

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH NGO ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

According to the approved Lifelong Learning Strategy (2004) by the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministers of Social Security and Labour, the country must strive to involve NGOs and social partners in the development of adult education. According to Rutkienė, Trepulė (2009), the lifelong learning paradigm covers all areas of human learning, provides opportunities for people to learn throughout their lives. It is very important for those who have not used or had no access to education for various reasons, departed from the job market etc. Lifelong Learning emphasizes the importance of both the EU and Lithuania in the context of education policy and practice of education (Teresevičienė, 2001).

Key words: non-governmental organizations, social inclusion, participation, empowerment.

Introduction

In addition to the application of lifelong learning principles in the communities, NGOs and other civil society organizations, the importance of citizenship education is significant too (Morris, 1998).

The movement of people with disabilities of the eighties of the last century in the U.S. and Europe emphasized citizenship as the presumption of a full member of the community, that consists of two dimensions: 1) participation in the political process (the right to vote, to participate in political parties, to join an NGO or other groups on the basis of interests and concerns, rights of the expression of speech, etc.), and 2) participation in social life of the community.

In Lithuania, according to Pūras (1997), at the initial phase of integration it was more focused on the reorganization of traditional institutions for people with disabilities and development of a new type of institutions, agencies, non-governmental organizations. Later, the paradigm of social change led to the increased participation of people with disabilities in the society, the state-building process, and it had an impact on national social policy change: the centralized state social assistance was no longer able to provide social security for the majority of social groups (Jonutytė, 2007), not even mentioning full-fledged social inclusion for people with disabilities. Emerging non-governmental organizations have become an intermediate between the state and the people who need social, economic and educational assistance.

By participating in the activities of NGOs, people with disabilities have gained a realistic chance for self-identification and social participation, expression of citizenship and the inherent powers. Non-governmental organizations not only strengthened the sense of community, but also allowed the development of much more universal human rights and the intrinsic powers: to expand the public experience in dealing with persons with disabilities, educational activities for the creation of social welfare not only for themselves but for others. In this way, participation in the activities of NGOs becomes an important precondition for the formation of a democratic, civil society and the optimization of integration processes of people with disabilities as active citizens of the State (Stumbraitė, 2006).

Discussing the idea of social participation, Ebersold (2004) identified the following development trends: 1) development of communication for greater cooperation of people with disabilities. The changing environment creates preconditions for developing interpersonal and inter-institutional relations through individual participation and full involvement in the activity of communities, organizations; 2) the promotion of social inclusion through personal empowerment. The main activity of a community is to enable a person helping to reveal his/her strengths and limit the manifestation of weaknesses (Ruškus, Mažeikis, 2007). In summary, the following factors contributing to the empowerment process can be distinguished: the content of NGOs activity and social openness and willingness to cooperate of those involved in the NGO.

In addition to trade unions, specialized associations, church, non-governmental organizations are an important part of civil society. Each NGO representing the interests of a certain population group, seeks not only its own goals, but acquires and develops social awareness and recognition, carry out educational activities in order to meet various needs of people with disabilities in a social context. Interactions between individuals create presumptions of the identification of social roles and social identity; empowers successful social adaptation, strengthening the self-esteem of people with disabilities, confidence in their power (G. Mead, cit. Giddens, 2005). Inadequate communication skills of people with disabilities become a barrier for social inclusion.

Distinction is made between the values to be followed by NGOs: social justice – fundamental human rights and security needs of everyone in an organization; active participation – people in NGOs must participate in solving their current problems and making important decisions; equality and distribution – the possibility and power distributed among all its members; training and competence – recognition and evaluation of the knowledge and skills that are used by people solving different social, economic problems; communication and cooperation, good faith communication with others, other organizations; social assistance and support – their assurance to those who need it most (Godvadas, 2004).

