

Societal participation and psychosocial development from adolescence to young adulthood

Chair: Sabina Kef, Assistant Professor Clinical Child and Family Studies, VU University Amsterdam

Co-chair: to be decided



Sabina Kef is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Clinical Child and Family Studies of the Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences and the EMGO+ Institute for health and care research of the VU University of Amsterdam. She received a PhD in Social and Behavioral Science from the University of Amsterdam in 1999, based on her thesis on social networks and psychosocial characteristics of adolescents with visual impairments (VI). Because of successful research proposals she received many grants in the past twenty years, leading to a unique accelerated longitudinal dataset in this field on the above-mentioned topic. She is also involved in multiple research projects as a supervisor, with studies into parenting and disability, the role of the social context on job satisfaction of people with intellectual disability, analyzing success factors related to workers with VI to stimulate youngsters etc. Furthermore, she is in the board of the InZicht/ZonMw committee focused on stimulating the field of research in rehabilitation and education of persons with VI. She is also a member of several other committees, like the Dutch organization of Children with impairments (NSGK), the national association of educationalists (NVO), the editorial board of the VGN-journal (Markant), the editorial board of the Eye Association Netherlands (Oogvereniging). Finally, she is the owner of Research Support Gehandicaptenzorg, in which she works as a freelance coach, lecturer and researcher in the field of rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

Symposium Abstract

The theme of the conference “Low vision rehabilitation: a global right” articulates the perspective of the rights of every citizen. For persons having visual impairments the dream of successfully participating in society is equally important as it is for every person. They have to same right to participate fully, and have the right to receive adequate (professional) support assisting them to achieve their goals. However, do we know enough of the successes and barriers regarding social participation throughout their lives in different developmental phases (childhood, puberty, young adulthood, adulthood, elderly)? The goal of this symposium is to share knowledge on social participation, also in relation to psychosocial development. Secondly we want to strive for improved tailoring in the future

parenting of parents, education, and rehabilitation for persons with visual impairments towards more success regarding this aspect of life. In four presentations, researchers, rehabilitation professionals, and experts by experience will shed their light on the symposium topics.

1. Social participation and self-determination of adolescents with visual impairments: preliminary results of a RCT study of a mentoring intervention.

Eline C. M. Heppe¹ MSc

Dr. Sabina Kef¹

Prof. dr. Carlo Schuengel¹

¹ Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, Clinical Child and Family Studies and the EMGO⁺ Institute for Health and Care Research, Van der Boechorststraat 1, 1081 BT Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Introduction: Young people with visual impairments (VI) dream about their futures just like everybody else. However, hopes of meaningful relationships with others, exciting leisure activities, successful school careers, and work career pursuits are often dampened due to difficulties prompted by their disabilities. These difficulties are not only experienced when trying to engage in activities necessary for successful participation (for example, communication and mobility), but also result from negative responses from others as well as a weaker self-esteem.

Method: In a Randomized Controlled Trial the effect of a mentoring intervention, called Mentor Support, was tested, using a pre-test (T1), post-test (T2), and follow-up (T3). Three groups of adolescents were included: two experimental groups and one control group. Mentor Support consisted of monthly face-to-face meetings with a mentor and weekly contact via internet or telephone. The joint meetings took place near the mentee's home. Activities were based on the mentees' desires and needs within several domains of social participation. Through modeling possible actions were gathered. Several theoretical frameworks, such as the Self-determination Theory, were used to develop the program. To enhance self-determination, the program aimed to satisfy three psychological basic needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness).

Results: As this study is still ongoing, the outline of the research, challenges while performing this research, and pre-test results (N = 77) on self-determination and social participation will be presented. For instance, feelings of stigmatization were related, through acceptance of the impairment, to satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs ($X^2 =$

8.64, CFI = .97, TLI = .90, SRMR = .07, $p < .001$). And on average mentees graded Mentor Support with an 8 and 80% felt truly connected with their mentor.

Conclusion: Self-determination could be a promising road to enhance social participation. The first descriptive process results of Mentor Support seem to be positive.

2. Expedition ToP: Experiences of adolescents with visual impairments, their parents and professionals in promoting success in job participation.

Drs. Judith Wijnen¹, dr. Sabina Kef² & Bella van Erp² MSc.

¹*Royal Dutch Visio, Hettenheuvelweg 41-43, 1101 BM, Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

²*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, Clinical Child and Family Studies and the EMGO⁺ Institute for Health and Care Research, Van der Boechorststraat 1, 1081 BT Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

Introduction: People with visual impairments (VI) are still facing problems in job participation. How could we focus more on both internal success factors (motivation/attitude, self-efficacy and social skills) and external success factors as in parenting and cooperation of colleagues? What are the experiences of adolescents themselves, parents and professionals?

