PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific analysis of the psychological and social development characteristics of children with visual impairments within the framework of typhlopsychology and special pedagogy. The study highlights the compensatory development mechanisms of sensory-perceptual processes, attention, memory, and thinking under conditions of visual analyzer insufficiency, emphasizing the leading role of auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic sensations. Furthermore, based on L.S. Vygotsky's theories of compensation and anomalous development, the specific patterns of psychic development in visually impaired children are thoroughly explained. The article also examines the influence of social adaptation, communicative activity, family environment, and inclusive educational conditions on the child's personality formation. Special attention is paid to the relationship between compensation mechanisms and specialized pedagogical approaches, typhlotechnical tools, and favorable socio-pedagogical conditions.

Keywords: visually impaired children, typhlopsychology, compensation mechanisms, sensory development, perceptual processes, attention, memory, thinking, social adaptation, inclusive education, typhlopedagogy, auditory analyzer, tactile sensation, psychic development, communicative activity.

The psychological and social development characteristics of visually impaired children are comprehensively studied within the framework of special psychology (typhlopsychology). Although development in these children follows general

developmental laws, due to the limitation of the primary analyzer — vision — psychic processes, particularly sensation and perception, take a unique direction. This issue is scientifically explained by L.S. Vygotsky's theory of "compensation" and "secondary defects." Subsequently, the sensory-perceptual processes of visually impaired children were deeply investigated by scholars such as M. Zemtsova, R. Boskis, and I. Solovyov.

The primary feature of psychological development in visually impaired children is the reorganization of the sensory system. While vision plays a leading role in normal development, in these children, auditory, tactile (touch), and kinesthetic sensations perform the leading compensatory function. Sensory processes constitute the initial stage of their interaction with the environment, and it is at this level that specific peculiarities are most clearly manifested. For instance, the sense of hearing becomes relatively keen and differentiated, enabling the child to develop a high capacity for locating sound sources, distinguishing between sounds, and perceiving speech through hearing. Tactile sensation, on the other hand, serves as the primary tool for determining the shape, size, and surface characteristics of objects. Perception through the fingertips (active tactile sensation) is a crucial source of cognition for them.

However, the development of sensory processes does not automatically reach a high level. It is formed through specialized education and training. Otherwise, the limitation of sensory experience can lead to a deceleration of general cognitive activity. For this reason, the purposeful development of sensory perception holds a vital place in typhlopedagogical practice.

Perceptual processes also occur uniquely in visually impaired children. Perception is the process of reflecting objects and phenomena as a whole based on sensations, and its formation becomes complicated under conditions of visual impairment. Due to the lack of opportunity to obtain large amounts of information quickly and simultaneously through vision, perception in these children develops in a fragmentary, sequential, and slow manner. For example, instead of comprehending an

object instantly through sight, they examine it with their hands and learn it step-by-step. This leads to a temporal extension of the perceptual process.

Spatial perception poses a particular challenge for visually impaired children. Determining distance, direction, and the relative positioning of objects relies more heavily on auditory and kinesthetic experience. Therefore, orientation in space and mobility skills require specialized instruction. Another feature of perception is a lower level of generalization. Because information about objects is mostly acquired through separate, isolated senses, integrating them into a holistic image requires additional mental activity.

These features of psychological development directly impact social development. The inability to fully receive social signals — facial expressions, gestures, and body movements — through vision complicates the communication process. Consequently, the acquisition of social experience is slowed down, and in some cases, social passivity or shyness may develop. However, this condition is not permanent: under correctly organized educational and social environmental conditions, such children can develop into active, independent, and socially adapted individuals.

In conclusion, sensory and perceptual processes occupy a central place in the psychological development of visually impaired children, and they are formed in a specific compensatory direction. While these processes are limited on one hand, they can be effectively developed through the correct pedagogical approach on the other. This constitutes an essential condition for the child's general psychic and social development.

