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**THE ATTITUDES OF THE SOCIAL MAJORITY TOWARDS VISUALLY
IMPAIRED PERSONS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS**

THESES OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Initially, the focus of the research had been the space usage and inter-group relations of visually impaired children, subsequently, the topic was approached from the aspect of disability studies (more precisely feminist disability studies) and gender studies, where we have witnessed an absence of Hungarian research and papers. In order to fill this research gap, after studying the inter-group relations at playgrounds (Lendvai & Nguyen, 2017), the approach of the feminist disability studies have become more emphatic (e. g. Lendvai & Nguyen, 2018; Lendvai, 2016). As a consequence, disability studies and gender studies are in the focal point of our interdisciplinary research, and with the aid of these disciplines we have studied the attitude of the social majority towards persons with disabilities and the perception of these attitudes by visually impaired persons.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Our previous research findings prompted a need to gain more knowledge about how visually impaired adults living in Hungary perceive the attitude of the social majority, and about the attitudes of the dominant group, as these topics have not been researched in several fields in Hungary, with special regard to the topic's social-psychological aspect. The primary objective of the present doctoral dissertation is to fill this research gap. The research questions and hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the literature of special-needs education, gender studies, disability studies and social psychology (Table 1).

By combining quantitative and qualitative methodology, i.e. in the course of triangulation (based on Jick, 1979), we wanted to shed proper light on the topic from different perspectives through combining mixed methodology with different techniques. For examining the attitudes of the social majority, questionnaires proved to be the most valid tools. On the other hand, qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and interpretative phenomenological analysis were applied for studying the more personal level: the lived experiences of visually impaired persons, and the perceptions of the attitudes of the dominant group¹ (Figure 1).

¹Members of the social majority are referred to here by the author as dominant group, as due to the stereotypes and negative attitudes associated with disabled persons, members of the social majority can be distinguished, based on possessing and exercising power and authority, from disabled persons who lack these, specifically because of stereotypes and negative attitudes.

