

## Students' Quality of Life in Relation to the War in Ukraine in Their Opinions: Analysis of Longitudinal Research Results

Jakość życia studentów w związku z wojną w Ukrainie w ich opiniach.  
Analiza wyników badań podłużnych

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**Abstract:** War generates the most devastating experiences, impacting the functioning and quality of life of those it directly affects, but also those it potentially threatens. Using a value-based approach, the authors aimed to examine the opinions of students from the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw regarding their quality of life in the context of the war in Ukraine. The study was longitudinal in nature. The study's duration (2022 and 2024) did not statistically significantly differentiate their quality of life assessments, which mainly yielded average values on a five-point Likert scale. In the second study, assessments of selected life areas, including overall life satisfaction, increased only slightly. The results also show that respondents in both studies expressed similar opinions regarding, among other things, the causes of the war, the motivations of the Russian government, and the projected scenario for Ukraine, Poland, and Europe. The aim of this article is to present the opinions of students from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw and the University of Rzeszów regarding their quality of life in relation to the war in Ukraine. Direct proximity to a country engulfed in war, along with a number of complex factors (including living conditions, health and safety, attitudes toward current war events, etc.), can determine opinions about quality of life. Given the negative perceptions regarding their own safety, future teachers require not only substantive preparation but also psychological training to address their own fears and, ultimately, equip them with the skills to provide assistance to future students and pupils.

**Keywords:** students, opinions, quality of life, war, Ukraine

**Abstrakt:** Wojna generuje najgorsze przeżycia i doświadczenia, oddziałuje na funkcjonowanie i jakość życia osób, których dotyka bezpośrednio, ale także tych, którym potencjalnie zagraża. Autorzy w oparciu o podejście wartościujące dążyli do zbadania opinii studentów Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego i Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie o jakości ich życia w kontekście wojny w Ukrainie. Badanie miało charakter podłużny. Czas realizacji badań (2022 rok i 2024 rok), nie różnicował istotnie statystycznie ocen jakości ich życia, które uzyskały głównie średnie wartości w pięciostopniowej skali Likerta. W drugim badaniu tylko nieznacznie wzrosły oceny wybranych obszarów życia, w tym ogólna satysfakcja z życia. Wyniki badania pokazują także, że respondenci w obu badaniach wyrażali podobne opinie dotyczące między innymi przyczyn wojny, motywacji władz Rosji, przewidywanego scenariusza dla Ukrainy, Polski i Europy. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie opinii osób studiujących w Uniwersytecie Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie i Uniwersytecie Rzeszowskim o jakości ich życia w związku z wojną w Ukrainie. Bezpośrednie sąsiedztwo z krajem, w którym trwa wojna wraz z szeregiem wielu złożonych czynników (między innymi sytuacją życiową, ochroną zdrowia i życia, stosunkiem do bieżących wydarzeń wojennych, itp.) może determinować opinie o jakości życia. Przyszli nauczyciele w związku z negatywnymi wskazaniami odnośnie do własnego bezpieczeństwa potrzebują nie tylko przygotowania merytorycznego, ale i psychologicznego w zakresie przepracowania własnych lęków, a w dalszej kolejności wyposażenia w kompetencje do udzielania pomocy przyszłym uczniom i wychowankom.

**Słowa kluczowe:** studenci, opinie, jakość życia, wojna, Ukraina



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## INTRODUCTION

Every person experiences a certain degree of life satisfaction based on individual experiences throughout their lives. The degree to which a certain conventional normality in everyday life is met depends on the degree to which a wide range of needs and individual and social expectations are met (Kolman 2000, 2). However, quality of life also depends on many indicators (life circumstances, events, etc.) that should be considered when assessing it. This approach is presented in the definition of “quality of life” formulated by the World Health Organization (WHO). This term means “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns” (WHO, 2024).

