STUDY AND EDUCATION OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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IDEAS OF SENIOR SCHOOLGIRLS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY ABOUT THE IDEAL IMAGE OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN FEMININITY (ON THE EXAMPLE OF APPEARANCE)

Abstract. The paper presents a theoretical and practical analysis of studying the phenomenon of the ideal of traditional and modern femininity. It describes the results of an experimental study of ideas of schoolgirls with intellectual disability about the appearance of the studied "ideal person"; draws a generalized portrait of femininity on the basis the girls' opinion. The author draws conclusions about the peculiarities of the ideas and the necessity to improve them for the successful formation of "life competences" in senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability. The urgency of the paper is connected with the problem that the crisis of ideals observed in the modern society to a large degree influences stereotypes and standards of femininity which makes family and social adaptation of girls more difficult. The following elements are singled out in the structure of the stereotype: appearance, personal traits and social characteristics. Senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability usually name traditional characteristics of femininity. General characteristics of appearance include the following: accurate, clean, tidy (traditional), elegant, stylish (modern). In the group of physical traits special attention is paid to the hair (it must be long enough to braid it), constitution (slim figure). Much attention is paid to the hairdo and make up. The influence of mass media upon stereotype ideas is demonstrated by the enumeration of standard women who include famous actresses, sports women and show business celebrities (according to respondents, even Verka Serdyuchka appears to be an ideal woman).

Keywords: ideal; femininity; appearance; ideas; senior school age; intellectual disability; life competences; socially important skills; Federal State Educational Standard.

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One of the main components of femininity is the girls' recognition of their belonging to feminine gender. The undertaken complex theoretic-practical research devoted to the problems of realization of belonging to feminine gender by girls with intellectual disability [11] studies, in particular, the phenomenon of the ideal images of traditional and modern femininity [1; 6; 11; 12]. This topic is interesting and significant for peda-

gogues and psychologists' practical work with the given category of schoolgirls in terms of formation of their personality in general taking into account their gender and of their preparation for their future social and family life, i.e. for the formation of "life competences". The "life competences" are vital for the realization of the Federal State Educational Standard for children with intellectual disabilities approved by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of December 19, 2014 # 1599 and registered by the Ministry of Justice on February 3, 2015.

"Ideals", "icons" and "benchmarks" are concrete realizations of people's ideas about things that are valuable for them. Ideals have a considerable sense value in terms of formation of the person's attitudes and values. V. V. Sizikova defines an ideal as a cognition about a desired standard connected with the person's aims and targets, O. V. Romanova treats it as a behavior regulator. Gender psychology interprets the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity as a system of instructions or indications of what the representatives of the two genders are to be. I. K. Kashirskaya notes that gender stereotypes play the role of benchmarks and key moments in self-identification of each person [1; 7; 16, etc.].

The modern society witnesses a crisis and collision of ideals. This is true to a great extent about the stereotypes and benchmarks of femininity, which makes family and social adaptation of representatives of the feminine gender more difficult (V. E. Ka-

gan, T. I. Yufereva, etc.) [9; 18].

Masculine and feminine stereotypes are not identical; they change with time, culture and ideology; and that is why researchers single out their traditional (timeless, eternal) and modern (urgent for the present moment of time) constituents [6]. In its turn, the structure of the stereotype contains the following elements: appearance, personal traits and social characteristics. In our research we shall specify the criterion of appearance which has been studied in the works of such scholars as E. F. Agil'dieva, A. A. Bodalev, O. G. Kukosyan, V. N. Kunitsyna, V. N. Panferov, K. D. Shafranskaya, etc. [8; 15, etc.]. A. A. Bodalev singled out the following components in the given criterion: physical appearance (build, anthropometric data, face, hair), functional features (mimicry, gestures, carriage, gait, postures, look, smile), and "frame" (clothes, hairdo, makeup, jewelry) [8]. It is traditionally believed that the importance of appearance for social life is more relevant for women that for men (E. F. Agil'dieva, D. Mayers, V. N. Panferov, L. N. Timoshchenko, T. I. Yufereva, etc.) [15; 18, etc.]. This tradition brings to life negative psychological complexes ("inferiority complex") in women, especially those of juvenile and young ages, which can lead to problems in their social adaptation. The criteria of feminine sex appeal and beauty are constantly changing but their importance for the life of women remains unchanged as appearance plays an important part in creating the first impression about a person

and can influence their perception and acceptance by other people. The traditional notion of women's beauty is connected with slim figure (the parameters of which have been changed and are still changing), gracious movements, light gait, elegant and dignified poise and free graceful manner (N. T. Belyakova) [11].

