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PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CONFLICTUAL INTERACTION AMONG PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

У статті здійснено теоретичний аналіз психосоціальних аспектів конфліктної взаємодії осіб з інвалідністю в сучасному суспільстві. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю осмислення чинників, що ускладнюють міжособистісну взаємодію осіб з інвалідністю в умовах поширення інклюзивних практик і водночас збереження соціальних бар'єрів, стигматизації та дискримінаційних установок. Визначено, що конфліктна взаємодія осіб з інвалідністю є складним психосоціальним феноменом, який формується під впливом зовнішніх соціальних передумов і внутрішніх психологічних медіаторів. До основних соціальних чинників віднесено стигматизацію, дискримінацію, бар'єрність середовища, патерналістські установки та негативний попередній досвід взаємодії. Серед психологічних медіаторів виокремлено самоповагу, тривожність, страх неприйняття, довіру або недовіру до оточення, емоційну саморегуляцію. Показано, що взаємодія цих чинників зумовлює виникнення таких проявів конфліктної взаємодії, як образа, непорозуміння, захисні реакції, уникання контакту, відкритий або прихований конфлікт. Окреслено основні наслідки конфліктної взаємодії, серед яких емоційне виснаження, соціальна ізоляція, зниження довіри, пасивність і самоізоляція. Обґрунтовано значення психологічної підтримки, розвитку асертивності, формування інклюзивної культури та посилення соціальної підтримки як ресурсів конструктивного подолання конфліктної взаємодії. У статті запропоновано структурно-функціональну модель психосоціальних аспектів конфліктної взаємодії осіб з інвалідністю, яка відображає взаємозв'язок соціальних передумов, психологічних медіаторів, проявів, наслідків і ресурсів подолання. Зроблено висновок, що конфліктна взаємодія осіб з інвалідністю має багаторівневий характер і потребує комплексного психологічного та соціального осмислення.

Ключові слова: особи з інвалідністю, конфліктна взаємодія, психосоціальні аспекти, стигматизація, самоповага, соціальна підтримка, інклюзивна культура

Abstract. This article presents a theoretical analysis of the psychosocial aspects of conflictual interactions involving persons with disabilities in contemporary society. The relevance of the study stems from the need to comprehend the factors that complicate interpersonal interactions of persons with disabilities amid the expansion of inclusive practices, while social barriers, stigmatization, and discriminatory attitudes persist. It is established that conflictual interaction among persons with disabilities is a complex psychosocial phenomenon shaped by the influence of external social conditions and internal psychological mediators. Key social factors identified include stigmatization, discrimination, environmental barriers, paternalistic attitudes, and negative prior interaction experiences. Among the psychological mediators highlighted are self-respect, anxiety, fear of rejection, trust or distrust towards others, and emotional self-regulation. The interaction of these factors contributes to manifestations of conflictual behavior such as hurt feelings, misunderstandings, defensive reactions, avoidance of contact, as well as overt or covert conflicts.

The primary consequences of conflictual interactions are outlined, including emotional exhaustion, social isolation, diminished trust, passivity, and self-isolation. The study emphasizes the importance of psychological support, assertiveness development, fostering an inclusive culture, and strengthening social support as critical resources for constructive conflict resolution. A structural-functional model of the psychosocial aspects of conflictual interaction among persons with disabilities is proposed, illustrating the interrelations between social conditions, psychological mediators, manifestations, consequences, and coping resources. The article concludes that conflictual interaction involving persons with disabilities is a multi-level phenomenon that requires comprehensive psychological and social understanding.

Keywords: people with disabilities, conflict interaction, psychosocial aspects, stigmatization, self-esteem, social support, inclusive culture.

Introduction. Contemporary society, despite proclaiming principles of equality and inclusion, continues to maintain a number of social barriers and prejudices against people with disabilities, which complicates their full participation in interpersonal interactions. Social stigmatization, discriminatory attitudes, and unequal access to resources contribute to the emergence of tense and conflictual situations in various spheres of life—educational, professional, and everyday communication. Under such conditions, conflictual interactions acquire a systemic character and may manifest as social rejection, psychological pressure, or bullying, negatively affecting the psycho-emotional state of people with disabilities. Conflictual interactions involving individuals with disabilities have a complex psychosocial nature, as they are determined not only by individual psychological characteristics but also by the broader social context [5]. Features of self-perception, self-esteem, emotional regulation, and previous social experiences interact with external factors such as societal stereotypes, cultural norms, and institutional practices [6]. This results in varying intensity of conflict experiences and variability in coping strategies—from constructive forms of adaptation to maladaptive reactions that deepen social isolation and psychological vulnerability.