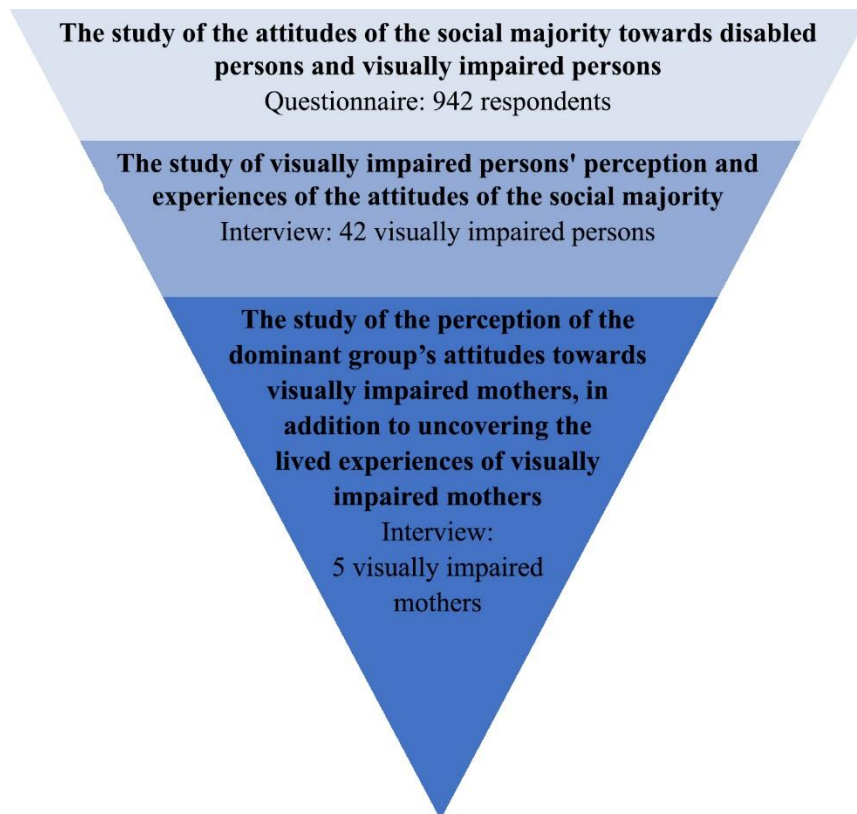


Figure 1: Research cone

The narrower focus of the research was to examine gender and competence. In the course of all three studies, the approach of gender studies and disability studies were dominant. As a result, examining gender, femininity and masculinity, as well as perceived competence have all played emphatic roles. All studies received the research ethics permission granted by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology, and all studies costs were covered by a research fund given by the ELTE PPK Doctoral School of Psychology.

Study	Objective	Research question	Selected method	Item number	Date of acquiring data
1.	Our goal was to compile a questionnaire with different international scales, that can survey the attitudes in Hungary towards disabled persons, especially focusing on visually impaired persons.	What are the characteristics of the attitudes of the social majority towards disabled persons? What are the characteristics of attitudes towards visually impaired persons?	Online survey conducted on a stratified random sample of the population. Title: The attitudes of the social majority towards disabled persons	Out of 1010 responses, the data of 942 persons were analysed (the answers of disabled persons were discarded)	April 2017
2.	The overall aim of the second study	Beyond their opinions about the attitudes of the	42 semi-structured interviews with	42 visually impaired persons:	Phase 1: Female

	was to uncover the perception of the attitudes of the social majority towards the visually impaired and the lived experiences of visually impaired persons. By interviewing visually impaired women, our goal was to examine their opinions and experiences about their femininity, while the interviews with visually impaired males focused on how they relate to their masculinity.	social majority, our research questions focused on competence and femininity/masculinity: In what way do the attitudes of the social majority appear in the experience and perception of visually impaired persons? In what way does the question of competence appear in the perception and experience of visually impaired persons? How do they perceive their femininity/masculinity, what do they think about the attitudes of the dominant group in connection with this?	visually impaired persons <i>Method of analysis:</i> qualitative thematic analysis	21 male and 21 female	interviews (spring 2016) Phase 2: Male interviews (from December 2016 to early April 2017)
3.	The objective of the third study was to explore the perception of the attitudes of the dominant group towards visually impaired mothers, in addition to uncovering the experiences visually impaired mothers lived through.	The research questions were open-ended, explorative and directed towards elaborating on the topic of phenomenology: How do visually impaired mothers live through maternity? How do they interpret the attitudes of the dominant group towards their maternity?	The analysis of the interviews of 5 visually impaired mothers out of the 21 female interviews utilised in the second study. <i>Method of analysis:</i> interpretative phenomenological analysis(IPA)	5 visually impaired mothers out of the 21 interviewees of the second study	

Table 1: Presenting the studies of the dissertation

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Disabled persons face the negative attitudes of society as a consequence of their disabilities (Antonak & Livneh, 2000), and this statement is valid about the attitudes of Hungarian society as well (see Bass, 2009; Szauer, 2009), despite the fact that the second most liked and accepted group (after Hungarians living in diaspora) are persons living with disability (Laki, 2010). Members of the dominant group feel sorry for disabled persons (cf. Louvet, 2007) and do not initiate friendly relations with them (see Harper, 1999; Green, 2007). Nevertheless, the attitudes of the members of the social majority towards disabled persons can be positive and negative at the same time. This ambivalence also appears in the stereotype content model of Fiske et al. (see Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Kervyn, Fiske & Yzerbyt, 2015), according to which disabled persons demonstrate a high value on the warmth dimension, but a low value on competence dimension, meaning that the members of the dominant group view them as likeable but incompetent (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007). As a long-term consequence of the paternalist

stereotype, disabled persons suffer from disadvantages on the job market as well as in the case of leisure activities (Beckett, 2009), as competence is an indispensable component of successful professional life (Louvet, Rohmer & Dubois, 2009).