Inappropriate poise, constrained or clumsy movements, untidy and poky appearance have traditionally been treated unattractive. The benchmarks of build constantly changed in different epochs (it enough to visualize Raphael's Madonnas, Kustodiev's women, etc.); nowadays the ideal is shifting from more robust forms to more slender and sporting ones. Physical appearance stereotypes enslave women to a large extent. D. Myers states that beauty "ideals" as benchmarks are translated through the appearance of women presented by mass media: fashion magazines, fashion shows, various TV shows about fashions, dieting, nutrition and some toys (e.g. Barbie).

Considerable influence of advertisement on the formation of typical ideas about an ideal appearance is registered by I. V. Groshev [11]. Special attention in general is paid to "framing" (according to the definition by A. A. Bodalev) appearance. The notions of "grooming", "skills of looking after oneself" and "self-presentation" are especially important nowadays; graciousness, plasticity and delicate figure are also valued. The representatives of the feminine gender try to follow the fashionable tendencies in clothes, hairdo and manners.

Ideals have a marked influence on self-consciousness of senior children and teenagers because these are the years when the stable image of one's "ego" and the realization of belonging to a gender are being formed [9; 16; 18, etc.]. This is true also about people with intellectual disabilities because they develop in accordance with the same laws as their normally developing peers, though their self-consciousness (including the gender-oriented one) displays certain specificity (S. L. Almazova, Ch. B. Kozhalieva, O. G. Nugaeva, N. S. Shchankina, etc.) [10; 11; 12; 14; 17, etc.].

As far as girls with intellectual disability are concerned, it is necessary to figure out the degree, to which their ideas about traditional and modern femininity correspond to reality, how well they are formed and what is their influence upon everyday life of such girls. This is necessary in order to introduce timely corrections in the distorted cognitions or to create conditions for the formation of adequate ideas (first of all about themselves) with the help of specially compiled corrective development programs based on diagnostics outcomes.

More than a hundred senior schoolgirls of 7 – 9 grades (aged from 12-13 to 16-17) of educational institutions for children with intellectual disability (not long ago called Type VIII Special (Correctional) Educational Establishments) – schools and boarding schools of Ekaterinburg, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and Perm Regions and Altai, i.e. from the whole

Urals-Siberian Region were tested. Inclusion of institutions from such a vast region allowed us to exclude the factor of living conditions and regional factors (city or countryside) from discovering the peculiarities of "ideal images" of femininity.

For gathering information about senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability we made up a diagnostic complex including teachers' interviews about the schoolgirls, observation of respondents in various kinds of organized and natural activity, investigation of self-consciousness of oneself as a representative of certain gender in the conditions of an experiment providing results on verbal and nonverbal levels (S. L. Almazova) [11].

Let us analyze cognitions of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability about an ideal image of femininity discovered with the help of the questionnaire worked out by us on the material of the "ideal's" appearance. The questionnaire includes questions by which it is possible to get information in the following topical blocks: ideas about appearance, about personal traits of the femininity ideal; wish to follow this ideal; mother's image as an ideal of femininity, concrete "ideal" images of oneself in current reality; ideas about oneself in the future life. As stated above, the first block includes questions dealing with the appearance of the "ideal image" of traditional and modern femininity and the wish to follow it: 1) What do you think an attractive girl should look like? 2) Would you like to be attractive girls (women)?

These question were given to senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability on answer sheets, they read them themselves and answered in writing according to their own understanding of the issue. No help in the form of explanations or illustrations or in any other form were provided. The conditions of diagnostic procedures excluded a chance of the respondents to consult each other let alone copy the answers.