Despite the growing scientific interest in issues of inclusion and socialization of people with disabilities, the psychosocial aspects of their conflictual interactions remain insufficiently studied. Most studies either focus on socio-structural barriers or analyze individual psychological difficulties, which does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of conflict formation and the specifics of their experience. The role of internal psychological resources in coping with conflict situations and their impact on psychological well-being also requires clarification [1]. The relevance of this research is determined by the need for a comprehensive analysis of the psychosocial aspects of conflictual interactions of people with disabilities. Studying the relationship between individual characteristics, social context, and coping strategies will contribute to the development of scientifically grounded approaches to psychological support, the enhancement of social integration, and the formation of an inclusive and tolerant society [2].

The purpose of the article. The aim of the article is to conduct a theoretical analysis of the psychosocial aspects of conflictual interactions of people with disabilities in contemporary society and to identify the main factors influencing their occurrence, course, and consequences [3].

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Issues concerning people with disabilities in contemporary scientific discourse are examined in terms of the social model of disability, inclusion, stigmatization, socio-psychological adaptation, and interpersonal interactions [4]. Theoretical foundations for understanding disability as a socially determined phenomenon are presented in the works of M. Oliver and T. Shakespeare, who emphasize the role of social barriers, discriminatory practices, and social exclusion. Significant for analyzing interpersonal interactions are also the ideas of E. Goffman regarding stigma as a factor complicating social contacts and creating tension in relationships. Contemporary studies by A. Ali, S. Kumar, I. Bertschi, and other scholars highlight the impact of stigmatization, self-stigmatization, social isolation, and negative social experiences on the psychological state of people with disabilities, their self-esteem, communicative behavior, and quality of interpersonal relationships [1].

In domestic research, issues of social inclusion and support for people with disabilities are addressed in the works of A. Kolupayeva, O. Taranchenko, O. Ovcharenko, and other researchers, who emphasize the importance of barrier-free environments, social support, and the development of constructive interaction.

At the same time, despite the significant number of studies, the psychosocial aspects of conflictual interactions of people with disabilities remain insufficiently explored. Insufficient research on this problem leads to increased social isolation, psychological discomfort, and reduced quality of life for people with disabilities. Studying the specifics of conflictual interactions will contribute to the development of effective approaches to social support and the integration of people with disabilities.

Theoretical foundations of research. Conflictual interactions of people with disabilities in contemporary society constitute a complex psychosocial phenomenon, shaped at the intersection of individual psychological characteristics and the social context. Conflictual interaction is understood as a process of confrontation between opposing interests, attitudes, or values, accompanied by emotional tension and capable of manifesting in both overt and covert forms. For people with disabilities, such interactions are often complicated by the presence of social stereotypes, stigmatization, and unequal opportunities in society, which increases the risk of destructive forms of conflict, including bullying. In this context, bullying can be considered a specific form of conflictual interaction characterized by systematic, repetitive aggressive actions and an imbalance of power between participants. Unlike situational conflicts, it creates a prolonged psychologically threatening environment in which the individual must constantly adapt to conditions of pressure and social rejection. For people with disabilities, this process is exacerbated by

discriminatory attitudes and social isolation, which significantly limit their ability to protect their rights and personal boundaries.

An important aspect of the analysis is understanding that conflictual interaction is not solely determined by the characteristics of individual participants. It is shaped within a system of social relations, where group norms, cultural perceptions of “difference,” and institutional practices play a significant role. In environments where tolerance is insufficiently developed, conflicts involving people with disabilities are more likely to take on a destructive character, accompanied by social exclusion and psychological pressure. This, in turn, affects the formation of a negative self-image, lowers self-esteem, and increases anxiety levels.

The experience of conflictual interaction largely depends on the individual’s subjective assessment of the situation. According to the cognitive appraisal approach, primary and secondary appraisal processes are crucial, during which an individual determines the degree of threat and the availability of personal resources to cope with it. People with disabilities who possess sufficient psychological resources—adequate self-esteem, well-developed emotional regulation skills, an internal locus of control, and support from their social environment—demonstrate more constructive coping strategies. At the same time, a deficit of these resources can lead to maladaptive reactions, such as avoidance, social withdrawal, or internalized aggression.

It is important to note that the experience of conflictual interaction has a cumulative nature. Repeated situations of social pressure or rejection gradually transform the cognitive and emotional structures of the individual. Stable expectations of negative attitudes from others are formed, the sense of control over the situation decreases, and anxiety and self-doubt increase. In the long term, this may lead to maladaptation, disruption of social connections, and deterioration of psychological well-being.

Coping strategies play a central role in the adaptation process. They are determined not by isolated personality traits but by their systemic organization. Constructive coping strategies, such as seeking social support, actively solving problems, or cognitively reappraising the situation, help reduce the negative consequences of conflict and maintain psychological stability. In contrast, maladaptive strategies, including avoidance or denial, may have a short-term protective effect but, in the long run, exacerbate feelings of helplessness and social isolation.

