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Seminare – 50 Years of Reflection, Dialogue, and Formation in the Spirit of the Humanism of St. Francis de Sales: Publisher's Note

Seminare 50 lat refleksji, dialogu i formacji w duchu humanizmu św. Franciszka Salezego. Słowo od Wydawcy

We are pleased to present to our readers the latest issue of *Seminare. Learned Investigations*, which appears in a particularly significant year, the 50th anniversary of our journal. Since its founding in 1975, *Seminare* has served as a space for academic dialogue and reflection on the human person, education, faith, and culture. The initiative to establish the journal arose from the post-conciliar academic and pastoral needs of the Salesian environment. Today, *Seminare* stands as a respected interdisciplinary forum for scholarly exchange with an international reach.

Over the past five decades, the journal has published 1,839 texts, including peer-reviewed articles, book reviews, and reports, contributing substantially to the academic output of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society, which has been the publisher of *Seminare* since 2008. We are deeply grateful to all authors, editors, reviewers, and readers who have contributed to shaping the identity and quality of this publication. *Seminare* remains a living testimony to the engagement of the academic community in the service of education and scholarship, inspired by the legacy of St. John Bosco and the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales.

Seminare. Learned Investigations is published by the Francis de Sales Scientific Society – an academic community engaged in research and educational activity inspired by the humanism of St. Francis de Sales and Christian personalism. The journal's profile focuses on the broadly understood "world of youth" studied from the perspective of various academic disciplines. We publish contributions in the fields of pedagogy, education, psychology, sociology, family studies, law, philosophy, anthropology, theology, and the history of education. We aim to offer a broad, interdisciplinary platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and scholarly reflection concerning education, formation, and the ongoing debate about the dignity and future of the human person.

The thematic focus of this issue centres on today's younger generation – their condition, challenges, and prospects for growth. Contributors from various fields of study explore topics such as technological transformation, psychosocial crises, education, guidance, and pastoral accompaniment. Particular emphasis is placed on youth facing emotional difficulties, loneliness, and disorientation in the digital world, as well as on the formative role of educators and mentors. The articles offer both insightful diagnoses and constructive proposals for educational and pastoral practice.

In the spirit of St. John Bosco and St. Francis de Sales, patron of our Scientific Society and a guiding figure in our educational and academic mission, we strive to support the academic community in fostering a culture of encounter, dialogue, and responsibility for the future of young people. The humanism of St. Francis de Sales, rooted in love, gentleness, and respect for human dignity, defines the horizon of our scholarly and formative engagement.

Grateful for the fifty years of *Seminare*, we look to the future with hope – continuing our scientific inquiries, promoting integral human development, and serving educational communities in the spirit of the Gospel and Christian humanism.

Jerzy Gocko SDB
President of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society

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Natural and Artificial Intelligence in the World of Young People: Discussion Article

Naturalna i sztuczna inteligencja w świecie młodych. Artykuł dyskusyjny

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Abstract: The article discusses the results of research on natural and artificial intelligence in the virtual and real worlds. Modern man exists in the real world using natural intelligence, but he is also increasingly interacting with the virtual world dominated by artificial intelligence. The research sought to define human natural intelligence in the context of the intelligence of the earthly reality and human society, and to seek an answer to the question of the role of artificial intelligence in everyday life. Since, the real world and the virtual world permeate one another, it is up to man to control artificial intelligence so that it can benefit both his life and the advancement of human society.

Keywords: natural intelligence, artificial intelligence, real world, virtual world

Abstrakt: W artykule zostały omówione wyniki badań nad naturalną i sztuczną inteligencją w świecie wirtualnym i realnym. Człowiek współczesny funkcjonuje w świecie realnym, posługując się naturalną inteligencją, ale coraz bardziej w jego życie wkracza również świat wirtualny, w którym dominuje sztuczna inteligencja. Celem przeprowadzonych badań było dookreślenie naturalnej inteligencji człowieka w kontekście inteligencji rzeczywistości ziemskiej i społeczeństwa ludzkiego, a także poszukiwanie odpowiedzi na pytanie o rolę sztucznej inteligencji w życiu codziennym. Świat realny i wirtualny wzajemnie się przenikają, dlatego zadaniem człowieka jest panowanie nad sztuczną in teligencją, aby pełniła rolę służebną w jego życiu i rozwoju społeczeństwa ludzkiego.