More than 300 answers of the respondents to the questions mentioned above were subject to analysis. The examples of answers of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability will be quoted in the original (respondent) variant with only spelling being corrected. While analyzing the answers about the criterion of appearance we preceded from those constituents which were suggested by A. A. Bodalev and which have been mentioned above. We shall call them to mind in order to make it easier to see the logic of analysis of the respondents' answers: physical appearance (build, anthropometric data, face, hair), functional features (mimicry, gestures, carriage, gait, postures, look, smile), and "frame" (clothes, hairdo, makeup, jewelry). In addition, we shall take into account the traditional or modern character of the distinguished constituents.

The main and most numerous group of answers of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability is made up of the following variants: "cool; looks well; beautiful; looks well after herself; serves a good example to others; nice; a fine person with no drawbacks; groomed; normal; takes care of her-

self; good and nice; good and comely; unusual; must be liked by all; should look beautiful; nice looking; pretty; clean; tidy; excellent figure; accurate; walks great; has a beautiful smile; nice face, eyes, hairdo, smile; nice clothes; tidy clothes and shoes; made up; has beautiful clothes; nice hair; beautiful gait; nice figure; well ironed; well groomed; no need to make up so heavily (it does not become young girls); is liked by friends; is beautifully made up; slender and not very thin; small; without makeup; lean; slim figure; tidy hair; in smart clothes; curled and elegant; of medium height and with long hair; tall and thin; stylish; sad face; natural; clean hair; beautiful nails; braided hair; must not be dirty; the main thing is not to overuse make up; plump enough; modest color of lipstick, skirt, well done hair".

The total number of attributes is about 200. They were subdivided into three main sections: general characteristics of appearance; physical features; "framing" physical features (some answers characterizing functional properties were also referred here). The following percentage of answers was calculated. *General characteristics of appearance*: neat – 32%; clean – 27%; tidy – 23%; other attributes – 10%; elegant – 5%; stylish – 3%. *Physical features*: weight, build – 23%; face – 17%; hair – 9%; height – 7%; eyes – 5%; legs – 2%; eyelashes – 2%. *"Framing" physical features*: clothes – 70%; hairdo – 30%; makeup – 23%; gait – 5%; smile – 5%; nails (looking after nails) – 2%. Now let us analyze them in more detail in terms of their

correlation with traditional or modern parameters of femininity.

1. General characteristics of appearance. "Neat, clean and tidy" are attributes of traditional femininity: "elegant and stylish" belong to modern femininity. The above-given percentage shows that senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability basically name attributes explicating traditional assumptions about femininity.

Other attributes make up 10% of all answers, but from the semantic point of view they are separate uncategorized attributes. They include such variants as: "well ironed", "is liked by friends", "in smart clothes", "natural but made up" (contradiction!), and "everything must be beautiful".

2. Physical features. Evaluation of the "ideal's" build was the most popular aspect of anthropometric data with senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability. The following variants were registered: "charming", "slender" and "beautiful". Some answers specify the peculiarities of the build through the following variants: "plump enough", "not very thin" and, on the contrary "slender", "thin".

Height was evaluated in the following way: "tall", "of medium height" and "small". There is no unanimity (which is absolutely natural both in relation to figure and height). Legs are evaluated in very few cases. All variations boil down to the following common attribute – "girls' legs should be long".

The face of the "ideal" is also popular in the girls' evaluation. More than half of the respondents characterize the face in general: "beautiful",

"sad" (1 answer); in fewer than half of the answers they describe the eyes: "beautiful", "large"; many respondents specified that the eyelashes should be necessarily "long".

Special attention was paid by the senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability to the importance of hair for the girl mainly on the basis of traditional ideas about their considerable length and possibility to be braided; many girls mentioned such property of women's hair as being "clean".

The following attributes characterize traditional femininity: "plump enough" and "not very thin" figure; "of medium height" or "small". Modern femininity is characterized by "lean", "thin" figure; "tall"; and "long-legged". The other attributes refer both to the parameters of traditional and modern femininity.

3. "Framing" physical features. Most attention was paid by senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability to clothes and the girl's skill to choose beautiful and tasty clothes. All variants of answers boil down to this. Special attention was also paid to hairdo by providing the following attributes: "beautiful hairdo", "combed, tidy, braided, curled hair".

While evaluating makeup the majority of the respondents gave the following answer: "beautifully made up". Next in popularity were the answer variants: "made up but not too heavily"; we also found the following specifications "modest color of lipstick", "heavy makeup does not become young girls". There are variants expressing an opposite opinion: "without makeup".