A resource-based approach is of particular importance, according to which the individual is viewed as an active agent capable of self-regulation and development even under social pressure. For people with disabilities, it is crucial not only to reduce the level of conflict in interactions but also to restore a sense of dignity, autonomy, and integrity of identity. Psychological resources—self-esteem, resilience, emotional competence, and social support—serve as key factors for effectively coping with conflict situations.

Equally important is the influence of the social environment on the nature of conflictual interactions. Tolerant attitudes and support from social institutions contribute to reducing conflict levels and fostering constructive patterns of interaction. At the same time, the absence of such conditions increases the risk of systemic conflicts and the entrenchment of negative social scenarios.

Conflictual interaction among people with disabilities is a multidimensional process that combines individual-psychological, social, and cultural factors. Its analysis requires a comprehensive approach that considers both external conditions and internal mechanisms of experience and coping. Psychosocial aspects of conflictual interaction should be examined through the combination of social and psychological factors, which do not exist in isolation but mutually reinforce one another.

Social factors primarily include stigmatization, discriminatory attitudes, environmental barriers, paternalistic treatment, social distance, and formal inclusion without genuine engagement in interaction. In many cases, a person with a disability is perceived not as an equal partner in communication but as an object of pity, care, or control. Such a stance from the social environment creates an asymmetry in interaction, where one party effectively assumes the right to define the needs, capabilities, and even decisions of the other. A conflict-generating factor is the violation of communicative equality, manifested in addressing not the person themselves but their assistants, doubting their competence, devaluing their opinions, imposing help without request, and ignoring the right to make independent choices. All these actions create a foundation for tension, resentment, protest, or covert alienation.

Psychological factors include heightened sensitivity to evaluation, anxiety, fear of rejection, distrust, low self-esteem, internal tension, and negative experiences from previous interactions. If a person has repeatedly encountered rejection, humiliation, ridicule, or at least doubt in their own abilities, this fosters expectations of negative treatment. As a result, even a neutral communicative situation may be perceived as potentially threatening or unfair.

A particularly important factor is the individual’s self-attitude. When self-esteem is well-developed, a person more frequently demonstrates assertiveness, the ability to engage in dialogue, defend personal boundaries, and respond constructively to conflicts. Conversely, low self-esteem, internal insecurity, or feelings of inferiority may either increase emotional vulnerability during conflict or promote passive-avoidant behavior.

The psychosocial aspects of conflictual interaction among people with disabilities are multi-layered, encompassing both external social conditions and internal psychological mechanisms that mediate the course of conflict. In this regard, it is appropriate to present an authorial structural-functional model that reflects the main components of the phenomenon under study and the nature of the relationships between them (Fig. 1).

The structural-functional model reflects the interrelationship of the main components of conflictual interaction among people with disabilities. The model demonstrates that social conditions—such as stigmatization, discrimination, environmental barriers, paternalism, and negative interaction experiences—affect the individual through psychological mediators, including self-esteem, anxiety, fear of rejection, trust or distrust, and emotional self-regulation. These mediators, in turn, determine the corresponding manifestations of conflictual interaction, such as offense, misunderstandings, defensive reactions, avoidance of contact, and overt or covert conflict. The consequences of these processes may include emotional exhaustion, social isolation, reduced trust, passivity, and self-isolation.

At the same time, the model incorporates resources for overcoming conflictual interaction, including psychological and social support, the development of assertiveness, and the formation of an inclusive culture.

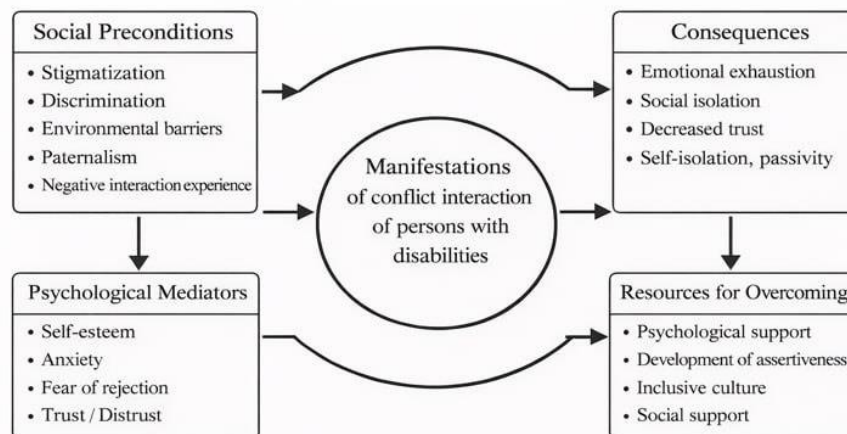


Fig. 1. Structural-functional model of psychosocial aspects of conflict interaction of persons with disabilities