According to conservative views on gender roles and the traditional male-female division of roles, it is still the task of the husband to be the breadwinner, while the woman should be the caretaker (Pongrácz Tiborné & S. Molnár, 2011). Women with disabilities are stigmatized multiple times due to their femininity and disability, and live under double oppression as a consequence of disability and sexism (Zinsmeister 2007). The members of the social majority often deny the right of disabled women to bearing children or even to sexuality (O'Toole, 2002). According to cultural stereotypes, mothers must possess both physical and mental health (Wendell, 2011). Reproduction and the birth of healthy children are in the focus, viewed by the dominant group as a sort of privilege on the basis of gender stereotypes, but they deny it from women with disabilities (Fine & Asch, 1988). Disabled women are interpreted in comparison to the normative body (Garland-Thomson, 2002) and can be in the role of the caretaker and the one being taken care of, the supported and the supporter at the same time (Wołowicz-Ruszkowska, 2016; Wendell, 2011).

Gender stereotypes and expected roles are present in the case of both sexes. As for gender stereotypes, counter-assimilation with the other group takes place, which means that the lack of traits and gender roles expected of men is demanded of women, while traits (Geis, 1993), as well as activities and jobs associated with women (Thompson, 1986; O'Neil, 1981, 2008), (which are considered more feminine) are expected to be avoided by men (see Blazina, 2003; Norton, 1997). Men who lack power and possess a masculinity that differs from the socially constructed norm are denied their manhood due to the absence of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Bem, 1993; Cheng, 1999). This view is present in today's Hungarian society, claiming that "disability and manhood are basically incompatible" (Kérchy, 2013, 25), as in this case physical power and autonomy, that are components of hegemonic masculinity, are perceived to be damaged.

4. FIRST STUDY – UNCOVERING THE ATTITUDES OF THE SOCIAL MAJORITY TOWARDS VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS

4.1. The objective of the study and the sample

The objective of the first study was to discover the attitudes of the social majority towards disabled persons, more specifically towards visually impaired persons. The focus of the online survey conducted on a stratified random sample of the population was the study of the attitudes

of the social majority towards disabled persons by measuring different international scales on the Hungarian sample. The sample framework for executing the data acquisition was provided by the online mailing list used by the company Solid Data. From this list, altogether 1010 persons completed the questionnaire in April 2017. The questionnaire was delivered to the recipients via e-mail, utilising the mailing list of the entrusted company. Among the 1010 respondents, 5.1% (52 persons) were disabled persons, and 2.5% (16 persons) were visually impaired (there were instances when a visually impaired person did not account for him/herself as a disabled person). In order to be able to examine the responses of persons belonging to the social majority, the data of disabled persons (68 persons) – including the visually impaired – were extracted, consequently, the examined sample changed to 942 persons. Within the sample of 942 persons, the stratifying variables were: sex (male = 51.9%; female = 48.1%), age (min. age = 18; max. age = 69; Mage = 43.188; SD = 13.822) and settlement type (capital = 19.7%; county centre = 21.4%; town = 30.7%; village = 28.1%). The distribution of the completed educational level of the respondents was the following: 8 years of primary education = 23.9%; vocational education = 24.9%; graduated high school = 32.1%; university degree = 19.1%.

