled.
5. Women are going to be more open and they agree that diagnosis must not be hidden from the employer. Talking about results among man we set up that they are not sure in themselves in such situation.
6. We set up strong Pearson correlation (0,08; level of significance $p=0,001$) of social attitudes on capability of mentally ill persons to be useful by their job activities and societal openness accepting situation of mental illness. It means that social attitudes to the phenomenon of mental illness are changing and that's why we can talk about real processes of understanding of integration processes of mentally disables persons.

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About authors**Adolfas Juodraitis**

Ph.D. Assoc. Prof. and Head of the Department of Social Pedagogy and Psychology in Faculty of Social Welfare and Disability Studies Siauliai University. The main scientific interests are: problems of delinquency, social resocialization of young offenders. Member of Scientific Council of Doctoral Studies, member of Senate Of Siauliai University.

Liuda Radzevičienė

Ph.D. Assoc. Prof. of the Department of Social Pedagogy and Psychology in Faculty of Social Welfare and Disability Studies Siauliai University. The main scientific interests are: psycho- pedagogical problems of the adults, who are in the group of social risk, problems of life quality of social risk group adults in changing socioeconomic situation.