

**ISMGE 2020****II International Scientific and Practical Conference "Individual and Society in the Modern Geopolitical Environment"****FACTORS OF ESTABLISHING BARRIERS OF THE  
RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIETY TO THE DISABLED**

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***Abstract***

The article shows the results of an author's study to identify factors contributing to the establishment barriers of relations in the interactions of the population with people with disabilities (questionnaire survey of residents of the Murmansk region, n = 632). Disability is understood as a social phenomenon caused by existing social barriers. Barriers of attitudinal are as important as barriers of an accessible environment, so removing these barriers allows people with disabilities to be truly included in society. According to the results of the survey, it was found that in general society is quite positive towards people with persistent health disorders, except for persons with disabilities with mental disorders. Citizens endow disabled people with both positive and negative characteristics, representing them in their minds as heroes or victims of circumstances. The attitude towards people with disabilities in a regional society depends on the nature of health disorders, social status and roles of people with disabilities, the level of their social activity and the emotions that they cause among others. In general, the study revealed obstacles to inclusive processes for people with mental illnesses, as well as for people with disabilities who have a passive lifestyle and are included in the system of industrial relations.

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**Keywords:** Accessible environments, barriers of attitudinal, disability, environmental barriers, inclusive processes.



## 1. Introduction

In the modern period of Russian society, the institution of disability is undergoing significant changes. These transformations are due to the development of inclusive ideas and the implementation of social policy measures in creating conditions for the independent life of persons with disabilities. At the same time as these processes, the image of people with disabilities themselves is transformed in the public consciousness of Russians.

In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability is understood as the result of interaction between persons with health problems and attitudinal and environment barriers (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006). Accordingly, overcoming social barriers is an integral part of the inclusion of persons with disabilities, an important condition for the inclusion of individuals in society.

And if the removal of environmental barriers allows individuals to physically participate in the life of society and build social interactions, the elimination of attitudinal barriers gives an opportunity to be really integrated into the social community.

At present, barriers of relations are a significant problem for modern society, preventing equal social participation of persons with disabilities and harmonious interactions with society. This is confirmed by research of modern Russian and foreign scientists.

For example, the study of Korosteleva et al. (2014) shows differences in attitude to people with disabilities depending on the nature of perception, namely the level of "abstractness" or "specificity" of a person with health problems.

Kondakova and Fakhradova (2015), exploring mental barriers in the Vologda region in 2013-2015, showed that most Russian citizens feel a desire to distance themselves from relations and communication with disabled people. At the same time, persons with disabilities themselves note difficulties in communicating with others and show pessimism and skepticism in assessing their opportunities for equal participation in society (Fakhradova, 2016, p. 65).

These or those stereotypes of the population leave an imprint on the attitude towards people with disabilities, which is confirmed by the results of studies by E.V. Voevodina and E.E. Gorina, held in 2011-2012 in the city of Vladimir (Voevodina, 2013, p. 62). Stigmatization can negatively affect opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in society.

Another factor preventing the establishment of harmonious relations between persons with disabilities and society is the erroneous judgment of a healthy population in the perception of the state of disability. Such judgements were revealed during the study by I.S. Volodina, V.L. Tikhonova and A.S. Grislis, carried out in the city Rostov-on-Don in 2015 (Volodina, 2015, p. 40).

In a study conducted by the author in 2018 among the expert community of the Murmansk region on the issue of attitudes towards people with disabilities, fear and distrust were named as reasons for the unfriendliness of citizens to people with health problems. The existing public fears are caused, first of all, by insufficient awareness of the problems and characteristics of the lives of disabled people (Afonkina & Zhigunova, 2018, p. 38). The results of the study showed the socio-psychological unpreparedness of society for the social inclusion of people with disabilities. It is also manifested in negative emotional manifestations of others in relation to people with disabilities, ill-will and bias, stereotypes, indifference,

misunderstanding, condemnation, unwillingness to help and interact with people with disabilities (Zhigunova & Tkachenko, 2019, p. 184).

In general, the analysis of data from secondary sociological studies carried out in Russia shows that Russian citizens do not always adequately perceive disabled persons and are not always ready to interact with them. Such perceptions certainly hinder inclusive processes in the country, and it is, therefore, necessary to further identify factors for establishing social barriers and developing effective measures to overcome them.