Method: In an innovative project of Visio and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, several data collections with multiple groups of participants will shed light on which factors are related to success in employment. Participants are: adolescents with VI (N=60, 15-22 years), their parents, professionals of Visio, and successful employees with VI. Data are collected using questionnaires, interviews (by Appreciative Inquiry), assignments and focus groups.

Results: Preliminary results showed that professionals attributed the problems of employment for a large part (77%) on the VI. Professionals did believe in change, as was found on their score on the growth mindset index, but some have more fixed mindsets. Accordingly, also the adolescents themselves scored rather positive on the growth mindset index. Important success factors for employment in adolescents were attitude, self-efficacy and social skills. Important success factors for employment to be highlighted in education were insights in the possibilities (and not the impairments) of the adolescents and Visio's connections with companies in general. Interviews with successful employees with VI underscored the relevance of high self-efficacy and positive beliefs. Results of the focus groups with parents are to be expected in spring 2017.

Conclusions: If we know more on the success factors, we could shape the parenting and education more towards them. Using an integrative multi factorial approach, as in this project, seems the way to go.

3. Psychosocial skills of students with visual impairment for a successful university career

dr Krisztina Kovács, senior lecturer and disability coordinator. Leader of Disability Center Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) 1088 Budapest, Múzeum krt. 4/A -125.

Boglárka Kollárszky, student of MA in Psychology and MA in Teaching Hungarian as Foreign Language at ELTE University

Background: The presentation will underline the importance of psychosocial skills in academic life for students with visual impairment. According to some previous studies children and adolescents with visual impairments face various problems in social relations comparing to their sighted peers. The reason may be that the absence or lack of visual input can affect the students' social skills. The literature on graduation of students with disabilities is inconsistent in what the predicting factors are. The presentation will give a short review on the literature, focusing on the psychosocial skills of the young adults with visual impairment for a prosperous university life. Furthermore, a successful MA student in Psychology who is blind will give her own perspective both as a person with visual impairment and as a student of psychology at a Hungarian University in the form of an interview.

Results: In the traditional narratives, intellectual and cognitive capacities are responsible for a successful university career. However, studies have proved that intellectual aptitudes only account for 30-50% of the students' performance. Personality and social skills have probably a greater role for students with visual impairment than any other, non-disabled students due to the fact that students with visual impairment are more dependent on a vivid social network. Personal experiences highlight the importance of these mix of capacities or skills to achieve success at university.

Conclusion: We must include psychosocial skills in supporting young adults to be successful in their university career.

4. A longitudinal perspective on social participation and psychosocial development of young persons with visual impairments

Dr. Sabina Kef¹

Eline C. M. Heppe¹ MSc

Prof. dr. Carlo Schuengel¹

¹ Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, Clinical Child and Family Studies and the EMGO⁺ Institute for Health and Care Research, Van der Boechorststraat 1, 1081 BT Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Introduction: Social participation is challenging for people with Visual Impairments (VI). In order to improve social participation, it's necessary to chart the current state of their social participation. Data of an accelerated longitudinal national research project in The Netherlands of adolescents and young adults with VI were analyzed 1) to give a description of the extent of participation in leisure activities, social relations and education/ employment, 2) test the interrelationship between participation areas and psychosocial functioning and 3) to trace successful pathways towards social participation.

Method: Participants with VI were interviewed in four waves, using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview: 1996 (Cohort 1: N = 316), 2005 (Cohort 1: N = 205, Cohort 2: N = 154) and 2010 (Cohort 1: N = 179, Cohort 2: N = 112). The fourth wave of 2016 is analyzed in Q1/Q2 of this year. Participation in leisure activities was measured using open-ended questions and "degree of peer activity questionnaire"; in relationships using questionnaires and open-ended questions about social networks, social support, social competences, dating experiences, marital status and starting a family; in education/work using open-ended questions about degree and kind of education, paid and voluntary jobs. Furthermore, psychosocial functioning was measured using questionnaires on self- esteem, perceived stigmatization, wellbeing, loneliness and acceptance of impairment.

Results: Results so far showed that most participants in this study find their way in education and work. On the area of leisure activities and relationships there are difficulties concerning dating, network size, sexual experiences, mobility and amount of peer-activities. These problems are negatively related to psychosocial characteristics like self-esteem, acceptance of impairment and loneliness.

Conclusion: Social participation seems to be an interplay between personal and environmental characteristics and needs to be learned by trial and error. Lack of experience in adolescence and young adulthood is a risk factor.