War, being an extreme situation (Borys 2004, 97), undoubtedly impacts individual and social life, especially if it lasts for a long time. It is worth emphasizing that war (as distinct from other synonymous terms such as “armed conflict,” “armed attack,” “state of war,” “armed aggression,” etc.) denotes the occurrence of a sharp conflict between states, leading to the severing of peaceful relations. A characteristic feature of war is armed combat, i.e., actual military operations (Kołodziejczak 2015, 70-72; cf. Babicki, Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2024). The aforementioned concepts were conceptualized in an article presenting the results of research from 2022 (Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Babicki, 2022).

The war in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, continues, and its end is unknown. Its effects are felt not only by Ukrainian society, which is directly affected by it, but also by the citizens of other countries, as the mere threat of the war spreading to other countries may be one of the factors reducing the quality of life of their citizens. Furthermore, it also impacts Russian society, even though Russia is the aggressor in the war.

Today, young people, standing at the threshold of life, experience numerous civilizational, social, cultural, economic, and political challenges, including wars. The awareness of the ongoing war at Poland's borders can generate significant anxiety and fear for their health, life, and future, and can also impact their definition of values and life goals. The results of our own study conducted in 2022 (Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Babicki 2022, 187-205), which included students from two universities: the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan

Wyższyński University in Warsaw, demonstrated that the outbreak of war in Ukraine primarily undermined their sense of security.

Research on quality of life is particularly important in longitudinal research, as their results provide valuable data for social policy, including family, educational, cultural, and health policy (Parachomiuk and Byra 2006, 26; cf. Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2022, 164). Currently, such studies are lacking, which is why the authors, after a period of two years, decided to repeat the research to determine whether young people's opinions on their quality of life in the context of the war had changed. In this article, they present a comparative analysis of selected results from both studies.

It is worth emphasizing that the tradition of studying quality of life is long-standing, dating back to philosophical inquiries into questions such as: Who is man? Where is he headed? At that time, the concept was understood more as "favorable fate", "prosperity", and "happiness". The issue of a happy life originally appears in the philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, and Epicurus of Samos. In ancient Christian and medieval philosophy, it was addressed by St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, and in modern philosophy by, among others, Arthur Schopenhauer and Baruch Spinoza. In the twentieth century, happiness drew the attention of Bertrand Russell, Max Scheler, and Sigmund Freud. In Poland, it was discussed by Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, and Karol Wojtyła.

Quality of life – viewed from various theoretical and research perspectives – appears in the works of authors such as Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, David J. Schneider, Frank M. Andrews, Stephen B. Withey, William I. Rodgers, John Goodlad, David T. Hall, Robert J. Bury, David Felce and Jonathan Perry, Erik Allardt, Michael Bach and Marcia H. Rioux, Henk J. Schipper, John Clinch, Valerie Powell, Ed Diener, John M. Reaburn, Irving Rootman, Martin Seligman, Michael Argyle, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Janusz Czapiński, and others (Daszykowska 2007, 24-98).

In the social sciences and humanities, emphasis is placed on the subjective approach to quality of life, which is based on the belief that an individual is best positioned to assess their own life situation. In this understanding, psychological well-being, reduced to satisfaction, contentment, and happiness, plays a significant role in determining quality of life. The subjective approach to the concept is presented, among others, by the World Health

Organization (WHO). From a subjective perspective, important indicators include individual life evaluations, primarily: physical fitness, physical well-being, psychological well-being, and social functioning (cf. Daszykowska 2022, 159-160).

