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The competency levels of disabled students who study in university

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of inclusive education of students with disabilities at the university. The article analyses the study of the readiness of students with disabilities to research activities. The success of studying at a university depends on the psychological readiness of disabled students to educational and professional activities. Research activities are the main type of educational and professional activities. We studied the readiness levels of students with disabilities from the Belgorod State National Research University for the research activities. We obtained interesting data on the levels of the disabled students' readiness to research activities. Most disabled students are not ready for the research activities. Students with disabilities experience difficulties in self-regulation, their goals in research activities are related to internal well-being, the communicative orientation is the leading emotional focus in research activities; the motivation to research activities is reduced. Efforts should be made to improve disabled students' university activities.

Keywords: Disabled students, inclusive education, readiness for research activities, psychological and pedagogical support.

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1. Introduction

Inclusive education of students with disabilities in the universities of the Russian Federation is a rare form of education. Why? What difficulties do students with disabilities experience at university? What prevents students with disabilities from getting higher education? Why are students with disabilities not ready for research activities at a university?

In the Russian Federation in 2018, there were more than 12 million people with disabilities, of whom 6 million were able to work. The share of working people in the total number of disabled people was only 14.3% (1 million and 644,000 people) (Information about persons with disabilities—students of professional educational organisations and educational institutions of higher education). Over the past 5 years, there has been a tendency to reduce the number of disabled workers (Information about persons with disabilities—students of professional educational organisations and educational institutions of higher education). This leads to a decrease in the standard of living and marginalisation of the disabled, to an increase in tension throughout the society. The very idea of inclusive education, enshrined in the Law on Education in the Russian Federation, aims to solidify society, recognise the value of each person. In the modern world, the need for highly qualified specialists employed in knowledge-intensive industries is growing; therefore, higher education becomes the key to successful employment.

The number of students with disabilities in universities in the Russian Federation is only 0.34% of the total number of students, which is significantly lower compared with foreign countries. For example, in the 2017–2018 school year, 21,757 students with disabilities studied at state universities of the Russian Federation, which is comparable to the number of students at one university (Information about persons with disabilities—students of professional educational organisations and educational institutions of higher education). There is a significant discrepancy in the number of disabled students and graduates. Every year about 6,000 students with disabilities are admitted to universities in the Russian Federation, only 3,000 students complete their studies (Information about persons with disabilities—students of professional educational organisations and educational institutions of higher education). Half of students with disabilities cannot adapt to the conditions of higher education and, for various reasons, stop their studies. This means that the potential of persons with disabilities in our country remains unfulfilled, and the problem is socially significant.

The Belgorod State National Research University adopted the 'Accessible Environment' program for 2017–2021. The purpose of the program: to create for students with disabilities equal opportunities with other students to access educational programs and services of the university. We, as representatives of the University's psychological service, organised psychological and pedagogical support for disabled students. Specially organised work with students with disabilities can increase the effectiveness of educational and professional activities and best meet their special educational needs. We assist disabled students in overcoming internal barriers and updating development and self-development resources.

An experimental study of the psychological readiness of students with disabilities to research activities was the first step towards solving the question.

1.1. Theoretical background of the study

The problem of psychological and pedagogical support of disabled students is relevant both in Russian and in foreign university education (2015; Aleksandrova, Lebedeva & Bobozhey, 2014; Ali, 2002; Anichkin, 2013; Arzhanykh, Gurkina & Terekhova, 2014; Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff, 2018; Bersenev & Musabirov, 2011; Berry, 2011; Bobkova, 2017; Degtyareva, 2014; Galchun & Sazonov, 2017; Golikova & Kozurman, 2015; Kan, 2008; Kohler & Field, 2003; Konovalova, 2017; Kovaleva, 2011; Leontiev, Aleksandrova & Lebedeva, 2011; Leshner & Demenina, 2015; Lewis, Wheeler & Carter, 2017;

Martynova, 2002; Morosanova & Bondarenko, 2015; Plaksina & Zarubina, 2004; Psychological and pedagogical foundations of teaching students with disabilities in high school, 2013; Stanevsky, 2000; Voevodina & Gorina, 2013; Volkova & Mikhalchi, 2015; Test et al., 2009).