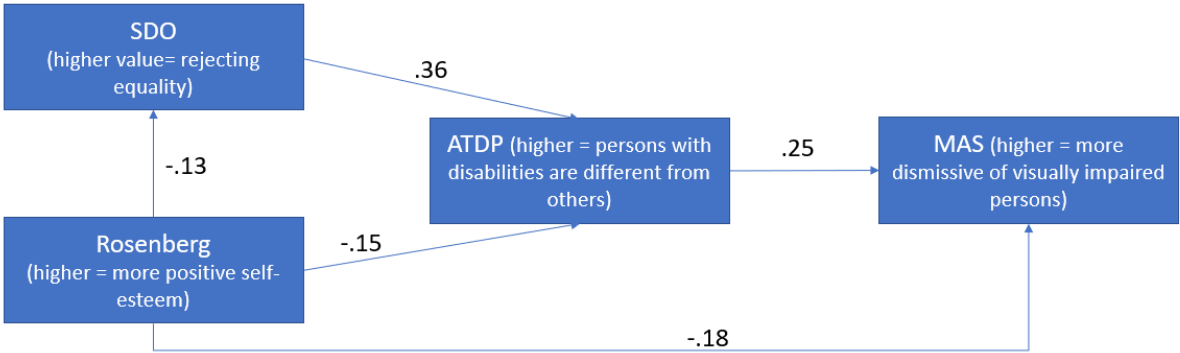
4.2. Study methods

The questionnaire was compiled on the basis of the literature and contained several international scales. At the time of the research, there were no available results produced on a Hungarian sample that used the same method as this study when examining the attitudes toward disabled persons. The scales applied were the following: Stereotype Content Model (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2007), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO7) (Faragó & Kende, 2017), Bogardus Social Distance Scale (based on Diószegi & Fehér, 2005), Contact (based on Pulai, 2009), Amiability Scale (based on Erős, Fábrián, Enyedi & Fleck, 1996) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Sallay, Martos, Földvári, Szabó & Ittész, 2014). Sexism was examined by two scales: the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall & Hunter, 1995, three items translated into Hungarian by Hunyady & Nguyen, 2001, further four items in Hungarian by Szabó, 2008) and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996 in Hungarian: Nguyen, 2007). The most defining scales for the present study were however the MAS and the ATDP-O scales, as both are scales that measure the attitudes towards disabled persons and have been either not used at all (like the MAS) or just sparsely (like the ATDP) on a Hungarian sample so far. MAS or the Multidimensional Attitude Scale (based on Findler, Vilchinsky & Werner, 2007) examines three attitudinal dimensions: the affective (emotional), cognitive (knowledge/thinking) and conative (behavioural) dimensions (see Olson & Zanna, 1993). In the course of the present

study, we used a modified version of the MAS, i.e. in the first case, the attitudes towards a visually impaired man, while in the second case, the attitudes towards a visually impaired woman were questioned, so the original non-gender subject “man/woman in a wheelchair” was modified due to the focus of the research.

4.3. Results

The social dominance orientation (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007) and the Rosenberg Scales (Findler et al., 2007) showed correlation and defined the attitudes towards disabled persons, and we have been able to prove the direct and indirect effect of self-esteem on the attitudes towards visually impaired persons. According to the results of the model, self-esteem predetermined social dominance orientation negatively ($\beta = -.13$; $p < .001$), i.e. those respondents who had a low self-esteem were less inclined to accept equality between groups and supported the necessity of maintaining the hierarchy. The Self-Esteem Scale predicted the attitudes towards disabled persons negatively ($\beta = -.15$; $p < .001$), while the Social Dominance Orientation Scale had a significant positive predictive value ($\beta = .36$; $p < .001$). Therefore, persons with lower self-esteem and persons with a higher score on the Social Dominance Orientation Scale viewed disabled persons as different from others. The Self-Esteem Scale had a direct negative predictive value on the output variable, i.e. the attitudes towards visually impaired persons ($\beta = -.18$; $p < .001$). It means that respondents with lower self-esteem had negative attitudes towards visually impaired persons. The attitudes towards disabled persons had a medium high positive predictive value on the attitudes towards visually impaired persons ($\beta = .25$; $p < .001$), which means that those respondents who viewed disabled persons as different from others, were typically more dismissive of visually impaired persons.