Słowa kluczowe: naturalna inteligencja, sztuczna inteligencja, świat realny, świat wirtualny

Introduction

Artificial intelligence and its tools are among those technological inventions whose functioning and potential are for most ordinary people impossible to decipher. Nowadays, people have limited knowledge of the "techniques of their operation", which is why they prefer to use intuitive, and at the same time increasingly autonomous, media applications created with the help of artificial intelligence. Development of artificial intelligence triggers interest that oscillates between

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enthusiasm and disorientation, since on the one hand AI effectively supports human (natural) intelligence, but on the other, it competes with it (*Człowiek na rozdrożu* 2020).

Young people benefit from the progress of digital technologies. Artificial intelligence allows them to acquire the latest knowledge without much intellectual effort, to creatively, although with little personal creative input, develop new content and forms of media content. Thanks to technologies managed by artificial intelligence, "the world has now switched to the sixth gear and is speeding at a dizzying pace carried by the power of technology. We are currently witnessing a significant discussion about the meaning and impact of artificial intelligence on the development of the economy, science, society and each of us. Such discussions are often charged with emotions. The vision of robots taking control of the world is mixed with the heavenly perspective of AI's 'service' for the glory of humanity. Where does the truth lie?" (Malczewski 2019, 2).

This question gains even more on importance due to the threats generated by artificial intelligence, such as the risk of finding oneself in a filter bubble. "Functioning in such a distorted, but also in a sense narcissistic reality, leads to a situation when an individual is no longer interested in confronting his own beliefs with others. Any form of diversity may then be not so much rejected by such an individual as simply not brought to his consciousness, because he is imposed upon a cohesive version of digital reality that he largely identifies with" (Szpunar 2018, 194)[1].

The emergence of artificial intelligence is a "sign of the times" (Przybyłowski 2021a), therefore, it generates the need to clarify the essence of natural human intelligence, to show its uniqueness and autonomy, in order to seek an answer to the question of what will be the future of man and human society in the age of artificial intelligence (Franciszek 2022; Franciszek 2023; Lennox 2023). This article is an attempt to start a dialogue with young people who have not given up on growing their faith and who are seeking opportunities to live out their faith in everyday life. It is thus aimed to raise young people's awareness of the value and richness, as well as of the practical importance of natural intelligence, which may enable them to use artificial intelligence more reflectively and thoughtfully.

1. Intelligence of man, nature and human society

According to Revelation, it was God who gave mankind His Spirit so that people might have "wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and skill in all crafts" (Ex 35:31).[2] Reason is an expression of the dignity given to human beings by the Creator, who created them in his own image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26) and enabled them

[1] Young people are often unaware of the existence of an information bubble, which is why, they do not analyse the displayed advertisements or the proposed political postulates of a given party, which deepen the one-sidedness of their own views (Popiołek and Sroka 2019, 162).

[2] People can celebrate the free gift of friendship with the Lord only when they "realize that our earthly life and our natural abilities are his gift. We need 'to acknowledge jubilantly that our life is essentially a gift and recognize that our freedom is a grace. This is not easy today, in a world that thinks it can keep something for itself, the fruits of its own creativity or freedom'" (Franciszek 2018, 55).

to respond to His love through freedom and knowledge. Science (knowledge acquired through the search for truth) and technology created by man demonstrate in a special way this fundamentally relational quality of human reason and will: they are extraordinary products of human creative potential.

In its most basic definition, intelligence refers directly to man and denotes the capacity to understand, learn and remember the acquired knowledge that one can apply in practice, that is use it in one's day-to-day functioning as a human. Intelligence, however, encompasses more than just thinking; it also includes evaluating, choosing, reacting, and, in general, manifesting a free and rational existence in the real world (Nęcka 1994; Strelau 1997).

The concept of natural intelligence can, however, be applied in a broader sense also to earthly reality, i.e. the entire created world. By virtue of their creation, all things have their own permanency, actuality, goodness, as well as their own laws and order, all of which man ought to respect (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 36). Apart from natural human intelligence and intelligence of nature, there is also the concept of social intelligence. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (No. 36) states that human societies, like all created things, have their own laws and values that man must gradually understand, embrace, and order (Przybyłowski 2022).