In visually impaired children, psychic processes, particularly attention, memory, and thinking, are formed in a unique manner. These characteristics are directly linked to the insufficiency of the visual analyzer and are reorganized through compensatory mechanisms. This issue has been deeply studied in typhlopedagogical psychology, and the process is scientifically grounded by L.S. Vygotsky’s theory of anomalous

development and compensation, as well as the research of R. Boskis, M. Zemtsova, and I. Solovyov.

Attention. The development of attention in visually impaired children is primarily formed through auditory and tactile analyzers. Due to the absence of visual information, the span of attention (the amount of information grasped at one time) may be relatively limited; however, stability (the ability to sustain attention on an activity for a long time) is often better developed. This is because the child perceives information gradually and sequentially, paying deeper attention to each detail. At the same time, the shifting and distribution of attention require specialized training, since spatial orientation and multi-channel perception are carried out without visual support. Through typhlopedagogical exercises, the skills of managing and directing attention are consistently enhanced.

Memory. The memory process in visually impaired children bears a compensatory character, where auditory and tactile memory play a leading role. In particular, verbal (word-based) and auditory memory tend to be relatively well-developed because the child receives information mostly through speech. Due to the scarcity of visual images, the process of memorization relies on the verbal-logical system. This reinforces sequentiality and systematicity in memorizing material. Meanwhile, representation-based visual memory may be limited, but it develops through a compensatory path — by linking images with words and tactile experience. The success of memory largely depends on instructional methods, where special methodologies (the Braille system, audio materials) play a significant role.

Thinking. Thinking is one of the most important compensatory psychic processes in visually impaired children. Due to the limitation of visual perception, thinking relies more heavily on auditory, speech, and tactile experience. As L.S. Vygotsky pointed out, speech is the primary tool of thinking; therefore, the

development of speech in visually impaired children plays a decisive role in the formation of thought.

In these children, the thinking process possesses a more sequential and verbal-logical character. They analyze objects and events not through sight, but on the basis of verbal descriptions and experience. This can positively influence the development of abstract and logical thinking. However, in the initial stages, difficulties are observed in generalization, spatial imagination, and figurative thinking. Therefore, the development of thinking is supported through specialized instruction, visual-tactile aids, and verbal explanations.

In general, attention, memory, and thinking develop in an interconnected compensatory direction in visually impaired children. The stability of attention, verbal-tactile forms of memory, and the speech-logical system of thinking constitute their primary psychic foundation. Properly organized pedagogical and psychological conditions significantly develop these processes, enabling the child's full social adaptation.

The social development characteristics of visually impaired children are intrinsically linked to their psychic development and are characterized by the unique course of the social experience acquisition process resulting from the insufficiency of the visual analyzer. Social development is the process through which a child enters into interaction with society, assimilates social norms and values, acquires communication skills, and finds their place in society. This process is formed in visually impaired children primarily on the basis of compensatory mechanisms and specialized pedagogical influence.

In visually impaired children, the communication process occurs mainly through hearing and speech, as visual communicative signals (facial expressions, gestures, eye contact) do not fully reach them. Consequently, difficulties may be observed in the initial stages of communication: initiating, maintaining a conversation, and

understanding non-verbal signals in communication are limited. As a result, the child often relies excessively on verbal communication.

Scientifically, as L.S. Vygotsky emphasized, socialization is formed through speech; therefore, speech development becomes the primary vehicle for social adaptation in visually impaired children. In such children, communication skills develop actively under correctly organized pedagogical conditions; however, in an unfavorable environment, they may be prone to shyness, communication avoidance, or social passivity. Although discomfort and misunderstandings may be observed in relations with peers at the initial stage, they can become active social participants through specialized support.

The social adaptation of visually impaired children depends on the quality of compensatory development and the social environment. The adaptation process is closely linked to acquiring skills in spatial orientation, independent mobility, and self-care. If these skills are not formed, the child becomes more dependent on assistance, which limits their independence.

However, within a correctly organized educational and rehabilitation process, visually impaired children can fully adapt to society. Specialized technical means (the Braille system, audio devices, orientation training) increase their independence. As emphasized in the research of M. Zemtsova and other scientists, the adaptation process depends not only on medical support, but also on pedagogical and psychological support.