5. SECOND STUDY - THE PERCEPTION OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE SOCIAL MAJORITY TOWARDS VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS

5.1. Method

The focus of the second study was to explore femininity and masculinity, besides examining the perception of the attitudes of the dominant group towards visually impaired persons. In the course of the study, qualitative deductive analyses of the semi-structured interviews were employed (based on Braun & Clarke, 2006 and Tracy, 2010) in order to uncover latent contents. In line with constructionism, we intended to uncover the subjective, “constructed” reality of the visually impaired interviewees. Therefore, our research questions were the following: “In what way do the attitudes of the social majority appear in the experience and perception of visually impaired persons?” “In what way does the question of competence appear in the perception and experience of visually impaired persons?”. The question focusing on gender was different for each sex: “How do visually impaired persons perceive their femininity/masculinity?” “What do they think about the attitudes of the dominant group in connection with this?”.

5.2. Sample

In the course of the second study, semi-structured interviews were completed with 21 visually impaired women and 21 visually impaired men, who were contacted via organisations dealing with visually impaired persons. It was an important criterion that the applicants should not have multiple disabilities. The sample included persons with near-normal vision (12 persons), low vision (7 persons) and total blindness (23 persons), of whom 23 persons were with congenital visual impairment and 19 with acquired visual impairment. Their average age was 35,6 years. Most of the interviewees (24 persons) were highly qualified persons living in the capital, 5 persons lived in a shire-town, 9 in a city, 4 in a village. Their family status was the following: 16 single, 4 in a relationship, 6 lived in common-law marriage, 15 was married, 1 person was divorced.

5.3. Collecting data and analysis

The male interviewees were interviewed by a male interviewer (an intercultural expert), and female interviewees were interviewed by the author (except for two interviews) in a quiet and safe environment preferred by the interviewees. In the course of the qualitative content analysis of the 42 semi-structured interviews, the analysis process described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied. The coding and the topics were formulated through constant interaction with each other. Validity and reliability – taking the research of Wołowicz-Ruszkowska (2016) as an example – were ensured by the inclusion of an independent coder (female, special-needs

teacher) who coded the highlighted parts of the interviews. Then, after the consultation, the relevance and accuracy of the completed analysis was evaluated by another expert (male, psychologist) on a five point scale.

5.4. Results

In the course of the qualitative content analysis, different segments of the lives of the interviewees were explored and seven relevant major themes were identified. Within the main theme ‘the attitude of the dominant group’, the hierarchy between the different types of disabilities, the role of proactivity and the role of contact has been discussed. The question of competence also seemed significant: besides proving competence, it also explored the challenges of choosing a career and finding employment. The experiences gained at educational institutions formed the most significant part of the lives of the interviewees, especially in the case of experiences gained at segregated institutions, the adaptations which followed, the institutional support received and the development of peer relations. The attitude of the people in the microenvironment of the interviewees were also highlighted. Besides the attitude of the family towards the visually impaired person and visual impairment in general, supportive environment or the lack thereof also proved to be significant. Due to the gender aspect of this study, questions around femininity and masculinity were also explored. Based on the experiences of visually impaired women, the stereotypes regarding femininity, the perceptions of the disabled body and the perceptions of the attitudes of the social majority towards women living with disabilities were discussed. Visually impaired men highlighted their experiences with masculinity, the cultural markers of ‘menhood’ and the changes in the roles culturally obtained by men. Moreover, they discussed the perceptions of the attitudes of the social majority towards men living with disabilities. In both the interviews with visually impaired women and men, sexism, sexual harassment and sexual coercion was mentioned. Seven major topics were identified in the course of the qualitative content analysis. The sub-topics of the major topic: attitude of the dominant group were homogeneity, the hierarchy of disability types, the attitudes towards visually impaired persons and their impact, the role of contact, the role of proactivity in the life of visually impaired persons and the role of volunteering. The defining role of competence as a main topic included the sub-topics: proving competence, the difficulties of choosing a career path and finding employment and free time as the tool for proving competence. The experiences acquired in educational institutes as a main topic included the sub-topics: opinions about segregated institutes, dormitory experiences, adaptation and the integrated institute, institutionalised support and its absence, teachers’ attitudes, peer attitudes