The activities and development of NGOs are associated with the necessity to quickly respond to human needs resulting from natural disasters, military conflicts, and ethnic unrest, etc. First, it was the humanitarian aid provided by the communities. Eventually the understanding of aid of the business through campaigns, promotions expanded, thus the formation of a new generation of NGO theory and business strategy began. Classifying and analyzing the development process of NGOs, Korten (1987, 1990) refers to the three generations in the development of strategies of NGOs, which can be discussed in the following ways: 1) the relief and welfare, 2) membership of a particular community, 3) NGOs as a framework for sustainable development. Development strategy of NGO, as a sustainable system, (Korten, 1987) focuses on non-governmental organizations with the participation in the wider institutional and political contexts that affect the development of the NGO itself. Third-generation NGO development strategy is not linked to specific communities, but its

activity aims towards particular social policy changes in the institutional, regional, national or global level. In addition to these characteristics, the NGO has a “citizens’ movement, which encourages a broader – “social vision” (Korten, 1990, p. 115).

Lithuanian NGO activities are very diverse not only in the content but also the legal concept of the activity analysis and they have attracted many researchers’ attention: significant studies by Žemaitis (2004), Zaleskienė, Rutkauskienė (2003), Dromantienė (2003), Šmitienė (2007) Ruškus, Mažeikis (2007), Žalimienė (2002, 2006), Gailienė (2006) create conditions for NGO activities to become a competent and socially relevant force. Scientific ideas, analyzed in the work of foreign researchers (Selian, 2004, Lewis, Madon, 2004, Lindsay, 2004) and developed in Lithuanian sociocultural, economic context, reveal new aspects of NGO activities, which should be more studied for understanding of the NGO phenomenon. A large part of NGOs brings together people with disabilities with the participation of NGOs to increase their opportunities for social inclusion, satisfies socioeducational and psychosocial needs. On the other hand, some studies (Galvanauskaitė, Ibenskas, Juralevičienė, 2006) show lack of the co-operation of NGOs with other institutions, restricting NGOs activities to the provision of material assistance. Thus, it is possible to formulate the following research issues of concern: *what is the real situation in Lithuania of NGOs fulfilling various socioeducational needs of people with disabilities? What are the principles of social empowerment and participation of persons with disabilities in the activities of NGOs and how are they manifested? What psychosocial characteristics and presumptions of empowering do the participants of NGO themselves and the administration identify?*

The object of the research – principles of social empowerment and socio-oriented participation in NGO of people with disabilities in Lithuania.

The aims of the research: to reveal the principles of social empowerment and socio-oriented participation in NGO of people with disabilities in Lithuania.

The objectives were:

- 1) To reveal the principles of the social empowerment and participation in NGO activities of persons with disabilities by developing a quantitative instrument (questionnaire).
- 2) To reveal the relations of the respondents’ demographic, socioeducational characteristics and variables applying descriptive statistical methods.
- 3) To reveal preconditions of empowerment, social participation and activation of people with disabilities who are in the NGO activities.

Methodology and Organization

In a study theoretical analysis and the questionnaire methods have been used. According to the theoretical analysis and operationalization of the research object, closed questionnaire was drawn up. The questionnaire consists of 10 units (blocks) and 108 diagnostic attributes. The questionnaire consists of instructions (guide), social-demographic variables block (data about gender, place of residence, etc.); and the main part – diagnostic (construct) block. This block reflects the participation in the activities of NGOs, NGO-based functions, experiences, the distinctive features, involvement of the NGO members and their family members, benefit to society, meeting socioeducational needs, partnership and cooperation on the rating scale (see Table 1).

Table 1. Questionnaire diagnostic blocks and component variables

Blocks of diagnostic variables	Symptoms - the number of claims (N)	The type of scale
Demographic variables	15	Nominal and rank scale
Participation in the NGO activity variables	15	rank scale
Participation in the NGO activity functional variables	10	rank scale
Participation in the NGO work experience variables	8	rank scale
NGO members and their family members in-variables	4	rank scale
The benefit to the public variables	10	rank scale
The satisfaction of socioeducational needs variables	12	rank scale
Decision-making variables	15	rank scale
Partnership and cooperation variables	18	rank scale
The main features of NGO	1	Nominal scale

The statistical methods (descriptive statistics, parametric ANOVA test, nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney test) were used analyzing the results of quantitative research findings. Using both parametric and nonparametric tests, it was intended to reveal the partnership relations of the variables of different genders, different regions of the country, different experience in the NGOs, as well as members of NGOs and the administration and functions provided by various NGOs and co-operation. The results obtained have been processed and analyzed based on the reliability index ($p \leq 0.05$). Indicator of statistical significance (p) shows that the respondents' opinion is statistically significant. This means that in the re-examination, the results of error would not exceed 5%.