The views of Russian scientists on the problem of accessibility of higher education in Russia were formed by the end of the nineties of the last century. The studies analyse the causes of unequal opportunities in relation to higher education among various social groups in society. The development of inclusive education in higher education contributes to the unique theoretical and practical experience of Russian pedagogy in the field of vocational education of people with disabilities (Martynova, 2002; Plaksina & Zarubina, 2004; Psychological and pedagogical foundations of teaching students with disabilities in high school, 2013; Stanevsky, 2000).

Russian teachers and psychologists have developed guidelines for teachers to teach disabled students (2015; Bobkova, 2017). The methodological recommendations spelled out practical approaches to building inclusive education for students with disabilities in the conditions of higher education institutions taking into account their individual development.

Leshner and Demenina (2015) proved that the development of inclusive education needs a university policy aimed at motivating people with disabilities to receive higher education. A university should take into account the influence of social factors on disabled students and the development of higher education in general. In the future, this will provide not only a graduate but also a 'motivated professional' (Leshner & Demenina, 2015).

In the modern university, pedagogical and psychological conditions must be created for students with disabilities (Anichkin, 2013; Bersenev & Musabirov, 2011; Degtyareva, 2014; Golikova & Kozurman, 2015; Leshner & Demenina, 2015; Volkova & Mikhalchi, 2015). Bersenev and Musabirov (2011) described the possibilities of inclusive education using the support centre. Anichkin (2013) identified specific areas of study for students with disabilities, analysed the possibilities of individual educational trajectories of students with disabilities. The author emphasised the short-term training seminars aimed at optimising the interaction of students (Anichkin, 2013).

Golikova and Kozurman (2015) also consider the construction of individual educational trajectories as a condition for the inclusive education of disabled students. The authors point out the need to introduce health-saving, adaptation and pedagogical technologies into the practice of higher education. Degtyareva (2014) notes the need to build educational strategies of the subjects of inclusive education Volkova and Mikhalchi (2015) focused on the pedagogical conditions for the implementation of inclusive education in universities.

For inclusive education, you need to create psychological conditions. Galchun and Sazonov (2017) and Konovalova (2017) consider that the psychological service of the university is a necessary condition for supporting disabled students. Knowledge of the characteristics of students with disabilities is also an important psychological condition for inclusive education. Voevodina and Gorina (2013) analysed the specificity of the social portrait of disabled students on the basis of data from interviews with disabled students themselves and their classmates and teachers (Kovaleva, 2011). Aleksandrova, Lebedeva and Bobozhey (2014) studied the adaptation of students with disabilities to the conditions of the university. They revealed the main difficulties of adaptation, overcoming which will allow students with disabilities to more effectively join the student team and the educational process (Aleksandrova, Lebedeva & Bobozhey, 2014). Kovaleva (2011) showed the importance of building tolerance for people with disabilities in the context of inclusive education at the university (Voevodina & Gorina, 2013).

Effective vocational education of students with disabilities is a prerequisite for successful work. Arzhanykh, Gurkina and Terekhova (2014) found out that university graduates are more often guided by motives and factors related to the intangible aspects of labour. According to the study, higher education will become increasingly popular among graduates of schools with disabilities (Arzhanykh, Gurkina & Terekhova, 2014).

Vocational education of disabled students is impossible without the inclusion of personal resources. Kan (2008) considered inclusive education as a factor in the rehabilitation and social integration of people with disabilities. Leontyev, Aleksandrova and Lebedeva (2011) studied the personal resources and mechanisms of psychological stability among students with disabilities and their role in inclusive education.

Foreign researchers of the problem of inclusive education emphasise the specifics of teaching people with disabilities, their legal awareness and special training of teaching staff. The system of support for students with disabilities is developing in Western European countries for more than 40 years. In Germany, the USA and other countries, it is well coordinated with the system of 'counselling' and 'tutoring'. As Ismontas points out, of all possible methods of solving a problem, the one in which the personal potential of a disabled person is actualised, his desire to change the situation for the better, the support of a meaningful environment for him (Psychological and pedagogical foundations of teaching students with disabilities in high school, 2013).