It is worth noting that the authors in this re-examination adopted the same theoretical perspective as in the first study, namely the concept of Janusz Czapiński. The author posits the importance of the will to live in the context of a person's return to balance after crises, as well as so-called partial satisfactions and well-being, largely determined by one's approach to life (types of emotions, judgments, satisfaction with life and its individual areas) in various situations (Czapiński 2001, 266-306). The authors of this article acknowledge this approach, but combine life satisfaction with a sense of meaning and human potential, which, as Tatiana Kanasz (2015, 51) argues, directs the researcher to perceive quality of life in eudaimonistic, not exclusively hedonistic, terms. This approach takes into account the implementation of valuable tasks, taking up existential challenges (such as war) and the possibility of human development (Ilska, Kołodziej-Zaleska 2018, 156-161; Daszykowska-Tobiasz, Babicki 2022, 187-189). It is worth emphasizing that quality of life research involves two dimensions: evaluative (high versus low levels of quality of life) and descriptive (different quality of life, different qualities of life) (Kryk, Włodarczyk-Śpiwak 2006, 96). The authors of this article focused primarily on the former approach. Furthermore, they situate the presented issues within the framework of social pedagogy, which examines the relationship between society and individuals and determines the impact of the sociocultural environment on their upbringing and development. Importantly, it explores, among other things, effective educational strategies for supporting human development in challenging life situations.

## 1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first study was conducted using a diagnostic survey method from April 12 to May 17, 2022, and the second study from January 16 to March 19, 2024. The aim was to determine the opinions of students of pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów (UR) and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (UKSW) regarding their quality of life in relation to the war in Ukraine.

The authors adopted two main research problems: What are the opinions of pedagogy students at the University of Rzeszów and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw regarding the quality of their lives in connection with the war in Ukraine? Have students' opinions about their quality of life in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine changed in 2024 compared to their opinions in 2022? Both the first and the repeated surveys were conducted using the CAWI technique, based on an electronic survey form on the Google Forms platform. Respondents received a link to the tool via email. The survey questionnaire contained single-choice, closed-ended, and semi-open-ended questions, and utilized a five-point Likert scale.

In 2022, 351 people participated in the study, while in 2024, this number reached 330. The vast majority of these were women aged 19 to 24, pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and living in rural areas (UR) or cities with a population exceeding 100,000 (UKSW). The high level of participation in the study resulted from the fact that it was conducted among students of education-related fields, which are predominantly studied by women. It is worth emphasizing that this overrepresentation of women constitutes a significant limitation; it narrows the interpretation of the data and does not allow for the generalization of the results to the entire student population.

Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 29.0 with the Exact Tests module – exact tests. All relationships, correlations, and differences are statistically significant when  $p \leq 0.05$ . The test used for statistical analysis (primarily for questions constructed on nominal scales) was the Chi-square test for the independence of variables. Coefficients based on the aforementioned test, namely Phi and Cramer's V, were used to determine the strength of the relationship, with the Phi coefficient also indicating the direction of the relationship. Phi and Cramer's V coefficients range from 0 to 1; higher coefficient values indicate a stronger relationship. Each Chi-square test analysis (in the case of small samples) was followed by additional tests: the exact method (preferred for small data sets to ensure sufficient computational power) or the Monte Carlo method (for larger samples and tables with larger categories of indications). When the conditions for using parametric tests were not met, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test for differences (for 2 samples) was used (see Pakov & Pierce 2005; Szymczak 2007; Mehta & Patel 2013; Nawojczyk 2002; Bedyńska 2007). Due to the limited scope of the article, only selected data are presented.

## 2. STUDENTS ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RELATION TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDY RESULTS

The timing of the survey does not statistically significantly differentiate the gender of the respondents. This applies to students from UR, UKSW, and the overall sample ( $p > 0.05$ ). Considering UR students, UKSW students, and the entire sample, no statistically significant correlations were found between the timing of the survey and the age of the respondents ( $p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, place of residence does not statistically significantly correlate with the timing of the survey, considering respondents from UR and UKSW separately and all students overall ( $p > 0.05$ ).

With respect to the structure of the respondents in terms of type of study, statistically significant relationships were found. It can be observed that students of supplementary master's degree programs participated in the survey more often in 2022 than in 2024. This applies to the overall results ( $p < 0.001$ ) and to the group of UR students ( $p < 0.001$ ). The strength of the relationship is more pronounced among respondents from UR (Cramer's  $V = 0.370$ ).