Research sample

A total of 175 respondents ($N = 175$) are persons with disabilities participating in the Lithuanian NGOs, representatives of the administration and management of NGOs of people with disabilities. Of 175 respondents 104 (59.4%) are members of NGOs, 23 (13.1%) the Board/Bureau members, eight (4.6%) principals/presidents, 14 (8.0%) of other persons involved in NGO activities, and 26 (14.9%) did not indicate their status.

In quantitative research the principles of the creation of the target sample were applied. In the study 450 questionnaires were distributed, 175 of which returned (return of 38.9%). Before distributing the questionnaires (by mail or directly) the possibility of completing the questionnaires and instructions have been discussed with the Chairs of the NGO(s). The survey involved 142 (81.1%) women and 33 (18.9%) men. Predominant duration of the involvement into NGOs was from 6 to 10 years – 75 (42.8%) and 1-5 years 58 (33.1%), followed by respondents from NGOs involved for 11-15 years – 19 (10.8%) and from 16 to 20 years – 10 (5.7%), 13 (7.4%) did not respond. The distribution of the survey respondents according to the place of residence: NGO members who live in the city of Šiauliai and in the district – 40 (22.9%), in Kaunas city and district – 37 (21.1%), Panevėžys city and district – 27 (15.4%), Klaipėda and the district – 17 (9, 7%) and other Lithuanian cities and regions (Alytus, Tauragė, Marijampolė, Utena, Telšiai) – 49 (28%) and 5 (2.9%) study participants did not indicate their place of residence.

Results of the research

In order to reveal the principles and presumptions of social empowerment and participation of the NGOs of people with disabilities in the quantitative study the relations of

the various functions of NGOs, cooperation and partnership and the respondents' demographic variables were identified.

People with disabilities are more vulnerable than others with the same rights in the society. NGOs, taking into account the rights of people with disabilities and their legitimate interests, have the possibility to provide various activities ensuring social inclusion and preventing social exclusion. It is important how people with disabilities being active members of the organization evaluate the possibilities of the non-governmental organizations to provide socioeducational assistance. The respondents' assessment of NGO current situation and expectations concerning NGO activities are presented in the table.

Table 2. NGO functions to meet the expectations of people with disabilities through NGOs activities of (N = 175)

NGO functions	M ¹ *	M ²	The average difference	p
The legal function	2,57	3,56	0,99	0,001
The function of social education	2,96	3,55	0,98	0,001
Medical aid function	1,91	3,29	0,96	0,001
Preventive function	2,37	3,29	0,92	0,001
Evaluation function	2,68	3,30	0,62	0,001
Educational function	3,35	3,83	0,49	0,001
Management function	3,20	3,66	0,46	0,001
Consulting function	3,35	3,72	0,37	0,001
Coordination function	3,42	3,66	0,24	0,001

* Legend: M1 – the average of the assessment of the current situation, M2 – the average of the assessment of expectations; p3 – a statistically significant difference (when $p < 0.05$) between the situation assessment and expectation averages.

The analysis of the data showed that respondents are sufficiently critical of the functions performed by NGOs, although they are active members of most of these organizations. None of the functions carried out by NGOs satisfy ($p = 0.001$) the respondents. One of the most essential activities of NGOs, to develop which the respondents pointed out the expectations for changes (i.e. activity development), is related to the legal and representation functions of NGOs. Also, the respondents would like to see those activities which would focus on social education and disease prevention, the aspects of rendering medical assistance.

Consulting assistance and the development of co-ordination functions of NGO are missed the least. This may be related to the recently sufficiently developed consultative and coordinating activities. In essence, a consulting activity is necessary for people when they face problems, but it is obvious that recently people already need specific knowledge or assistance, and NGOs providing consulting services is unable to solve it. On the other hand, the extension of the desired functions of NGOs indicates the specifics of the group of respondents: these are people who more likely than other members of NGOs have some or other health problems. In assessing these results, it can be argued that people with disabilities tend to associate the functions of NGOs with the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, development of general educational activities.

Table 3 shows the respondents' assessments of the participation in NGO activities (current situation and in the aspect of expectations).