Russlynn Ali points out the need to inform students with disabilities timely about their rights and responsibilities, which guarantees them the opportunity to use the benefits of higher education in a timely manner. The author gives specific laws that reflect the rights and opportunities for higher education for students with disabilities. Ali (2002) notes the possibility of academic adjustment (adaptation of the educational program). The adjustment includes changes in academic requirements and aids and services (for example, load reduction, provision of recording devices, extended testing time, etc.) (Ali, 2002).

Lewis, Wheeler, Carter point out the need to use modern knowledge, strategies and training approaches when working with people with disabilities. These researchers assign a special role to the professionalism of teachers, who should be able to work with a wide range of training needs (Lewis, Wheeler & Carter, 2017). Berry (2011) offered recommendations for experienced and novice teachers on the basis of data from a study of the professionalism of teachers in matters of inclusive education.

Test et al. (2009) showed that today in primary schools this process is more efficient than in universities. The authors emphasise the need to create special conditions for ensuring inclusion in.

Kohler and Field (2003) identified the following conditions for inclusive education: the creation of special educational programs, the development of students with disabilities, inter-agency cooperation and family participation. The integration of these areas will lead to the success of students with disabilities, the development of their skills and abilities, which will expand their capabilities (Kohler & Field, 2003).

Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2018) point out the need for continuing education and the provision of job places for graduates with disabilities. Only in this way, the professional education will be effective (Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff, 2018).

The earlier theoretical substantiation of the problem of inclusive education of students with disabilities in the university has determined the direction of experimental research.

2. Methodology

We have developed a diagnostic program to study the readiness of students with disabilities to research activities. The program identified the levels of readiness of students with disabilities to research activities, as well as their personal characteristics as the internal determinants of such

readiness. The study included 72 disabled students of the Belgorod State National Research University from one to six courses of study (bachelor degree course, specialist's program and master degree course), of which 61.1% are girls, 38.9% are boys aged 17–24 years.

The diagnostic program included the following techniques:

1. The questionnaire 'Style of self-regulation of behaviour with a scale of reliability' (Morosanova and Bondarenko, 2015);
2. The questionnaire 'Personal goals of students engaged in research activities' (author: Gerasimova);
3. Test-questionnaire 'Emotional orientation' (Test questionnaire Emotional orientation; Dodonov, 2009);
4. The value-normative methodology for studying the motivational readiness of students for research activities (author: Gerasimova).

The study was conducted remotely using a google-form. Anonymity and confidentiality of information were the condition for the study.

3. Results and discussion

The study included 72 disabled students of the Belgorod State National Research University from one to six courses of study (bachelor degree course, specialist's program and master degree course), of which 61.1% are girls, 38.9% are boys aged 17–24 years.

The technique 'Style of self-regulation of behaviour with a scale of reliability' allowed studying the self-regulation of students with disabilities. The subjects with high rates of general self-regulation are independent, they react flexibly and adequately to changing conditions, advancing and achieving a goal with them to a large extent consciously. With high motivation of achievement, they are able to form such a style of self-regulation, which allows compensating for the influence of personal, characterological features that impede the achievement of the goal. The higher the general level of conscious regulation, the easier it is for a person to master new types of activity, feel more confident in unfamiliar situations, the more stable his success in the usual activities.

Our study demonstrated the prevalence of subjects with low scores on a given scale. Most disabled students (79%) have a low level of self-regulation. Nearly, 21% of students with disabilities have an average self-regulation level. The need for conscious planning and programming of their behaviour for such students has not been formed. They are more dependent on the situation and the opinions of the people around them. They have reduced the possibility of compensating adverse personal characteristics to achieve the goal.

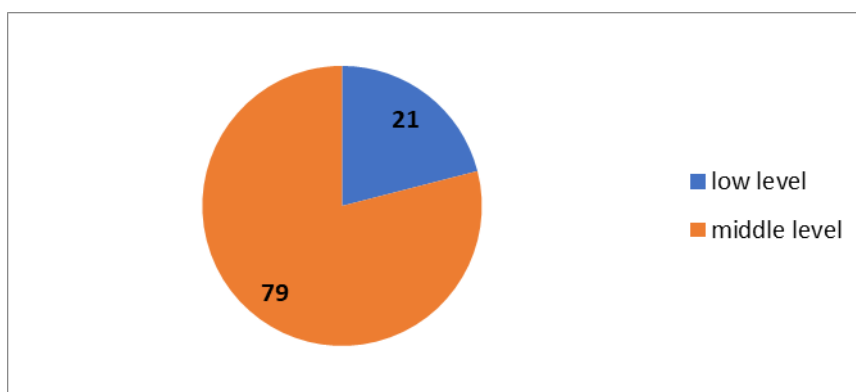


Figure 1. Self-regulation of students with disabilities (%)