and problematic peer relations. The sub-topic components of the microenvironment main topic are: the reaction of the family to visual impairment, the existence or absence of a supportive micro-environment, the definitive role of the upbringing style of parents and the role of the siblings of visually impaired persons in addition to the role of parents in terms of relations with the school. The focus of genders was provided by the main topics femininity and masculinity. The femininity main topic included: the perception of prescriptive stereotypes in connection with femininity, expectations concerning the body and appearance of women, the perception of the attitudes of the social majority towards women with visual impairment and the attitude towards one's own body and the disabled body. The sub-topics of the main topic masculinity were: the cultural markers of manhood, the changing role of men and the perception of the attitudes of the social majority towards men with disabilities. A separate unit included sexism, sexual harassment and rape as main topics and their sub-topics: sexism as a tool for overemphasising masculinity, sexism, sexual harassment as a victim and sexual coercion.

5.5. Discussion

The interviewees characteristically reported more positive attitudes when uncovering the general attitudes of the dominant group, compared to the opinions and experiences connected to the different topics. They believe the attitudes of the social majority are more positive (cf. Laki, 2010; Illyés & Erdősi, 1986) towards visually impaired persons than towards persons with other disabilities. Moreover, in the course of establishing contact with strangers, they have experienced the presence of helpfulness and openness. Nevertheless, in concrete situations, such as finding employment, educational experiences, or notions about the masculinity or femininity of the disabled person, their experiences and perception of the attitudes of the dominant group were more critical. It is important to highlight that the majority of the interviewees were not only highly qualified persons, but were also active in the field of volunteering and have been holding sensitivity trainings around the topics of disability and visual impairment. As a consequence, they proved to be trained at intergroup relations and knew the defining criteria of the possible deconstruction of stereotypes.

6. THIRD STUDY – THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED MOTHERS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEM

6.1. Methods

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, we found interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to be most suitable for our analysis. The process (sampling, data collection, interview analysis)

was conducted according to the IPA method. The aim of this study is to investigate the experiences of visually impaired women regarding motherhood and their perception of the dominant social group’s attitude. In accordance with IPA, our research question is open, explorative and aimed at delving into the topic of phenomenology (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009): „How do visually impaired women experience motherhood? How do they interpret the dominant social group’s view of their motherhood?”

6.2. Participants

Based on IPA methodology, a purposive sample was recruited because idiographic inquiry requires a homogeneous and small sample (based on Oxley, 2016), and the interviewees can be considered homogenous from the aspects of visual impairment, motherhood and highly qualified. In our analysis we treated the visually impaired women as a homogeneous group even though the wider group of women with disabilities is heterogeneous, having multi-faceted identities (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). However we theorize that the state of stigmatization and the prescribed mother-role are such “group-forming elements” (Hernádi and Könczei, 2013, 18), that make it possible for them to be analyzed as a group.

Name	Age	Type of Visually Impairment	Highest educational attainment	Marital status	Visual status of husband	Number of children
Gabriella	46	acquired: profound low vision	college	married	sighted	2 (adults)
Anita	38	acquired: blind	college	married	sighted	1 (primary school)
Rita	33	congenital: profound low vision	university	married	visually impaired	3 (from small child to primary school)
Sára	37	acquired: profound low vision	college	married	visually impaired	1 (small child)
Júlia	34	congenital: profound low vision	university	married	visually impaired	1 (small child)

The names were changed in each instance, in order to preserve anonymity.

6.3. Data collection

In recruitment, we asked for the participation of women who did not live with cumulative disabilities, were older than 18, had a congenital or acquired visual disability (near-normal vision, low vision, total blindness) and who would gladly take part in a study in which they would be asked about their thoughts regarding femininity and the attitude of the social majority. The letter contained a prospectus with relevant information as well as a statement of consent,

which stated that taking part in the semi-structured interview was purely voluntary and could be ended at any time, and that any answer could be denied; it would last approximately 90 minutes, anonymity was guaranteed, no monetary compensation would be given and that if need be the involvement of a psychologist could be requested.