Every moment of human life is a miracle of existence, a fact that man cannot fully realize as an individual, for life seems to be an independent and autonomous process, but at the same time one that is due to man – "I am because I am" one. Moreover, all nature seems to be at man's service, because man can manage nature (rule it, take care of it). The same is true of human society, whose functioning is subjected to human rule. However, in accordance with the principle of the relative "autonomy of temporal things", man must acknowledge the truth that created things depend on God, and that he therefore cannot use them without referring them to Him. This knowledge is necessary for the Church to be able to "update" (aggiornamento) the implementation of the salvation mission (Przybyłowski 2018b), but it is primarily needed by Christians so that they can fruitfully fulfil their individual vocations and engage successfully in both social and political spheres of life (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 62; Przybyłowski 2024; Przybyłowski 2018a; Przybyłowski 2020).

Therefore, "intelligence" in the real world first refers to the existence and activity of God, who creates everything. Man has been given intelligence by God as well, and his primary responsibility is to understand himself and his existence. Having recognized the appropriate methods of individual sciences or arts, man's second challenge is to distinguish between social intelligence and the intelligence of nature, which has its own laws and order that man must respect. This can be done by putting specific methods that are unique to each field of science or art into practice (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 36).

According to Revelation, the existence and meaning of the world is closely linked to man in his unity and wholeness, with his body and soul, with his heart and conscience, with his mind and will (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 3). The

teaching of the Church, whose source is Divine Revelation[3] should provide answers to several questions: 1) What is the proper condition of man?; 2) What are human weaknesses?; 3) How can we ensure that human dignity and vocation are properly recognized? ((Sobór Watykański II 2012, 12).

The search for answers to these questions is the subject of applied theology, whose research focuses on the person of man who is by his nature created by God in His likeness. Man's individuality, on the other hand, results from being endowed with a created, immortal soul. And here we can include the thoughts of St. Teresa of Jesus. According to her, "of the many joys to be found in the kingdom of Heaven, the chief is that we shall have no more to do with the things of earth; for in Heaven we shall have an intrinsic tranquillity and glory, a joy in the rejoicings of all, a perpetual peace, and a great interior satisfaction which will come to us when we see that all are hallowing and praising the Lord, and are blessing His name, and that none is offending Him. For all love Him there and the soul's one concern is loving Him, nor can it cease from loving Him because it knows Him. And this is how we should love Him on earth, though we cannot do so with the same perfection nor yet all the time; still, if we knew Him, we should love Him very differently from the way we do now" (Teresa od Jezusa 1987).

The teaching of St. Teresa allows us to define more precisely the nature of human presence in the real world. Namely, man strives to satisfy his basic physical, material and psychological needs, which focuses his life on nature and society. However, in the spiritual dimension, life focuses on God. It should be emphasized though, that just as human soul participates in existential being, so the body participates in the spiritual relationship between man with God. The immortal soul and the mortal human body are one and the same and cannot be separated. It should be underlined that, just as the soul's presence is not recognized or distinguished in a person's physical existence, so the limitations of the body are imperceptible in the existence of the immortal soul. These reservations have their significance, because in every dimension of existence man constitutes, appears and acts as an individually whole person (Mrzygłód 2012).

It is worth mentioning the various ways of human existence. Namely, the original environment of human life is nature, or in other words, the created world. The Church teaches that human life changes with death, but does it not end, and when the place of human "earthly dwelling turns to dust", man will find an eternal dwelling prepared for him in heaven (preface from the Mass for the Dead). Man does not therefore vanish with death but changes his form of existence. The reality that the preface refers to as the "eternal dwelling" is yet inaccessible to present human cognition (intelligence), but the changed life of man (eternity) is still real life, not invented, hypothetical, or as we might say today: "virtual". Eternity is the ultimate goal of human existence, to which Christ invites each created and redeemed man.[4]

[3] Christian revelation contributes greatly to the promotion of this communion between persons, and at the same time leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has written into man's moral and spiritual nature (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 23).

[4] In applied theology, the Council's perspective of the world is adopted, which means "the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world

2. Artificial intelligence in the teaching of Pope Francis

The intelligence of nature and human society created by God is directed towards man, who is endowed with the gifts of reason and will, limited by God's law. With the aid of contemporary media technology, man develops artificial intelligence by applying his intelligence and relative freedom in the pursuit of truth. It enables him to use a collection of data and sophisticated algorithms to construct a virtual world. However, as this world is merely a possible depiction of the actual world created with the aid of media technology, not everything can be calculated or predicted. The world portrayed by the media is fabricated, fictional, transient, and contains only statistical approximations rather than definitive future predictions. One could argue that only man has his own history (time continuum); the virtual world lacks the feature of temporal transience (past, present, and future). However, in the dimension of space, the virtual world is an alternative to the real world. These two worlds constitute two coexisting spaces (however mutually exclusive) therefore a person should be aware of the unreality (artificiality) of the virtual world, its fragmentation and incompleteness.