Separate components of self-regulation of students in research activities are also underdeveloped. First, in students with disabilities planning is underdeveloped. The ability to plan characterises the individual characteristics of the nomination and retention of goals, the formation of a person's conscious planning activities. Nearly, 58% of students with disabilities have difficulties in planning research activities. Difficulties arise for students with disabilities already at the initial stage of research activities. They find it difficult to plan their work. They do not know where to start, how much time each stage of work requires, what timeframe it is necessary to meet, what to prepare by the time of the start of research activities, etc.

Nearly, 10% of respondents showed a high level of planning skills. Only a tenth of disabled students feel the need for conscious planning of activities. Plans are drawn up realistic, detailed, hierarchical and stable; the goals of the activity are set forth independently.

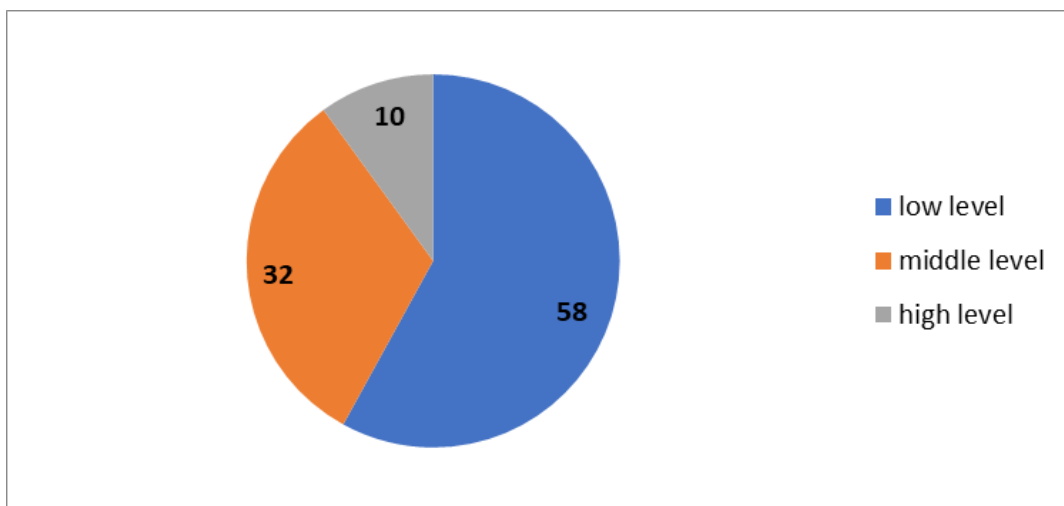


Figure 2. Planning skills of students with disabilities for research activities (%)

Evaluation of results is another indicator of student self-regulation in research activities.