Students described Russia's current actions towards Ukraine. The majority of them considered them an "invasion/armed attack" – UR students: 173 responses in 2022 and 303 responses in 2024; UKSW students: 119 responses in 2022 and 196 in 2024. The answer "interstate conflict" was received from UR students: 16 responses in 2022 and 49 in 2024; UKSW students: 8 responses in 2022 and 35 in 2024. The next most common answer was "World War III" – UR students: 18 responses in 2022 and 24 in 2024; UKSW students: 10 responses in 2022 and 15 in 2024. Other indications included: "unjustified and barbaric attack on a sovereign state," "war between three powers (USA, Russia, China)." The definition of Russia's actions towards Ukraine is not statistically significantly dependent on the time of the survey, taking into account respondents from UR and UKSW separately and all respondents in total ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The main reason for Russia's claims against Ukraine was given by respondents as: "Russia's desire to rebuild and expand (with other countries) the Russian empire" – UR students: 133 responses in 2022 and 232 in 2024; UKSW students: 85 responses in 2022 and 157 in 2024. A similarly semantically and frequently chosen response was: "Russia's renewed desire to recreate the USSR" – UR students: 54 responses in 2022 and 91 in 2024; UKSW students: 39 responses in 2022 and 51 in 2024. Less frequently cited reasons included: "the desire to have power and control over Ukraine," "a military threat to Russia from Ukraine," and "a planned incitement of a global conflict." The time of the survey did not statistically significantly differentiate opinions on the main reason for Russia's claims against Ukraine. This applies to students of UR, UKSW, as well as all students together ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Most students had no opinion ("hard to say") or expressed a negative opinion ("definitely not") about the justification for Russia to use force against Ukraine (in 2022, the average was  $M=1.55$  ( $Mdn=1.00$ ;  $SD=1.17$ ), and in 2024 –  $M=1.61$ , ( $Mdn=1.00$ ;  $SD=1.17$ ).

Respondents assessed Poland's security in the current Russia-Ukraine situation on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 means "definitely negative," 2 means "negative," 3 means "neither positive nor negative," 4 means "positive," and 5 means "definitely positive"). In 2022, these responses were at an average level of  $M=2.80$  ( $Mdn=3.00$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ); in 2024, they were at a comparable level of  $M=2.79$  ( $Mdn=3.00$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ). These responses oscillated around the "neither positive nor negative" option.

If NATO took military action against Russia, according to the respondents, Poland should "probably" support it: in 2022 – average  $M=3.57$  ( $Mdn=4.00$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ), and in 2024 –  $M=3.38$  ( $Mdn=4.00$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ).

Respondents also assessed the impact of the current Russia-Ukraine relationship on their lives (on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means "definitely negative," 2 means "negative," 3 means "neither positive nor negative," 4 means "positive," and 5 means "definitely positive"). The average in 2022 was 2.02 ( $Mdn=2.0$ ;  $SD=0.79$ ), while in 2024 it was  $M=2.11$  ( $Mdn=2.0$ ,  $SD=0.80$ ), indicating an impact assessment of "rather negative."

Analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test for all students revealed that only opinions regarding Poland's potential involvement in a NATO armed attack against Russia differed statistically significantly depending on the time of the survey ( $p = 0.013$ ). Slightly greater

support for such an initiative is evident in 2022 than in 2024. However, among students from the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, no statistically significant differences were found with respect to the remaining survey results (presented above).

