

## Salutogenesis of Youth with Disabilities: Serendipity or Constant Pattern

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**Introduction.** Creating positive health, or salutogenesis, and developing ways to use this concept in health sociology has grown over the past three decades. A salutogenic approach, a concept developed by sociologist Aaron Antonovsky, provides a particular perspective to the way health is viewed, which is centered on the discovery and use of personal resources, either inside a person or in the environment that maintain a healthy status. This is opposed to the traditional view of health care-pathogenesis, which focuses on the search for the causes of a disease. In particular, theories about salutogenesis focus on the search for factors that keep people healthy, especially those in difficult circumstances, as opposed to investigating the reasons for ill health.

**Aim.** The aim of the research is to explore the factors that help to successfully reintegrate into society, gain achievements and to flourish for young people with disabilities, despite the negative life experiences caused by long-term health problems.

**Material and Methods.** Within the research, total of 25 case studies were conducted including observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews with young people with disabilities and their family members during the period from May to September, 2014. The recruitment criteria of the informants were as follows: 18 to 30 years, civically and socially active young people with congenital or acquired disabilities, living in different regions of Latvia. Participants of the research were recruited according to respondent driven sampling method, when existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. This sampling technique is often used in hidden populations which are difficult for researchers to access and at the same time allows researchers to make estimates about the social network connecting the hidden population. The research data were analysed using qualitative content analysis approach in accordance to salutogenesis theoretical framework.

**Results and Conclusions.** Empirical qualitative research of youth with disabilities in Latvia approves theoretically settled two main set of factors promoting salutogenesis – Generalized Resistance Factors – such as long-term development of individual and family economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, and Sense of Coherence – a positive way of viewing life and an ability to manage the many stresses met through life, which is affected by prolonged health problems related to physical or mental disability. In order to obtain statistically significant and reliable data, qualitative research data were supplemented with quantitative survey among students of special schools in Latvia by employing Sense of Coherence scale to appraise internationally recognized methodology and instruments for study of salutogenesis.

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