Studies by foreign scientists also show the seriousness of the problem of barriers in relations. In particular, the studies of American scientists show as obstacles to the independent life of people with disabilities an unfavourable socio-psychological environment that contributes to their labeling and discrimination (Shier et al., 2009), a lack of understanding of people with disabilities (Williams et al., 2018). Scientists note the influence on the structure and scale of attitudes towards people with disabilities of the cultural and social composition of the population (Boo & Nie, 2018), social perfectionism, "interpersonal" stress and the distant behavior of healthy people (Cox & Hill, 2018) and many other factors.

In a study conducted in Ireland among people with intellectual disabilities (n = 601 people), it was found that most of them (57.9% of the respondents) had difficulty communicating. As a result, these people have low social activity (Smith et al., 2019). A study by Deliyore-Vega del (2018) found that today people with communication barriers still do not have timely access to dialogue and communication. Recognizing the right of persons with disabilities to alternative communication, scientists note that it is violated in these individuals due to communication barriers.

A study conducted among the Dutch population (n = 892 persons) identified stereotypes attributed to disabled people by the public, such as "friendly," "in need of help", "unreasonable." Although these stereotypes have not been linked to the high level of discrimination against persons with disabilities, the authors consider that hidden forms of discrimination, such as limited opportunities for choice and self-determination, cannot be excluded (Pelleboer-Gunnink et al., 2019). It is also noted that people with disabilities have a lower social status, less popularity (Van der Sande et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important to adhere to the principles of universal design, whose capabilities positively affect the perception of persons with disabilities (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017).

Thus, barriers of relationships are ubiquitous in today's world. As a result of these barriers, persons with disabilities face manifestations of ill-will, risks of declining social status and exclusion.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Based on a review of the articles, it was found that equal participation of people with disabilities is still problematic. One of the reasons for inequality and exclusion is the existing barriers to relations between people with disabilities and other citizens, caused by many dynamically changing factors. This phenomenon requires a systematic study, as it is the most important indicator of the implementation of social inclusion processes.

### **3. Research Questions**

The study aims to identify factors that influence the creation of barriers to the attitude of the regional community towards people with disabilities. In this regard, the following questions were raised:

What do citizens think about the need for disabled people to participate in society and about the factors of their successful interaction with fellow citizens?

Does the nature of the disease of persons with disabilities and their state of health affect the attitude of citizens towards them?

Does the attitude towards people with disabilities depend on social activity and employment of persons with impairments?

What social statuses and roles of people with disabilities are more acceptable for the population in the process of building interactions?

How do stereotypes, feelings and emotions of respondents in relation to persons with disabilities affect the level of willingness to interact with them in work and everyday activities?

What factors contribute to and hinder the willingness of citizens to help people with disabilities?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to identify the leading factors in establishing barriers to relations between people with disabilities and citizens in a regional society in the context of the development of inclusive processes.

### **5. Research Methods**

To identify the leading factors in establishing barriers in relations at the empirical level, a questionnaire method was used, conducted under the guidance and with the participation of the author in 2019. The object of the study was the population of the Murmansk region of the Russian Federation aged 15 to 75, in the amount of 632 people. The sample is representative by gender and age.

Most of the respondents had higher education - 64.6%, 26.6% of respondents had secondary vocational education, 4.4% - general secondary, 4.4% - other. The professional and official status of the respondents is as follows: specialists in the structure of the respondents amounted to 51.3%, workers - 25.7%, employees - 19.2%, administrative workers - 3.8%.

Data processing was carried out using the statistical package SPSS.