Respondents defined the role of Polish soldiers in the current Russia-Ukraine situation as mainly “securing the Polish border” – UR students: 103 responses in 2022 and 198 in 2024; UKSW students: 71 responses in 2022 and 139 in 2024. A popular answer was “intensifying preparatory activities for a possible war” – UR students: 40 responses in 2022 and 71 in 2024; UKSW students: 24 responses in 2022 and 41 in 2024. “Humanitarian aid to Ukrainian citizens who remained in the country” was chosen by UR students: 29 people in 2022 and 53 in 2024; UKSW students – 18 respondents in 2022 and 27 in 2024. “Humanitarian aid to refugees from Ukraine in Poland” was the role of Polish soldiers for – UR students: 32 respondents in 2022 and 41 in 2024; UKSW students: 16 respondents surveyed in 2022 and 18 in 2024. Respondents also offered responses such as “there should be no role,” “defend Poland from Ukraine and Russia itself,” and “throwing Ukrainians who break the law across the border, not putting them in prison where we have to pay for criminals” (original spelling). However, these were isolated responses. Considering the UR students, UKSW students, and everyone in total, no statistically significant relationship ( $p > 0.05$ ) was found between the time of the survey and the assessment of the role of Polish soldiers in the current Russia-Ukraine situation.

In the survey, respondents were asked to provide a possible scenario for the future of Russia-Ukraine relations. Among the responses from UR and UKSW students, the most frequent responses included: “Russia will take over the territories of Ukraine (in the east and south) occupied in 2014”; “Russia will lead to Ukraine's capitulation”; and there was a suggestion of the outbreak of World War III. However, most respondents did not specify a future scenario, claiming they could not predict it. When defining a scenario for Europe and the world in the near future in the context of Russia-Ukraine relations, students mostly indicated that “Europe and the world will remain safe” – UR students: 138 responses in 2022 and 242 in 2024; UKSW students: 79 responses in 2022 and 41 in 2024. A large group of respondents did not know what the fate of Europe and the world would be like in connection with the war in

Ukraine, but there were many people (although they were in the minority) who had pessimistic, sometimes even catastrophic visions, for example: "Europe and the world will be destroyed."

An important part of the study was to determine respondents' opinions on the quality of their lives in relation to the war in Ukraine. They first assessed (on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means "definitely negative," 2 means "negative," 3 means "neither positive nor negative," 4 means "positive," and 5 means "definitely positive") their quality of life before February 24, 2022, in the following areas: "family/friends and acquaintances," "economic situation," "personal security," "personal development/education," "professional work," "free time and entertainment," "health and fitness," "housing conditions," "personal rights and freedoms/independence," "state of the natural environment," "spirituality," and "overall life satisfaction" (Table 1).

The average quality of life scores for the 2022 and 2024 surveys in the sample mostly ranged between "neither positive nor negative" and "positive." The average scores ranged from 3.55 (for "economic situation") to 4.27 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2022, and from 3.58 (for "economic situation") to 4.32 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2024. The average quality of life scores for the remaining life areas fell within these ranges.

Table 1. Students' assessment of quality of life before February 24, 2022, across different areas of life

| Assess the quality of your life before February 24, 2022, in the following areas |                    | Family/friends and acquaintances | Economic situation | Personal security | Personal Development/Education | Professional work | Free time and entertainment | Health and fitness | Housing conditions | Personal rights and freedoms/independence | The state of the natural environment | Spirituality | Overall life satisfaction |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 2022                                                                             | Mean               | 4,27                             | 3,55               | 4,00              | 4,02                           | 3,70              | 3,88                        | 3,81               | 4,12               | 3,90                                      | 3,64                                 | 3,77         | 3,81                      |
|                                                                                  | Median             | 4,00                             | 4,00               | 4,00              | 4,00                           | 4,00              | 4,00                        | 4,00               | 4,00               | 4,00                                      | 4,00                                 | 4,00         | 4,00                      |
|                                                                                  | Standard deviation | 0,76                             | 0,98               | 0,86              | 0,81                           | 0,91              | 0,90                        | 0,86               | 0,79               | 0,93                                      | 0,92                                 | 0,97         | 0,90                      |
| 2024                                                                             | Mean               | 4,32                             | 3,58               | 3,97              | 4,07                           | 3,76              | 3,99                        | 3,89               | 4,10               | 3,90                                      | 3,67                                 | 3,85         | 3,87                      |
|                                                                                  | Median             | 4,00                             | 4,00               | 4,00              | 4,00                           | 4,00              | 4,00                        | 4,00               | 4,00               | 4,00                                      | 4,00                                 | 4,00         | 4,00                      |
|                                                                                  | Standard deviation | 0,75                             | 0,98               | 0,90              | 0,78                           | 0,91              | 0,90                        | 0,88               | 0,84               | 0,93                                      | 0,96                                 | 0,95         | 0,90                      |