Table 3. Assessments of participation in the NGO activities by persons with disabilities (n = 175)

Personal description of the activities of NGOs	M ¹ *	M ²	The average difference	p
Mutual help group activities of NGOs	2,85	3,37	1,34	0,001
NGO concern not only on the physical health but also on the creation of the possibility to reveal their skills	2,98	3,47	0,50	0,001
Provision of NGO proposals for the government agencies	2,71	3,13	0,43	0,001
In planning the activities of NGOs, members discuss relevant issues, identify priorities for action	2,95	3,31	0,36	0,001
NGOs cooperate with medical institutions	2,86	3,20	0,34	0,001
The experience of communication with the public service	3,05	3,33	0,28	0,001
NGOs cooperate with the media	3,13	3,32	0,19	0,001

* Legend: M1 – the average of the assessment of the current situation, M2 – the average of the assessment of expectations; p3 – a statistically significant difference (when $p < 0.05$) between the situation assessment and expectation averages.

As it is shown by the survey data, the respondents in assessing the activities of NGOs, mainly aim to the development of mutual aid activities (mean difference between the current situation and expectations is even 1.34). When people with disabilities get involved into the activity of NGOs their activeness and motivation are developed and the participation positively influences their attitude towards disability. One of the motivational factors of people with disabilities in the NGOs – communication needs. Experiencing positive interaction people with disabilities are more inclined to focus on mental rather than physical characteristics of the partner, thereby increasing the concept of personal identity. The results suggest that NGOs should put more emphasis not only on the physical health care, but also make it possible to reveal their skills, opportunities for self-expression. It means that NGOs of people with disabilities by their activities aim to the members' mental health promotion and harmonization.

Two other NGO activities, which are actualized by study participants, are related to social capital development. Higher expectations of the respondents were to the provision of the proposals of NGO activities to government agencies. According to the survey data, respondents estimated that the prediction of the priorities of the organization and joint discussions in the future should be given more attention.

Collaboration with medical institutions is another NGO activity that people are missing. On the one hand, the treatment does not require the professionals to participate in NGO activities. On the other hand, health care activities cannot take place in non-governmental organizations. However, this demand could be met by health education specialists that have been trained in recent years and who could provide educational services of health promotion, social education.

As it is clear from the survey data, the respondents pointed out the cooperation with the media to be developed as the NGO field. Media attention to the NGO activities in which people with disabilities take part in recent years has increased. It could be due to the increasing finances for social projects that come from the structural funds of EU; with the development of processes of social integration and increscent of social participation of people with disabilities as well.

In order to reveal various aspects of meeting the expectations of people with disabilities in NGOs activities, firstly the relations between the respondents' experience in the NGOs and

the functions performed by the NGOs have been inspected (using the parametric ANOVA test). The obtained data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Relation of respondents' length of involvement of NGOs and NGO-based functions (the current situation aspect) (n = 175)

Functions performed by NGO	From 0 to 5 years	From 6 to 10 years	11 years and over	Statistically significant difference
	M	M	M	$p \leq 0,05$
Consultative function of NGOs	3,25	3,44	3,74	0,07
Preventive function of NGOs	2,44	2,51	2,55	0,86
Medical function of NGOs	2,27	2,19	1,84	0,22
Educational function of NGOs	3,26	3,38	3,49	0,33
Social education function of NGOs	2,63	3,30	3,13	0,01

Assessing NGO roles in the aspect of current situation between the duration of respondents' participation in NGOs and NGO-based functions (medical, advisory, educational and preventive), any statistically significant difference was not found. As it is shown by data analysis, a statistically significant difference is in the assessment of the social function of education: the respondents having short experience of the participation in the activities of NGOs (from 0 to 5 years) give the lowest assessment to this function in comparison with the respondents having long (over six years) experience of the participation in the activities of the NGOs. It may be presumed that the social development (training, teaching, education) function is assessed more positively (i.e. as relatively well-conducted) by the respondents having 6-10 years experience of the participation in the activities of NGOs compared with the assessments of the respondents having short (up to 5 years) experience in the NGOs activities.

Analyzing the relations of functions performed by NGOs (in the aspect of future expectations) and the duration of the respondents' participation in the NGOs statistically significant difference was not found.

Using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test it was aimed to reveal the relations between the variables of the status of members of NGOs (ordinary member and the representative of administration) and the functions performed by various NGOs and co-operation and partnership. Table 5 shows the relations between the variables of the status of the respondents in NGOs and the functions carried out by various NGOs.