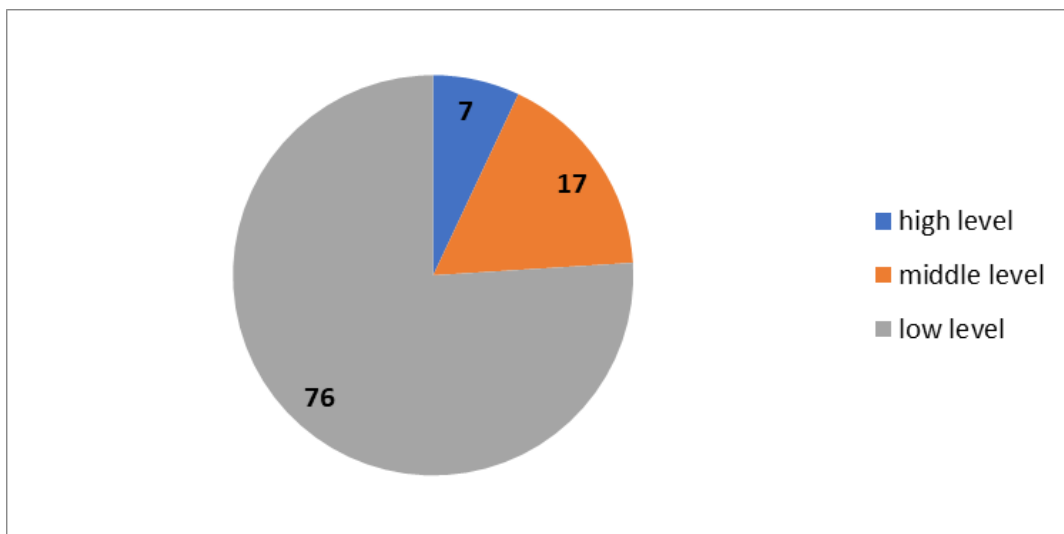


Figure 3. Evaluation of results as an indicator of student self-regulation in research activities (%)

Nearly, 76% of students with disabilities had a low level of research results evaluation, 17% had an average level. Only, 7% of students with disabilities had high levels of ability to assess the results of research activities. Most students with disabilities cannot do an interim analysis of the activities, which determines the future strategy of work. They do not notice their mistakes, they are not critical to their actions. Subjective criteria for the success of such students are not sustainable. This leads to a sharp deterioration in the quality of performance with an increase in the volume of work or the appearance of external difficulties.

Independent behaviour is another indicator of self-regulation of students with disabilities in research activities. Only, 3% of students with disabilities can carry out research activities independently. Nearly, 19% of students with disabilities have an average level. Nearly, 78% of students with disabilities have a low level of autonomy. Such students are dependent on opinions and assessments of others. They develop plans and action programs independently, often and uncritically follow someone else's advice. Disabled students with low autonomy have regulatory failures in the absence of outside help. Such students need help with ongoing assistance in organising research activities.

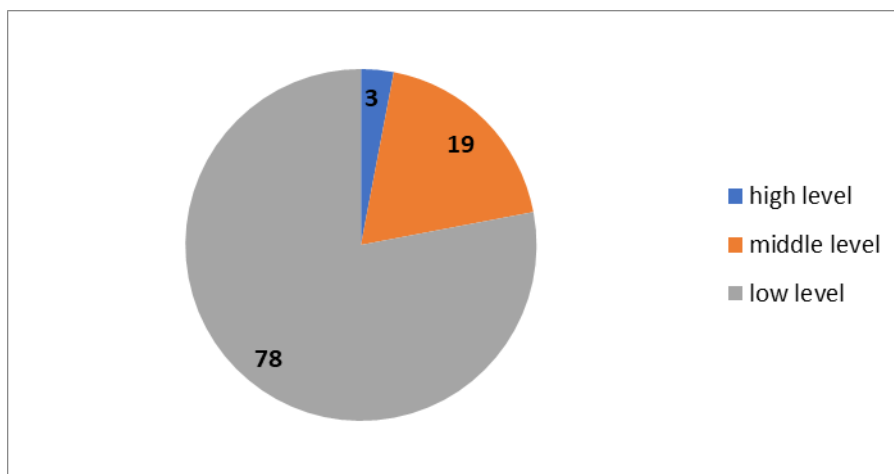


Figure 4. Independence as an indicator of self-regulation of students with disabilities (%)

We studied the personal goals of students with disabilities in research activities across the three main blocks of goals. Goals related to the social purpose of the profession. Goals related to the 'internal' well-being of the individual (cognition, self-knowledge, self-development and self-realisation). Goals related to the 'external' well-being of the individual (material and social well-being of the individual and family).

The goals related to the internal well-being of the individual prevailed in 76% of the respondents. Research and development activities are important for students with disabilities with the goal of learning, self-knowledge, self-development and self-realisation. The presence of personal expediency of research activities for students with disabilities is a positive sign. The lack of goals related to the social mission of the profession demonstrates a certain abstractness of students with disabilities from the realities of today. Often, students with disabilities do not study for the sake of their future life and the acquisition of a sought-after profession but for spending time at a university. Studying at the university appears in the life of a disabled student as the next stage, filled with communication with peers and teachers.