Thanks to contemporary cybernetic communication techniques, artificial intelligence has joined the intelligence of humans, nature, and society in the virtual world. The virtual world, which is "artificial," has been linked to the concept of intelligence used so far, therefore its associated intelligence is also artificial. It may also be referred to as learning intelligence, virtual intelligence, cyberspatial intelligence, media-based intelligence, or computational intelligence (Kurp 2023).

In the world of science and technology, there is no unambiguous definition of artificial intelligence. The term itself, which has already entered everyday language, encompasses a variety of sciences, theories and techniques aimed at making machines reproduce or imitate in their operation the cognitive abilities of human beings. The term "forms of artificial intelligence" is therefore often used, which emphasizes the discrepancy that exists between these systems and the human person. Artificial intelligence is not a uniform entity, since its different forms are "fragmentary" in the sense that they can imitate or reproduce only some of the functions of human (natural, integral) intelligence. The use of plural form also highlights how distinct these devices are from one another and how they should always be viewed as "psychotechnical and sociotechnical systems". Regardless of the underlying technology, their operation and effects on people and their lives depend not only on their design but also on the objectives and preferences of those who use and create them, as well as the circumstances in which they are employed (Franciszek 2022, 2).

Intelligent machines can perform tasks assigned to them with greater efficiency than humans. In its various forms, artificial intelligence, based on

which is the theater of man's history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ, Who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God's design and reach its fulfillment" (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 2).

machine learning techniques,[5] although still in its early stages, is already bringing about significant changes in human life as well as in the fabric of societies, having a profound impact on cultures and social behaviours (Franciszek 2022, 3). Here an important question arises: Will humans be able to control the impact of artificial intelligence on their lives and the real world?

With the advancement of artificial intelligence, new challenges will arise of technical, anthropological, educational, social and political nature. Artificial intelligence has made it possible to, for instance, increase labour savings, develop more automated and efficient production through the advancements of robotics, enhance transportation, create more dynamic markets, and transform data collection, organization, and verification procedures. At the same time, nowadays, people must become more conscious of the rapid changes taking place and learn how to handle them in a way that protects fundamental human rights, while respecting institutions and laws that support the holistic development of the human person. Artificial intelligence should support human potential and modern people's highest aspirations, not compete with them (Franciszek 2022, 2).

Advancements in computing and digital technologies are changing numerous aspects of everyday life, including communication, public administration, education, consumption, interpersonal relationships and many more. Technologies employing various algorithms can, however, extract data from the digital traces left on the Internet that permits the control of people's mental and relational habits for commercial or political purposes, often without their knowledge, thereby restricting their conscious exercise of their right to free choice. Indeed, in a space such as the Internet, characterized by an excess of information, they can shape the flow of data according to selection criteria that are beyond the user's control (Franciszek 2022, 2).

Digital revolution provides greater freedom for people, but at the same time it may trap them in structures known today as *echo chambers* (Jamieson and Cappella 2008). Echo chambers are produced by algorithms that present users with information that supports their current views. By gaining knowledge from users' interactions with other content, such as likes, comments, and shares, these algorithms regulate media communication. Through the delivery of pertinent and captivating content, algorithms manage social media communications to maintain user engagement.

The virtual image of the world, created by humans with the use of artificial intelligence, will now permanently coexist with the real world. However, this raises the question: Will humans, as creators of the virtual world continue to have a decisive impact on the virtual world's evolution as its creators? And the second, important question: Will humans maintain full control over artificial intelligence, a technical tool that is far more capable than humans at processing, storing, and correlating data?

[5] "Developments such as *machine learning* or deep learning raise questions that go beyond the realm of technology and engineering, and have to do with understanding, which is intimately linked to the meaning of human life, basic cognitive processes and the capacity of the mind to perceive truth" (Franciszek 2022, 3).

Currently, primarily due to artificial intelligence, the real and virtual worlds are intertwined. In practice, this means that when thinking, feeling and acting, modern people use applications created and managed by artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence thus poses new challenges generated by the virtual world for people living in the real world.