A small number of answers refer to the evaluation of the gait, and all respondents gave the only variant – "beautiful". About the same number of answers deal with the nails using the same attribute "beautiful". The smile is mentioned by few respondents and is referred to just as a smile with no attributes.

On the whole it should be noted that senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability use the word "beautiful" more often than any other adjective while defining criteria of femininity and their constituents which once again illustrates their intellectual disability in general and speech underdevelopment in particular.

In our analysis, we shall refer the variant "without makeup" (i.e. natural) to evaluation of traditional femininity. Evaluation of the quality of makeup is a phenomenon of modern femininity. Other variants correspond both to traditional and modern definitions of femininity.

The next group of answers of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability is represented by such variants as: "actress; Vasilisa the Beautiful; Jade Rachid; Anastasiya Zavorotnyuk; Verka Serdyuchka; Glyukoza; I. Dubtsova; S. Rotaru". These answers are conventionally termed as *cognitions about appearance on concrete examples or images*.

Then come answer variants which we termed as *"other" attributes not relating to appearance*: "kind; industrious; well-bred; polite; clever; obedient; behaves well; with good manners; decent; clever and even cleverer; gay; never lies; never

deceives; does not scold; honest, respectable; sweet".

Single respondents could not answer the question and replied with the words "I don't know". This variant was classified as *no answer*.

Vocabulary usage was studied with the help of quantitative analysis of the answers of this group which produced the following results: 60% of answers incorporate 3-4 and more attributes (detailed answers); 40% of answers include 1-2 words (short answers).

We generalized the characteristics given by the respondents and made up an approximate "ideal image" of femininity in terms of appearance based on the cognitions of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability about it: a "smartly dressed and slender" (though the ideas of a slender figure may vary greatly), "with a nice hairdo" (often with long hair), "beautiful face" (more often made up), "tidy, accurate and clean" girl.

Thus, the average sample "portrait" demonstrates that the majority of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability have a basically formed idea about an "ideal image" of femininity, and this "ideal" includes both traditional (accuracy, tidiness, cleanliness) and modern constituents (much attention is paid to clothes, style, makeup and figure parameters).

The analysis of answers to the second question – about the girls' wish to be attractive (i.e. to correspond to the "ideal" of femininity) – showed that this wish is rather considerable: 80% of respondents' answers point in this direction quite unequivo-

cally. Anyway there are some answers that manifest infantilism (immaturity) of the wish and even poor understanding of one's own answer. Thus some girls express a desire to look like characters of popular serials (and they name the characters), and popular singers, including Verka Serdyuchka (being absolutely sure that "she" belongs to the feminine gender).

Summing up our study of ideas about the appearance of an "ideal" of femininity in senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability we come to the conclusion that their cognitions are basically formed, adequate and to a large degree traditional. The following features of formation of these notions are specific: infantilism, superficial nature, stereotypicality, idealization and inadequate realization (i.e. the notions have been formed, but they are not transferred upon themselves and their own behavior in everyday life does not match them). The most important fact that was revealed by this part of investigation is the wish of the majority of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability to correspond to the "ideal" of femininity in terms of one criterion – appearance.

The discovered specific features of the ideas of senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability about the appearance of the "ideal" of femininity, alongside with other aspects of gender self-consciousness were taken into account while testing and implementation of a special developing program of psychological support of this category of girls in their self-realization as representatives of certain gender. The author of the article S.L. Almazova

has several publications about this program [2; 3; 4; 5; 13, etc.].

The complex program of work with senior schoolgirls with intellectual disability highlights the necessity of improvement of their cognitions about socially significant skills referring to "framing" appearance and forming a conscious wish to obtain these "life competences". They include skills of looking after oneself (skin, hair and nails), showing good taste in clothes (not to look vulgar, showy or pretentious), avoiding too bright and ridiculous makeup, being always tidy and accurate and controlling ones movements, gait and poise. The formation of these "life competences" would facilitate better social adaptation of girls of the given category. Such programs are being looked forward to by practical educationalists dealing with teaching and upbringing of children with intellectual disability; they will become even more urgent starting with September 1, 2016, when the Federal State Educational Standard for children with intellectual disabilities comes into effect. Preparation for such an important event should be carried out well in advance.

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