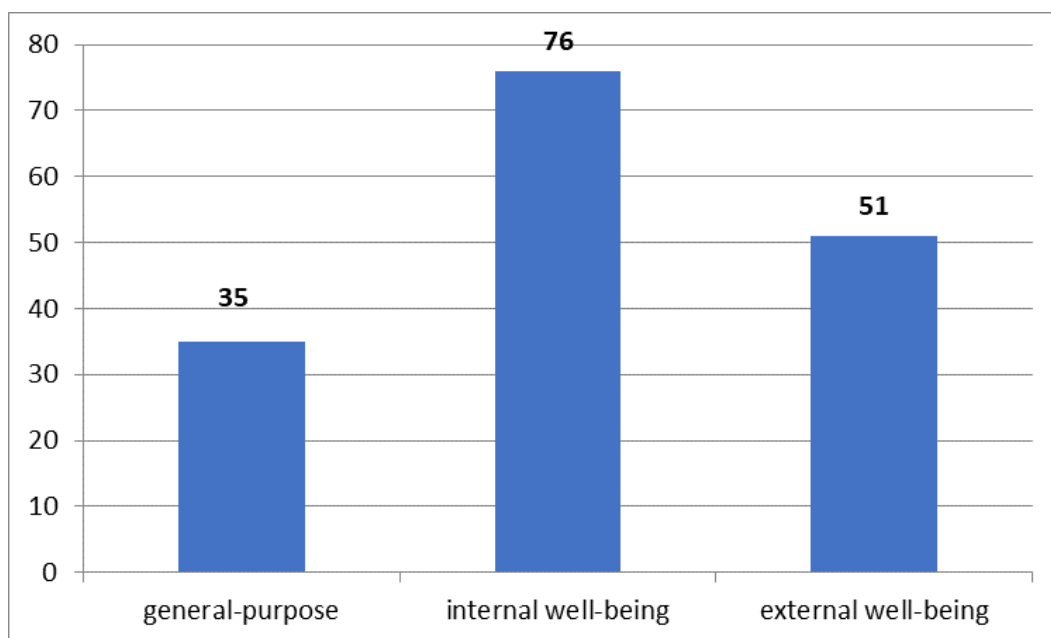


Figure 5. Distribution of students with disabilities by personal goals in research activities (%)

Positive emotions show us how satisfied our occupation is. The study of the emotional orientation of students with disabilities allowed us to reveal the place and role of intellectual emotions in research activities. It is intellectual emotions that are leading in the implementation of research activities.

Predominant emotions in research activities were communicative emotions (37 points). Our study demonstrated the presence of a pronounced need for communication and, accordingly, the importance of communicative emotions for students with disabilities. In the process of communication can be any emotion. Communicative emotions arise as a reaction to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the desire for emotional intimacy (to have a friend, a sympathetic interlocutor, etc.).

Praxic orientation ranked second (25 points). Praxic feelings are quite natural for disabled students. Such experiences are caused by the activity itself, changes in its course of work, success or failure to perform and difficulties in its implementation. Disabled students are willingly engaged in practical activities due to the limited nature of the majority of disabled students' sensual experience. Research activity in this case may be an end in itself. Students with disabilities need to show the other side of the research activities, which is carried out not for the sake of activity but carried out to achieve some kind of scientific result.

Our study showed that the least significant emotion in research activities is a romantic focus (seven points). A low romantic focus indicates a lack of special attraction of research for students with disabilities.

The lowest results were obtained when studying the motivational readiness of students to research activities. The value-normative methodology for studying students' readiness for research activities was tested by students of the Belgorod State National Research University. The author of the method, Gerasimova, is one of the co-authors of this article.