3. The Virtual World and Artificial Intelligence

Today, a new culture of the virtual world is emerging, where "digitalized multimodal communication networks have encompassed all cultural expressions and personal experiences to such an extent that virtuality became a fundamental dimension of our reality" (Castells 2011, 21). The virtual world can be briefly summarized as **I³**: **I**nteraction + **I**mmersion + **I**magination (Burdea and Coiffet 2003, 4).

From the very beginning, the virtual world created by humans, thanks to modern media communication technologies and using the Internet, has been characterised by the existence of AI. Already in the first wave of artificial intelligence, i.e. social media, users discovered new possibilities of communicating on the network, but at the same time real threats and pathologies in their use also appeared. Social media, for instance, frequently turns into instruments of "cognitive contamination," altering reality by spreading partially or totally untrue narratives, such as deepfake, fake news, or artificially produced audio or video messages that mimic real-life behaviour or use voiceovers. These programs' foundation, simulation, can be helpful in some situations, but it turns perverse when it warps relationships with other people and the real world (Franciszek 2023).

The second level of generative, artificial intelligence brings completely new possibilities but also threats. The launch of the ChatGPT application, marked a qualitative leap in the use of artificial intelligence in networked media communication. However, this is just another stage in the development of artificial intelligence, not its beginning. Media communication assumes that it is possible to create a tool that will allow people to use and utilize the computing power of computers even more effectively.[6] Artificial intelligence functions only in the virtual world and therefore should also be defined and described as a technical instrument for managing cyberspace.

However, due to the widespread access to the Internet and easier access to modern digital devices, the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds have blurred. People are increasingly integrating the advantages of the virtual world with their real-world presence in their daily lives. These worlds coexist simultaneously and permeate one another. However, this does not eliminate the fundamental

[6] The computing power of a computer is the number of arithmetic operations that this device can perform in a given unit of time. The first computers performed only operations on integers, but since the 1960s, operations on floating-point numbers have been used, which are more flexible and convenient to use for most applications. Today, computing power is expressed in the number of such operations per second (Floating point Operations Per Second – FLOPS). On the other hand, the computing power of the most modern quantum computers compared to classical computers may depend on the number of entangled qubits in their memory (Nielsen and Chuang 2000; Biskupski and Beńke 2019).

difference between the real and virtual worlds. People live in the real world, to which they belong both physically, spiritually and mentally. Human corporeality has an immanent dimension, thanks to which people have the opportunity for personal (individual) development, but also for social development through the progress of science and modern technologies. Human spirituality, on the other hand, has a transcendent dimension, which allows them to overcome their limitations resulting from their nature, tainted by the effects of sin, in order to direct their life towards God, who is both the Creator and the Savior.

The natural environment of human life is the real world which humans discover with the use of their senses and intelligence. Humans use their senses to perceive the virtual world as well. The virtual world thus becomes, through imagination, an extension of the sensory cognition of the real world (Przybyłowski 2021b). The virtual world is an "image" created from elements of the real world, but it is created by humans using artificial intelligence, which is not subject to the logic of natural intelligence. As people increasingly use artificial intelligence tools in the virtual world, the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds are becoming less clear. This will have a limiting effect on people's natural intelligence, shaped in the real world.

As artificial intelligence advances, we may envision a scenario in which using its tools to do tasks in the virtual world will become easier for people than following their natural intelligence's instructions. As a result, artificial intelligence may eventually surpass natural intelligence, which would restrict the impact of natural intelligence on people and their lives in the actual world.

Natural intelligence is based on the foundation of the truth about the relative autonomy of the real world and limited freedom in using the laws which govern earthly reality. However, because artificial intelligence allows people to use the virtual world with a great deal of freedom, it is not constrained by the truth of the real world. Thanks to artificial intelligence, the virtual world is independent of the limitations that the real world is subject to. First of all, humans, using artificial intelligence, extend the possibilities of both quantitative and qualitative existence beyond the real everyday reality. There is no such thing as time or space limitations in the virtual world. When people utilize virtual worlds, their senses, which are directly tied to how the brain, reason, and intellect work, become less important than artificial intelligence, which takes precedence over cognition, emotion, and experience. As a result, artificial intelligence starts to create the virtual world more as a superior force than a mere tool. Additionally, in the actual world, artificial intelligence is progressively displacing humans with tools that help them solve the obstacles of daily life more quickly and easily, both in the functional and material spheres.