Table 5. Relation of NGO membership status (members and administrators) and the functions provided by NGOs (in the aspect of future expectations) (n = 175)

NGOs' functions	Members of NGO	Administration of NGO	Statistically significant difference
	M	M	$p \leq 0,05$
<i>Current situation</i>			
Social education function of NGOs	3,78	3,70	0,92
Educational function of NGOs	3,82	3,86	0,93
Preventive function of NGOs	3,25	3,46	0,62
Medical function of NGOs	3,23	2,37	0,02
Consultative function of NGOs	3,56	3,67	0,13

In assessing NGO roles in the aspect of the current situation statistically significant difference was not found between the assessments of the members of NGOs and the administration, although the average of the assessments of educational, preventive, medical and counseling functions of the latter is slightly higher. As it is shown by data analysis, a statistically significant difference is only in the assessment of medical NGOs function: the representatives of the administration compared with ordinary members of the NGO assess this function as more and better performed. That is, the management representatives of NGOs tend to assess medical function as developed, and other non-governmental organization members see it as less developed.

In the analysis of the relations of the functions carried out by NGOs in terms of future expectations and the status of a member of NGO statistically significant difference was not found. Table 6 shows the data on relations between the variables of the status of the respondents in NGOs cooperation and partnership.

Table 6. Relationship variables of NGO membership status (members and administrators) and the NGO Co-operation and partnership (N = 175)

Cooperation and partnership variables	Members of NGO	Administration of NGO	Statistically significant difference
	M	M	$p \leq 0,05$
<i>Current situation</i>			
NGOs, to which I belong, cooperate with the media	2,96	3,47	0,001
NGOs, to which I belong, cooperate with educational and training institutions	2,96	3,08	0,02
NGOs, to which I belong, cooperate with other similar NGOs in Lithuania	3,17	3,51	0,03
NGOs, to which I belong, cooperate with political parties	2,34	2,94	0,001
Implement joint activities (events, workshops) with mainstream schools	2,55	2,86	0,04
Go to excursions together with our partners	2,87	3,32	0,02
<i>Expectations for the future</i>			
NGOs, to which I belong, cooperate with political parties	2,46	2,97	0,02
Implement joint activities (events, workshops) with mainstream schools	2,86	3,31	0,024
We participate in the activities of NGOs with other persons that are not members of the NGO	3,00	3,37	0,034
Prepare and implement joint projects with partners	3,28	3,72	0,036
I believe that the NGOs in which activities I participate, are developing and improving	3,48	3,80	0,005

According to survey results, it can be said that the NGO management more than any other NGO members emphasizes collaboration and partnership with NGOs both in the aspect of the current situation and future expectations. This is confirmed by statistically significant differences between the variables in Table 6.

It should be noted that the NGO management puts more emphasis on cooperation with the media, educational institutions, political parties and other national NGOs. Administration in assessing the future expectations, rather than the NGO members tend to believe that other persons

who are not members of a particular NGO participate in NGO activities, that NGO develops and implements joint projects with various partners and the fact that their NGO is growing and evolving. Using the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis H test it was aimed to reveal the relations between the variables of the respondents' place of residence (the region of NGOs operating) and the functions performed by various NGOs and co-operation and partnership. The data is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Relation of Respondents' place of residence and functions carried out by NGO (aspects of the current situation and future expectations) (n = 175)

Functions of NGO	Region of Vilnius*	Region of Kaunas	Region of Klaipėda	Region of Šiauliai	Region of Panevėžys	Statistically significant difference
	M	M	M	M	M	$p \leq 0,05$
<i>Current situation</i>						
Consultative function of NGOs	3,45	3,62	3,24	3,54	3,48	1,68
Preventive function of NGOs	2,68	2,53	2,18	2,85	2,11	0,012
Medical function of NGOs	2,33	2,00	1,18	2,70	1,35	0,001
Educational function of NGOs	3,58	3,16	3,29	3,52	3,59	0,38
Social education function of NGOs	2,95	3,48	2,47	2,39	2,81	0,01
<i>Expectations for the future</i>						
Consultative function of NGOs	3,63	3,83	3,88	3,53	3,81	0,12
Preventive function of NGOs	3,42	3,63	3,29	3,25	2,96	0,98
Medical function of NGOs	3,13	2,92	2,06	3,25	3,33	0,013
Educational function of NGOs	3,88	3,75	3,88	3,80	3,74	0,66
Social education function of NGOs	3,69	3,72	3,53	3,32	3,62	0,40

* The term "region" (as in Lithuania there is no longer spatial distribution according to region) refers to the city and district.