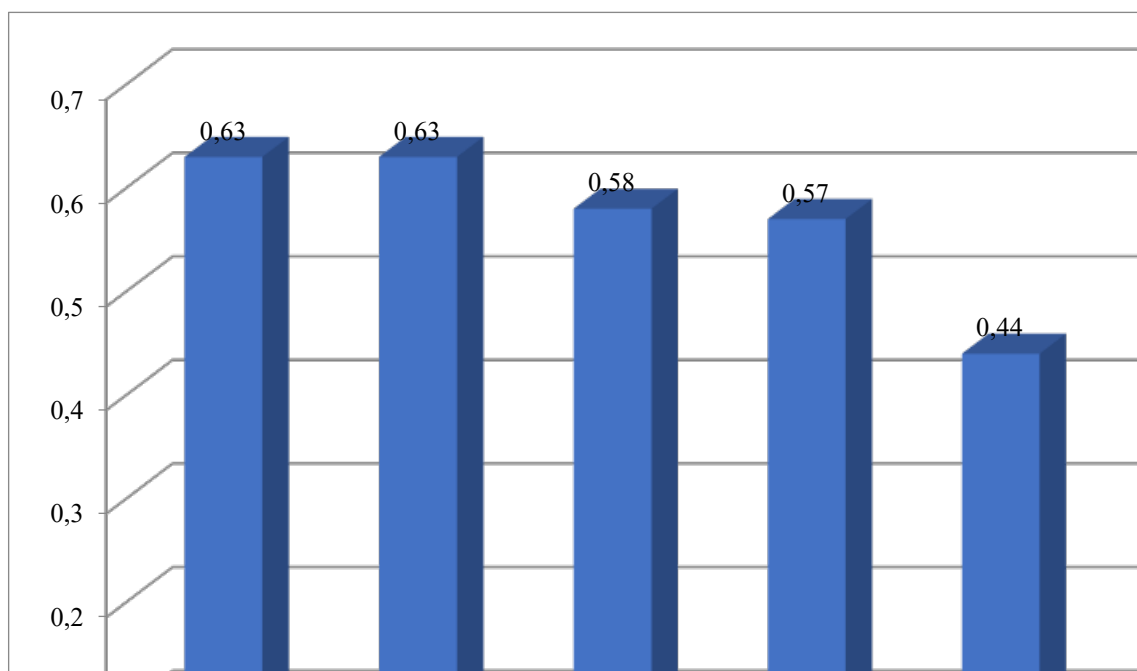
### **6. Findings**

According to the results of the study, it was found that all citizens consider it necessary to include people with disabilities in society, 68.7% of them believe that this inclusion should be complete, as possible. 84.2% of respondents said that the presence of people with disabilities in public places became more familiar than a few years ago. However, 48.8% believe that Russian society is not yet ready to interact with people with disabilities. Among the reasons for this unpreparedness, 53.8% of respondents indicated negative attitudes existing in society towards people with disabilities, among other reasons.

At the same time, respondents associate successful functioning of people with disabilities in society to a greater extent with the level of adaptation, readiness for independent life and readiness for social interaction (4.3 points out of 5), and to a lesser extent with working capacity (3.9) and ability to work (3.8).

The majority of the respondents have a positive attitude (46.8%) and more likely positive (37.2%) to the presence of persons with disabilities in society. However, when answering the question about the attitude to people with disabilities with different types of disorders, positive ratings lose their stability depending on the specific type of disease. In terms of indices (where 1 is a positive ratio), the ratio to people with musculoskeletal disorders corresponds to a value of 0.64, to people with visual and hearing disorders-0.62, and to individuals with mental and intellectual disabilities, the index was only 0.14. In other words, if to people with disabilities with disorders of the musculoskeletal system, hearing and vision have a positive attitude above the average, then people with mental diseases have a positive attitude at the lower limit.