Conclusions for Further Discussion with Young People

Based on the conducted analysis, it is possible to provide answers to the following basic questions: What are the benefits for humans of using artificial intelligence tools? Does artificial intelligence pose a real threat to human intelligence? The

answer to these two questions seems unambiguous, namely, artificial intelligence can only exist in close link with humans. If people die, artificial intelligence will die as well, as it is unable to control the intelligence of earthly reality (nature). Nature, whose laws were established by the Creator, does not need artificial intelligence for its existence, because its laws have superior power over artificial intelligence. Humans are part of nature, which is why artificial intelligence could not function autonomously in the real world without humans.

Thanks to artificial intelligence, humans increase their access to the virtual world, but at the same time, the use of AI technologies will change the way the life is organized in the real world. Systems with artificial intelligence are capable of learning and producing knowledge. Because of the increasing speed of computational operations and the capacity to accumulate, store, and use information resources, artificial intelligence will become increasingly intuitive and autonomous in this domain, potentially surpassing human intelligence. As artificial intelligence develops in cyberspace, its influence on individual human life and its functioning in society will also increase. Artificial intelligence will "manage" human societies' institutions, structure, and functioning.

On a personal level, it is an individual who decides on the degree to which he includes artificial intelligence in his life and in what spheres of his life he allows it to adapt to his daily functioning, physical, spiritual, and mental demands. However, on a society's level, artificial intelligence can be applied to enhance the structure and operation of institutions. Unfortunately, it can also be used to restrict people's social and personal rights in a way that may violate human dignity. People can be manipulated, enslaved, and subject to institutional control through the unlawful but also immoral (unethical) use of artificial intelligence, which poses a threat to individual life as well.

"A computer is a logical apex of a human's evolution: intellect without morality" (John Osborne) – these words can also be used directly to describe artificial intelligence, which lacks human emotions and is not governed by morality derived from truth or freedom. What guidelines, then, ought to govern how people use artificial intelligence? In the first place, artificial intelligence must be subordinated to absolute protections of human life, both in the individual and social dimension. Secondly, artificial intelligence should play a subservient role towards respecting personal dignity of man and the ensuing rights. As a result, people and, more generally, various organizations should be required to adhere to morally and legally established norms when using artificial intelligence. From the perspective of faith, it should be emphasized that a crucial criterion for the use of new artificial intelligence tools should be their adherence to the moral standards of both societal and individual human life (*Encountering Artificial Intelligence* 2024).

Considering faith in an individual dimension, in order to use artificial intelligence, man needs the presence of God, who endows him with the grace of faith; "since it is faith that adequately introduces man into the reality of the revealed mystery. The 'guiding into all the truth' is therefore achieved in faith and through

faith: and this is the work of the Spirit of truth and the result of his action in man. Here the Holy Spirit is to be man's supreme guide and the light of the human spirit" (Jan Paweł II 1986, 6). It is widely accepted that the ability to discern between fact and fiction and to make one's own assessment of the objective condition of circumstances is a sign of maturity. Therefore, when employing artificial intelligence, one should endeavour to find the truth and follow moral principles. Given the adage "there is no morality without freedom", every believer has a grave moral duty to pursue the truth and, if discovered, to uphold it (Jan Paweł II 1993, 34). "All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (Sobór Watykański II 2012, 22).

Plutarch stated that "the mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled" (Dryden and Vos 2000, 306). In the end, we should view the relationship between artificial intelligence and natural intelligence as follows: natural intelligence will gain nothing if humans uncritically use the effects of artificial intelligence; on the other hand, artificial intelligence will continue to be a very useful and effective support for humans if they treat it as an object, as a tool that needs to be constantly monitored so that the mind, feelings and emotions are not cluttered with its "products".[7]

Artificial intelligence creates a virtual environment that can become a "prison" for humans. However, humans will decide how far and deep they want to enter the environment of artificial intelligence, because this involves the danger of being enslaved by it. Many people will certainly succumb to such enslavement and become dependent on the environment of artificial intelligence (Przybyłowski 2018c). This is a real threat and a pessimistic vision of the relationship between man and artificial intelligence.

The positive vision is associated with the revealed truth about man, who received from God the mission of ruling over creation. Man should therefore also rule over the environment of artificial intelligence, deciding on its influence on his life. It is man who must decide to what extent artificial intelligence will be used by him, because he is responsible for watching over its development and participation in his individual and social life. Artificial intelligence will remain at man's service if he decides on the scope of its influence on his person and everyday life.