The results of the research show that in the aspect of the current situation the functions of preventive work and medical services performed by NGOs are best assessed by the representatives of NGOs of the region of Šiauliai. Counseling and social education functions were best assessed by the representatives of NGOs in Kaunas region. Educational function of NGO activity is best assessed by the representatives of NGOs in Panevėžys region. In Klaipėda region, the assessment of medical function by the representatives of NGOs is relatively weak. This is confirmed by statistically significant differences.

According to survey results, a hypothetical presumption can be made that in the city and region of Šiauliai the cases of heart and circulatory, respiratory diseases significantly exceed the national average, therefore, NGOs related to meeting socioeducational, medical and other

needs of people with disabilities and the provision of services in this region are more focused on preventive and medical functions.

The research shows that in the aspect of future expectations the representatives of NGOs in Panevėžys region would like to develop the functions of medical services carried out by NGO most. These survey data are confirmed by a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.013$). Assessing other functions performed by NGOs in the aspect of future expectations statistically significant differences between the NGOs of the regions have not been identified.

It should be noted that in the analysis of survey data according to the variables of the NGO functions (in the aspect of the current situation and future expectations) and co-operation and partnership in the aspect of respondents' gender statistically significant differences were not found.

Conclusions and discussion

Universal foundation of democracy is the avoidance of discriminatory and hierarchical social relations. Therefore, social services and policies related to people with disabilities are to be developed according to social causes. Public health and development indicators are related to individuals' level of independence, enabling choice of the place and ways of study, work, personal relationships and participation in the community.

NGOs play an important role in development of social intelligence of the individual. The role of NGOs in education and methods may be better understood with the theoretical concepts: empowerment, communication, and communication activities. Empowerment is aptly illustrated by the theory of the exchange of knowledge, which is based on the principle that everyone has certain knowledge and what one knows may be given to others. Thus, education of the members of NGOs must also be organized so that everyone can pass on their knowledge themselves, and on the other hand get knowledge in exchange from the immediate environment. Communication in NGO is the basis of organizing education that must have meaning for the members of organization.

During the study, the directions of the strategies of NGO activity applied in Lithuania to meet socioeducational needs of people with disabilities have been revealed: it is a direct assistance service (the First NGO Development Strategy), membership of a particular community and participation of the NGO in long term activities strengthening the positions of NGOs oriented towards the long-term benefits (the Second NGO Development Strategy) and development principles of NGOs, as a sustainable system, that is targeting to the activity of non-governmental organizations, participating in broad institutional and political contexts, aiming to social policy change of a certain field at institutional, regional, national or global level (the Third NGO development strategy), as well as the emergence of NGOs as the movement of citizens (the vision of fourth wave strategy).

The quantitative research showed the principles of the social empowerment and participation of persons with disabilities:

- In the study it was found out that the respondents are expecting the change of many functions of NGOs. In particular – development of the functions of legal representation, social education and medical assistance.
- It was found out that social capital is one of the major values of NGOs, valued in all non-governmental organizations of people with disabilities of the country.
- According to the respondents' assessments, one of the essential and important development directions of the activities of NGOs should be increasing and activation of mutual assistance activities in non-governmental organizations (of people with disabilities). In fact, it is meeting the need for communication. All this is related to the development of the principles of empowerment and, in general, to increasing of

the activeness of people and the motivation to participate in social life.

- Other major directions of the principles of social participation of NGO and of the development of activity are the creation of self-expression possibilities for the members of NGOs and the more active provision of proposals to government on NGO activities. That is, persons with disabilities participating in NGO activities tend to link the functions of NGOs with the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, the transition of the NGO functions from consultative and general educational to relevant and specialized (e.g., legal assistance).
- Assessing according to the relations of the variables of the duration of respondents' participation in the NGOs and functions carried out by the NGO, it has been found out that study participants with the experience in the NGOs of more than five years tend to emphasize the function of social education in NGOs.

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