Conflictual interaction among people with disabilities occurs across various social contexts, and in each of them, it takes on its own specific characteristics. In the family environment, conflicts typically arise due to overprotection, restrictions on autonomy, disregard for the right to independence, or, conversely, emotional neglect of the individual’s needs. In educational settings, sources of conflict often include formal inclusion, low expectations, exclusion from active participation, and peers’ lack of readiness for equitable interaction. In professional environments, conflict-generating factors include distrust of professional competence, discriminatory attitudes, limitations on career advancement, and symbolic or actual exclusion from collective engagement. In everyday social life, conflicts are caused by insensitivity to the needs of people with disabilities, unethical forms of communication, imposition of the role of “weak” or “dependent,” and accessibility barriers.

Conflictual interaction has not only situational but also prolonged consequences for people with disabilities. At the emotional level, it can provoke feelings of offense, anxiety, frustration, helplessness, shame, and anger. At the cognitive level, it can form persistent expectations of negative treatment and an interpretation of the social environment as dangerous or hostile. At the behavioral level, it can lead to avoidance of communication, self-isolation, reduced initiative, and refusal to participate in certain activities. Particularly significant is that repeated experiences of conflict can exacerbate secondary social maladaptation. In other words, not only primary limitations but also the negative nature of social interaction

can become a source of additional difficulties in personal development, maintenance of self-esteem, and social inclusion.

Overcoming conflictual interaction among people with disabilities requires a comprehensive approach. It is important to strengthen self-esteem, assertiveness, emotional self-regulation, and the ability to defend personal boundaries and needs, which are internal resources of the individual, alongside social support, a safe communicative environment, a culture of respect for diversity, and the readiness of others for equitable interaction, which are external resources. Psychological support is especially important, aimed not only at addressing the consequences of negative experiences but also at developing the agency of people with disabilities. Educational initiatives for the social environment are also essential, as they help reduce stigmatization, overcome paternalistic attitudes, and establish a partnership model of communication.

The proposed structural-functional model allows not only a systematic description of the psychosocial characteristics of the emergence and development of conflictual interactions among people with disabilities but also the identification of key points for psychological intervention. Understanding how social conditions influence the individual through psychological mediators and the consequences this has in various areas of life opens pathways for targeted prevention and correction of destructive forms of communication.

Conclusions. The psychosocial aspects of conflictual interactions involving people with disabilities in contemporary society should be considered as a multi-level system, combining social conditions, internal psychological mediators, direct manifestations of conflict, its consequences, and coping resources. The proposed structural-functional model allows for a comprehensive understanding of the logic behind the emergence and development of conflictual interactions and can serve as a theoretical foundation for further empirical research and practical programs of psychological support for people with disabilities. Social conditions, such as stigmatization, discrimination, environmental barriers, paternalism, and negative interaction experiences, do not act on the individual directly but are mediated through internal psychological factors. These mediators include self-esteem, anxiety, fear of rejection, trust or distrust in others, and the capacity for emotional self-regulation. It is these mediators that determine the intensity of an individual's perception of external conflictogenic factors and the forms of response chosen.

Conflictual interactions of people with disabilities occur across different social spaces—family, educational, professional, and socio-domestic—each with its own conflictogenic specificity. However, regardless of the environment, a key factor remains the disruption of partnership-based, egalitarian communication, manifested in overprotection, lowered expectations, distrust in abilities, or symbolic exclusion. This indicates that the systemic problem lies less in individual discriminatory actions than in entrenched paternalistic societal attitudes.

Overcoming conflictual interactions requires a comprehensive approach combining internal personal resources (self-esteem, assertiveness, emotional self-regulation, the ability to defend personal boundaries) with external resources (social support, a safe communicative environment, a culture of respect for diversity). A promising direction for practical work is psychological support aimed at developing the agency of people with disabilities, as well as educational initiatives for the social environment that reduce stigmatization, overcome paternalistic attitudes, and establish a partnership-based model of communication. Thus, the proposed model not only describes the existing issues but also provides a framework for developing evidence-based interventions focused on preventing destructive forms of communication and enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities.

Research prospects are related to the empirical study of psychosocial factors in conflictual interactions involving people with disabilities, particularly the roles of self-esteem, anxiety, social support, stigmatization, and previous interpersonal experiences. Promising directions also include the development and testing of psychological support programs aimed at fostering constructive conflict behavior strategies, assertiveness, and communicative competence of people with disabilities within contemporary society.

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