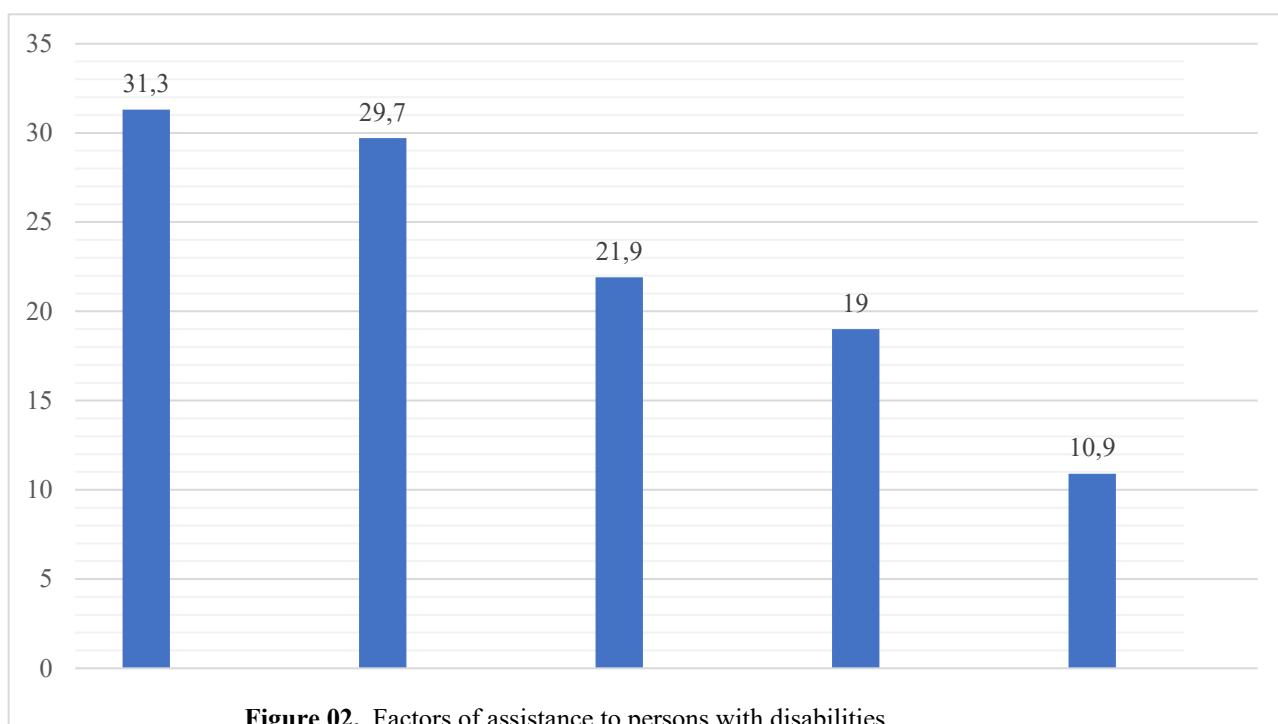
The majority of respondents (93.7%) have feelings of respect, pride, and admiration for people with disabilities who seek to lead an active lifestyle, 1.9% are neutral, and 4.4% have difficulty responding. In relation to people who lead a passive lifestyle, almost half of the respondents (43%) change the range of feelings in the direction of empathy, compassion, along with other positive feelings; 15.8% feel pity, 12.6% are neutral, 1.2% - negative, 0.6% - indifferent, 14.5% are undecided about their attitude. So, respondents are more positive about disabled people who lead an active lifestyle. In relation to this category, there are no feelings of pity, indifference, negative emotions, a low level of neutral responses, in contrast to the attitude to passive people with disabilities (Figure 1).



**Figure 01.** Level of the comfort of interaction with disabled persons with certain social roles, indexes

It is more comfortable for respondents to interact with people with disabilities who have the roles of a classmate or friend of the child (indices 0.63), a colleague (index 0.58), a neighbor (0.57), a friend (0.44). Less preferred options for citizens – if disabled people will have the status of a chief (index 0.19) and a subordinate (index 0.29).

Most of the respondents (76.6%) are ready to assist people with health problems, if necessary. However, almost half of them (31.3%) will help only people with certain types of diseases, 29.7% - people with a certain state of health; 21.9% of respondents are ready to help only friends with disabilities, 19% - to relatives, 10.9% - only if there is sympathy for a person in need of help (Figure 2).



**Figure 02.** Factors of assistance to persons with disabilities

So, the study showed that society today understands the need for social inclusion of people with disabilities. At the same time, the citizens associate the success of this inclusion primarily with the socio-psychological readiness of the disabled themselves to be in society, and not with their professional competencies and ability to work.

In General, society is quite positive about persons with impairments, with the exception of people with mental disorders. The society gives people with disabilities equally positive and negative characteristics due to the disease and believes that the disease leaves its mark on the individual.

One of the factors influencing the attitude of citizens towards people with disabilities is the lifestyle of people with disabilities. Citizens are more positive about people with disabilities who seek to lead an active lifestyle than people who are not involved in anything.

The attitude towards people with disabilities also depends on the roles and statuses of the latter. The least citizens are ready to see next to themselves disabled in the system of industrial relations in the status of chief and subordinate. Most of all, citizens are ready for their children to study or be friends with children with disabilities. While most of them are willing to help persons with impairments, some

respondents note that they are ready to help people with only a certain type of disease, state of health or under the condition of personal acquaintance, kinship with a disabled person or personal sympathy.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, according to the results of the study, we can conclude that at present the following factors affect the attitude towards people with disabilities: type of disease, lifestyle, roles and statuses of people with disabilities, public perceptions about the personal qualities and work of people with disabilities, and to a certain extent, the presence of kinship and dating.

The results of the study reveal obstacles to the process of social inclusion to a greater extent for people suffering from mental illness, as well as for people with disabilities who lead a passive lifestyle and are included in the system of industrial relations. However, there are risks for inclusion and other categories of people with disabilities due to conflicting trends in representing the image of disability among representatives of society.

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