Social stereotypes also play an important role in social adaptation. If a correct attitude toward disability is formed in society, the child feels free and as an equal member of society. Otherwise, social barriers and discrimination hinder the adaptation process.

The family is one of the most critical factors in the social development of a visually impaired child. The family shapes the child's first social experience and

directly influences their emotional-volitional development. A supportive, encouraging family environment oriented toward independence fosters positive personality traits in the child.

Conversely, overprotection (hyperprotection) or indifference adversely affects the child's social development. As a result of hyperprotection, the child does not learn to make independent decisions, and passivity and learned helplessness are formed. In the research of R. Boskis, the decisive impact of the family environment on emotional and social development was also explicitly highlighted.

The surrounding environment — namely the school, peer group, and the broader social environment — is also of great importance. Under conditions of inclusive education, visually impaired children adapt faster to society, develop their social skills, and feel like full-fledged members of the community.

The role of compensation mechanisms and socio-pedagogical conditions in the development of visually impaired children is one of the central scientific problems. This issue has been widely studied within special psychology and typhlopedagogics, with the theory of the "complex structure of anomalous development" and "compensation" developed by L.S. Vygotsky serving as the methodological foundation. Subsequently, this direction was deepened empirically and practically by scholars such as M. Zemtsova, R. Boskis, and I. Solovyov.

Mechanisms of Compensation. Compensation mechanisms refer to the process of functional and psychological reorganization aimed at offsetting deficiencies through other psychic and sensory systems of the organism when the activity of the visual analyzer is impaired or lost. This process takes place at biological, psychological, and social levels.

At the biological-compensatory level, the activity of auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic analyzers intensifies. The child perceives the environment not through vision, but through sounds, touch, and movement sensations. For instance, orienting in

space, distinguishing people by their voices, and perceiving speech with subtle differences develop through the auditory analyzer. Tactile sensation becomes the primary tool for determining the shape, size, and texture of objects. These processes represent a functional redistribution of sensory systems rather than simple enhancement.

At the psychological level, compensation is realized through speech and thinking. As L.S. Vygotsky pointed out, speech is the primary tool governing higher psychic functions; therefore, speech becomes the main pillar of thinking in visually impaired children. They rely more heavily on verbal-logical thinking, which can positively influence the development of abstract reasoning.

Furthermore, an essential aspect of compensation is the strengthening of the motivational sphere. Visually impaired children can form internal motivation directed at overcoming difficulties. In this, volitional qualities — perseverance, patience, and goal-directedness — play a significant role.

However, the compensation process does not occur automatically. It is directly linked to specialized pedagogical influence and social conditions. If conditions are not properly organized, compensation may form weakly or incompletely.

Socio-pedagogical conditions are a decisive factor in the development of visually impaired children. These conditions include the family, the educational institution, the peer collective, and the broader social environment. These factors can either support or, conversely, restrict the child's psychic development.

The family — as the primary social environment — shapes the child's emotional stability and self-confidence. A supportive, encouraging, and independence-oriented family environment helps compensatory mechanisms work effectively. On the contrary, excessive protection (hyperprotection) or indifference limits the child's independent movement and reinforces social passivity.

The educational institution, in turn, creates special pedagogical conditions. Through typhlopedagogical methods, the Braille system, audio tools, and orientation and mobility exercises, the child develops compensatory skills. The environment of inclusive education strengthens social integration and ensures the equal participation of the child.

The peer collective also plays a vital role. Positive social relationships help the child feel like a full-fledged member of society. Negative relationships, however, can exacerbate social withdrawal and emotional instability.

As emphasized in the research of M. Zemtsova and other scientists, socio-pedagogical conditions are the primary factor determining the direction of the compensation process. That is, even if biological potentials exist, their development is determined precisely by the quality of the social environment.

In conclusion, in visually impaired children, compensation mechanisms are realized at biological, psychological, and social levels. However, the effectiveness of this process directly depends on socio-pedagogical conditions, and a correctly organized environment ensures the full-fledged development of the child's personality.

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