The data was recorded in the spring of 2016. As part of the research twenty-one interviews were conducted, from which five were selected to be analyzed using the IPA method. The five chosen interviewees were mothers, and the perspective, experience, depth and detail of their accounts were suitable for analysis by the IPA method. The interviews were conducted by a female interviewer.

6.4. Results

Master theme	Emergent theme
A. Attitude of broader environment	
B. Gender role expectations and stereotypes	B1. Maternal identity, experiences of motherhood B2. Coordination of roles B3. Contribution of the husband/father
C. Microenvironment	C1. Micro-communities C2. Family's attitude
D. Healthcare and social welfare system	D1. Prenatal care and childbirth D2. Health visitor and paediatrician D3. Social welfare system

In our analysis of the interviews we identified the attitude of the broader environment's as the master theme. Several emergent themes appeared within the other themes we examined. Within the master theme of gender role expectations and stereotypes emerged the themes of maternal identity and the experience of motherhood, the coordination of the roles and the contribution of the husband/father. Within the master theme of microenvironment emerged the themes of small communities and family's attitude, while within the master theme of health and social care emerged the themes of prenatal care and birthing, health visitors and paediatric and social care appeared.

6.5. Discussion

The typical experience of visually impaired mothers is primarily one of being treated as a person with a disability by members of the dominant social group. While the interviewees emphasised their identity as mothers when defining themselves, their perceptions reflect the opinion of the

broader environment, and that of the dominant social group, which would typically deny them the role of caretaker and competent mother. This paternalistic approach is not only found among members of the social majority but is also reflected in the attitudes of the microenvironment. Therefore, the concept of ideal motherhood, as determined by the dominant social group, has managed to slip through the holes of the family safety net. The microenvironment has not formulated its notion of motherhood according to its personal acquaintance with the woman in question and her actual capabilities, but according to the attitude of the social majority. The healthcare and medical points of view require further changes, as visually impaired mothers need to be treated as well as advised on the grounds of their individual needs.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Comparing the main findings of the studies

The different research objectives were reached, as the attitudes of the dominant group towards disabled persons, and within that towards visually impaired persons were measured on different scales. These scales are applied in the fields of social psychology and special-needs education and the correlation between the different scales was uncovered. Additionally, the extensive presentation of the perspectives of visually impaired persons was given a central role, as the present dissertation was created on the principle of “nothing about us, without us” (see Gombkötő, Szauer, Páter & Szentkatolnay, 2011). In the course of the qualitative phase, the experiences of visually impaired persons were examined and presented in detail, besides their perceptions of the attitudes of social majority. It is important to emphasise that the findings of this phase – due to the methodology and sampling – cannot be generalised, nevertheless, they are highly sensitive representations of reality. Two major topics unfolded along the research objectives, that have been the common element of all three studies: competence and gender have become the main focal points of the research.

The results of both the quantitative and the qualitative studies showed that the persons perceived by any external viewer as a disabled person do not necessarily view themselves as such (Wendell, 2011). The positive impact of contact has also emerged as an element that connects the three studies: the narratives of the interviewees have confirmed the findings of the first study in connection with the key role of contact in creating a more positive attitude. The findings of the first study have also correlated from other aspects with the negative, individual experiences that appeared in the second and third studies. In the course of all three studies, the ambivalent feelings and stereotypes towards disabled persons and visually impaired persons have been present, and these caused a higher level of social anxiety (Fichten & Amsel, 1986), therefore,

the inter-group contacts were characterised by a general feeling of discomfort (Fichten, Robillard & Sabourin, 1994). These psychological mechanisms were noticeable at the affective, cognitive and conative levels as well (Park, Faulkner & Schaller, 2003).