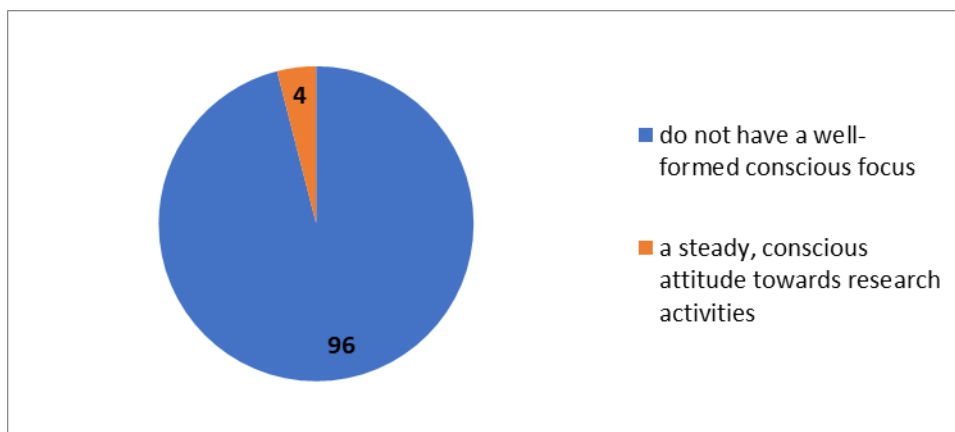


Figure 6. Orientation of students with disabilities to research activities (%)

The overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) do not have a well-formed conscious focus but show a situational focus when engaging in research activities. Only, 4% of respondents demonstrate a steady, conscious attitude towards research activities. Such students with disabilities refer to research activities as a necessity, a mandatory condition for obtaining a higher education diploma. The motives of professional self-development and the fulfilment of the public mission of a researcher of a topical research problem are not taken into account. The value-normative methodology allowed revealing not only the degree of stability of the position of students with disabilities but also the measure of its influence on real behaviour. This position remains only the intention or has an impact on the actual behaviour of the subjects.

Motivation for research activities of all respondents is insufficient. Our study showed that 30% of students with disabilities have a lower level of motivation than average, 5.5% have a low level and 64.5% have no research motivation.

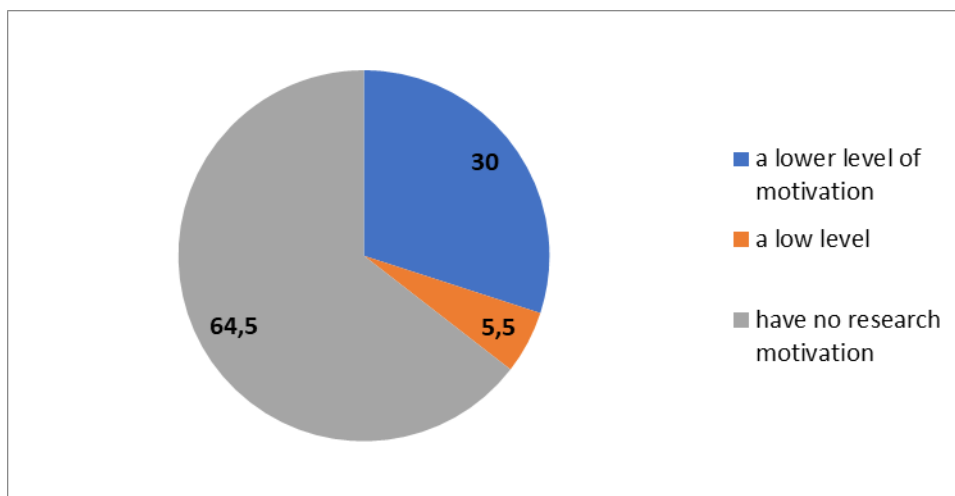


Figure 7. Motivation on research activities of students with disabilities (%)

Thus, the study showed that the vast majority of students with disabilities are not ready for research activities. Students with disabilities experience difficulties in self-regulation, their goals in research activities are related to internal well-being, the communication orientation is a leading emotional focus and there is a lack of motivation for research activities.

4. Conclusion

During our study, the following results were obtained:

1. A diagnostic tool was developed to study the psychological readiness of disabled students to research activities.
2. New data were obtained on the level of psychological readiness of students with disabilities of different courses and areas of preparation for research activities.
3. New data were also obtained on the personal determinants of the psychological readiness of students with disabilities to research activities.

Issues that need further development:

1. To determine the content of the work of the psychological service to ensure the socio-psychological adaptation of disabled students to the environment of the university.
2. Develop a program for teaching disabled students effective and rational methods of research and development activities for self-realisation and self-affirmation of the individual in this type of activity.
3. Develop and test psychological programs on the basis of the Psychological Service of the Belgorod State National Research University to overcome internal barriers and update the resources for the development and self-development of disabled students.
4. Develop mechanisms of interaction with employers to help disabled students build a successful career in the field of science, technology and innovation.

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