Source: Own calculations

In the group of respondents from UR, the results are not statistically significantly different depending on the year of the study, as evidenced by  $p$ -values  $> 0.05$  for the Mann-Whitney U test. In the group of students from UKSW, only the results for one area of life before February 24, 2022, are statistically significantly different depending on the year of the study, as evidenced by  $p$ -value = 0.029 for the above test. Compared to those surveyed in 2022, students at UKSW in 2024 assessed "free time and entertainment" slightly more positively. For this area, the mean in 2022 was 3.88 (Mdn = 4.00, SD = 0.90), while in 2024 it was 3.99 (Mdn = 4.00, SD = 0.90).

Respondents also rated the quality of their current life in relation to the following areas on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 means "definitely negative," 2 means "negative," 3 means "neither positive nor negative," 4 means "positive," and 5 means "definitely positive") (Table 2).

Table 2. Students' assessment of their current quality of life (after February 24, 2022) in relation to the aforementioned areas

| Assess the quality of your current life (after February 24, 2022) in the following areas of life |                    | Family/friends and acquaintances | Economic situation | Personal security | Personal Development/Education | Professional work | Free time and entertainment | Health and fitness | Housing conditions | Personal rights and freedoms/independence | The state of the natural environment | Spirituality | Overall life satisfaction |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 2022                                                                                             | Mean               | 4,03                             | 2,77               | 2,82              | 3,62                           | 3,39              | 3,43                        | 3,37               | 3,86               | 3,48                                      | 3,22                                 | 3,66         | 3,33                      |
|                                                                                                  | Median             | 4,00                             | 3,00               | 3,00              | 4,00                           | 3,00              | 4,00                        | 3,00               | 4,00               | 4,00                                      | 3,00                                 | 4,00         | 3,00                      |
|                                                                                                  | Standard deviation | 0,85                             | 1,09               | 0,97              | 0,88                           | 0,92              | 0,93                        | 0,89               | 0,93               | 0,93                                      | 0,98                                 | 0,99         | 0,98                      |
| 2024                                                                                             | Mean               | 4,09                             | 2,88               | 2,86              | 3,72                           | 3,47              | 3,60                        | 3,45               | 3,73               | 3,45                                      | 3,21                                 | 3,68         | 3,46                      |
|                                                                                                  | Median             | 4,00                             | 3,00               | 3,00              | 4,00                           | 4,00              | 4,00                        | 4,00               | 4,00               | 4,00                                      | 3,00                                 | 4,00         | 4,00                      |
|                                                                                                  | Standard deviation | 0,83                             | 1,09               | 1,01              | 0,87                           | 0,94              | 0,94                        | 0,97               | 1,03               | 0,98                                      | 1,04                                 | 0,99         | 0,99                      |

Source: Own calculations

The sample was dominated by ratings between "neither positive nor negative" and "positive." The averages ranged from 2.77 (for "economic situation") to 4.03 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2022, and from 2.86 (for "personal security") to 4.09 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2024. Average quality of life ratings, taking into account other areas of life, fell within the above-mentioned ranges.

Students participating in the 2024 survey, compared to respondents participating in the 2022 survey, rated "free time and entertainment" and "overall life satisfaction" slightly more positively. The differences in the results are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), at  $p = 0.004$  and  $p = 0.033$ , respectively, using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Respondents also predicted their quality of life in the near future (from 1 to 2 years) in relation to the current Russia-Ukraine relationship, taking into account the aforementioned areas of life. As with the previous questions, students provided their responses using a five-point Likert scale (where 1 indicates "definitely negative," 2 "negative," 3 "neither positive nor negative," 4 "positive," and 5 "definitely positive") (Table 3).