Proving competence was of great importance for the visually impaired persons, the questioning of competence and the negative attitudes of the dominant group in connection with this were outlined in the findings of the first study. The findings of the second and the third studies underpinned that the lives of visually impaired persons are affected by this destructive attitude. Taking note of the different phases of the lives of the interviewees (ranging from the attitudes of families, through difficulties at school and the workplace, to the attitudes connected to femininity and masculinity and even connected to maternity), their perception of the dominant group's generally characteristic opinion was that people view visually impaired persons as incompetent. As a consequence, visually impaired persons felt that they are obliged to demonstrate a significantly better performance than the members of the dominant group in order to be treated as equal members of society. The collective action showed correlations with this – besides belief in a just world and system justification – as the interviewees were clear about the privileges of the dominant group. They gave account of several exclusive and discriminatory cases against visually impaired persons that demonstrate the negative attitudes of social majority and how their competences are questioned. For disabled persons, collective action can be an important point of bonding, when they can act as the representatives of their group (e.g. during volunteering), with the aim of improving the conditions of the whole group (cf. Wright, 2009).

The theoretical background of feminist disability studies served as the starting point for this research. According to these studies, the social majority views disabled persons as asexual or genderless (Garland-Thomson, 2002; Shakespeare, 1999). The findings of the quantitative research showed that if the question stated the sex of the visually impaired person, there was a difference between judging female and male visually impaired persons. Therefore, being viewed as genderless by the social majority was not proven within this study. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that when posing the question, it was signalled (and thus highlighted) for the respondent that the visually impaired person belongs to a certain sex, and in a real person perception situation this works differently from this artificial situation and person perception. The interviews with the visually impaired persons, however, underpinned the genderlessness that appeared in the literature (Garland-Thomson, 2002; Wendell, 2011; Shakespeare, 1999), as according to the interviewees, especially in the case of female visually impaired persons, the

members of the dominant group did not consider their gender, but viewed them primarily or exclusively as disabled persons.

The objective of the present dissertation was to present such an overview of the current situation of visually impaired persons in Hungary, which is in line with The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations. As a result, the studies made an effort to present, with an interdisciplinary approach, how these rights are ensured in Hungary, and how the persons affected perceive the application of these rights, and what general picture characterises the attitudes of the social majority. In summary, social inclusion and participation, dignity, respect for autonomy and diversity, refraining from negative discrimination, equal opportunities, and gender equality are all basic principles that are components of the UN Convention and this dissertation reflects upon these in detail.

7.2. The practical relevance of the results

It was a general goal of the empirical studies to aid the implementation of future attitude research with the scales created for researching attitudes towards disabled persons and with the scales modified by the topic, and also to add items and scales connected to disabled persons to social psychological attitude research. It has been proven that besides general attitude shaping, it is necessary to pay special attention to education, to the job market aspect and to healthcare. Parallel to this, the comprehensive sensitisation of society would also be indispensable. The results of the research can be relevant to civil society organisations working with disabled persons as well. It is our prime goal to provide help for their future work with our data.

7.3. The limitations of the research, future directions

In the course of the application of the qualitative and quantitative methods, besides the specialities of the methodology, it posed a difficulty that the topic of the dissertation is sparsely researched in Hungary from this type of interdisciplinary approach. As a result, numerous scales were questioned used in the questionnaire during the quantitative study which affected its length. Qualitative researches – like this current studies – has several limitations. First of all, with respect to the choice of sample being non-representative, the results of the study cannot be generalised, however, qualitative thematic analysis does not aim at that. The sample of the qualitative research included especially motivated interviewees, who were also highly qualified persons. It would be worthwhile to examine other aspects of the rich material recorded in the course of the research. This could potentially be the secondary analysis of the semi-structured interviews recorded with visually impaired persons, as the present analysis did not unfold every

segment of the interviews. Furthermore, it would be useful to apply the different attitude measurement scales used in the questionnaire on other samples and in other contexts.

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