Table 3. Students' projected assessment of quality of life in the near future (up to 2 years) in relation to the current Russia-Ukraine relationship

| Assess your expected quality of life in the near future (up to 2 years) in relation to the current Russia-Ukraine relationship |                    | Family/friends and acquaintances | Economic situation | Personal security | Personal Development/Education | Professional work | Free time and entertainment | Health and fitness | Housing conditions | Personal rights and freedoms/independence | The state of the natural environment | Spirituality | Overall life satisfaction |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 2022                                                                                                                           | Mean               | 3,96                             | 2,53               | 2,79              | 3,42                           | 3,21              | 3,41                        | 3,30               | 3,43               | 3,13                                      | 2,97                                 | 3,52         | 3,18                      |
|                                                                                                                                | Median             | 4,00                             | 2,00               | 3,00              | 3,00                           | 3,00              | 3,00                        | 3,00               | 4,00               | 3,00                                      | 3,00                                 | 4,00         | 3,00                      |
|                                                                                                                                | Standard deviation | 0,90                             | 1,07               | 1,01              | 0,92                           | 0,98              | 0,93                        | 0,93               | 1,05               | 1,02                                      | 1,03                                 | 1,01         | 1,05                      |
| 2024                                                                                                                           | Mean               | 4,03                             | 2,72               | 2,83              | 3,50                           | 3,31              | 3,52                        | 3,42               | 3,39               | 3,15                                      | 3,01                                 | 3,57         | 3,32                      |
|                                                                                                                                | Median             | 4,00                             | 3,00               | 3,00              | 4,00                           | 3,00              | 4,00                        | 4,00               | 4,00               | 3,00                                      | 3,00                                 | 4,00         | 3,00                      |
|                                                                                                                                | Standard deviation | 0,88                             | 1,12               | 1,03              | 0,94                           | 1,00              | 0,95                        | 0,97               | 1,08               | 1,04                                      | 1,09                                 | 1,03         | 1,05                      |

Source: Own calculations

The sample was dominated by ratings ranging from "neither positive nor negative" to "positive." The averages ranged from 2.53 (for "economic situation") to 3.96 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2022, and from 2.83 (for "personal security") to 4.03 (for "family/friends and acquaintances") in 2024. The average quality of life ratings, taking into account other areas of life, fell within these ranges.

Analysis using the aforementioned test across all participants showed that the assessment of quality of life in the near future differed statistically significantly in only three aspects depending on the year of the study ( $p < 0.05$ ). Respondents in 2024, compared to respondents in 2022, rated the “economic situation” ( $p = 0.011$ ), “health and fitness” ( $p = 0.038$ ), as well as “overall life satisfaction” ( $p = 0.037$ ) slightly higher.

## CONCLUSIONS

The authors believe that the findings from the survey of students from the University of Rzeszów and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (conducted in 2022 and 2024) regarding their quality of life (including selected areas) in the context of the war in Ukraine cannot be considered definitive. The results obtained allowed for addressing the research questions, fulfilling the established research objectives, and capturing the respondents’ opinions in this regard; however, they did not account for the complex factors that may have influenced their statements.

The authors acknowledge that the significant overrepresentation of women in the study must be taken into account, as it limits the generalizability of the findings to the male population. Women tend to communicate emotional states and subjective perceptions (including health concerns and perceived stress) more frequently, and they demonstrate a higher degree of empathy in crisis situations. Furthermore, women prioritize quality-of-life factors differently (e.g., well-being, security, etc.), which may slightly shift the focus of the study toward a female perspective (cf. Daszykowska-Tobiasz 2022, 184–198). Consequently, the results cannot be considered universal for the entire academic community of the University of Rzeszów and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Bearing these limitations in mind, the authors have identified the most significant conclusions.

The study showed that in both 2022 and 2024, the declared assessments did not achieve extremely positive or extremely negative values. They are clearly positioned (relative to assessments before the war, during it, and those projected for the near future) mainly at the level of “neither positive nor negative.” However, statistical analysis did not confirm significant differences in the responses of respondents from both groups due to the timing of the survey. It

is worth noting that the 2024 survey results, compared to the 2022 survey results, showed only a slight increase in current life quality assessments in the areas of "leisure and entertainment" and "overall life satisfaction." Similarly, the respondents' projected assessments of their quality of life in the near future in the areas of "economic situation," "health and fitness," and "overall life satisfaction" recorded a slight increase. It can be assumed that the average values of quality of life assessments in the event of a war abroad will be low. However, in both the 2022 and 2024 surveys, they were not very low. This may be due to the students assigning the highest ratings to "family/friends and acquaintances" in the first and repeated surveys (for the three time periods), as evidenced by the mean values. The authors of numerous studies demonstrate that having close friends enhances happiness and acts as a protective shield even in extreme life circumstances. This applies primarily to women (see Doroszewicz 2008, 5-18; cf. Suwalska-Barancewicz 2018, 49-65), and they predominated in the sample.

Additionally, the fact that the war did not directly affect the respondents could have led some students to fail to perceive the threat posed by Russia to themselves and Poland, which in turn could have impacted their quality of life assessments. Another reason could be the replication of public opinion, a lack of interest in the issue, and passivity regarding following the course of the war, as evidenced by the significant percentage of respondents who "had no opinion or were unable to answer some of the questions in the questionnaire."

The long duration of the war may have led to a kind of "fatigue" among the respondents (see Bokovets 2024), a consequence of the prolonged crisis. Additionally, the prolonged occurrence of threatening situations, inconsistent information about the war, the safety dilemma, and other factors may have increased fear tolerance, led to impatience, to a lack of interest in the problem, or even to its denial. This also raises the question of the objectivity of the respondents in estimating risk and their own agency, as the greater the risk and the lower the agency, the more strongly an avoidance attitude develops. In crisis situations, women tend to react more emotionally and experience higher levels of stress than men (Pawińska & Zyzik 2021, 11-13; Daszykowska-Tobiasz, 2022, 27-35; 184-198; Shvay, 2025, 20-30).

Of course, substantiating these issues would require a broader approach to the research problem than the authors assumed. Nevertheless, they obtained a picture of quality of life assessments made by students from two universities (mainly women): from central and

southeastern Poland, at the beginning and two years after its outbreak. These assessments are not polarized, and the analysis did not reveal many statistically significant differences in their opinions between the outbreak of the war and two years after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

War undoubtedly poses a challenge to the modern world, as it disrupts its order and destroys the foundations of a stable and happy life. It poses a challenge to social pedagogy, as it causes suffering and trauma on an individual level, but also negatively impacts society. The practical goal of social pedagogy in the context of war is primarily to restore the ability of people living in drastic environmental conditions to meet their basic needs, including a sense of security. It also involves realizing socially accepted values and supporting them in achieving greater life satisfaction in all areas (individual perspective), as well as strengthening the potential of the environment, which translates into improved quality of life (societal perspective).

Although the results of our own survey from 2022 and 2024 did not reveal very low quality of life scores in relation to the war in Ukraine according to the students' opinions, they should not be ignored, as they did not indicate the highest values in its assessment either. In this context, education plays an important role, its importance being strategic (Shvay 2025, 37). Its task is to protect young people from the psychological effects of war and reduced well-being, as well as from the associated disinformation and chaos in the media. It also creates opportunities for development, adaptation, and preparation for life in crisis situations. Education should open young people to new perspectives while respecting the complexity of the world, but also instill in them hope for a future life in a community of people in peace and with a sense of individual self-fulfillment and satisfaction.

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