However, the increasing degree of mutual permeability of the real and virtual worlds will be a challenging issue of the future. As a result of this process, man's spatiotemporal presence in the actual world will be progressively limited and replaced by his functioning in the virtual world. Since this process cannot be stopped, it should be acknowledged in the context of religion that man's reality exists wherever he is. However, there is a distinction between the real and virtual worlds: the former is a natural living environment that requires human care,

[7] "Machines certainly have an immensely greater capacity than humans to store data and correlate it, but it is humans and humans alone who must decipher its meaning" (Franciszek 2023).

whereas the latter should be dominated, controlled, and monitored by humans so that the artificial intelligence environment does not become a "prison" for them.

It is up to young people to take up this new challenge: "It is our responsibility to creatively influence the process of change (...), while remaining truthfully sensitive to all of its harmful and inhuman elements". (...) Obviously. we face technical, scientific, and political challenges, but they can only be resolved from the human standpoint. It is necessary to awaken a new humanity that is infused with a deeper spirit, new freedom, and new faith" (Guardini 2021, 82-83).

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SEMINARE

The Use of Language Models in Education

Wykorzystanie modeli językowych w edukacji

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyse the ways in which language models can be used in education from the perspective of the theory of dual media articulation. Addressing this issue is important given the growing significance of artificial intelligence in educational processes. Qualitative, exploratory desk research was conducted using 38 sources, selected for their relevance and contribution. These included reports from international institutions (such as OECD), national studies, governmental documents, and publicly available online materials. In the research conducted through the lens of material articulation, language models were identified as tools that support the learning process through personalization and increase knowledge accessibility. Within symbolic articulation, these tools represent a new form of communication and organization of teaching, which influences the process of information acquisition by students and contributes to a shift in traditional teaching methods. Language models are both an opportunity and a challenge in education. Although initial regulations regarding their use are already emerging, there remains a need for detailed legal, ethical, and implementation frameworks.

Keywords: language models, education, youth

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu było przeanalizowanie sposobów wykorzystania modeli językowych w edukacji z perspektywy teorii podwójnej artykulacji mediów. Podjęcie tego zagadnienia jest istotne ze względu na rosnącą rolę sztucznej inteligencji w procesach edukacyjnych. Przeprowadzono jakościowe, eksploracyjne badanie desk research, wykorzystując 38 źródeł wybranych ze względu na ich trafność i wkład merytoryczny. Źródła te obejmowały raporty międzynarodowych instytucji (takich jak OECD), krajowe badania, dokumenty rządowe oraz publicznie dostępne materiały online. W ramach badań przeprowadzonych przez pryzmat artykulacji materialnej modele językowe zidentyfikowano jako narzędzia wspierające proces nauki poprzez personalizację oraz zwiększające dostępność wiedzy. W ramach artykulacji symbolicznej narzędzia te stanowią nową formę komunikacji i organizacji nauczania, które wpływają na proces przyswajania informacji przez uczniów oraz prowadzą do zmiany tradycyjnych metod nauczania. Modele językowe stanowią zarówno szansę, jak i wyzwanie w edukacji. Chociaż pojawiają się już pierwsze regulacje dotyczące ich wykorzystania, wciąż istnieje potrzeba opracowania szczegółowych rozwiązań prawnych, etycznych i wdrożeniowych.

Słowa kluczowe: modele językowe, edukacja, młodzież

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence has gained popularity in recent years thanks to language models developed for communication with users, primarily ChatGPT 3.5 and its improved version, ChatGPT 4, a tool that generates responses which, in most cases, are indistinguishable from texts written by humans (Köbis and Mossink 2020, 1-6).

The introduction of artificial intelligence solutions allows for maximizing work outcomes, including teaching and learning, in much less time. Language models can be an important tool used by students and teachers in the educational process, becoming an element of the educational system (Jaskuła 2023, 13). It should be noted that the role of these tools is not limited to providing information, but also affects the nature of pedagogical relationships and the way knowledge is acquired by young people. Language models lead to the automation of the teaching process and the personalization of learning. Impact Research conducted a survey between February 2-7, 2023, with a representative group of students and teachers in the United States on behalf of the Walton Family Foundation. The survey showed that ChatGPT was positively evaluated by teachers. More than 51% of teachers had already started using the language model, with 40% using it at least once a week. Additionally, 72% of teachers believed that AI tools have the potential to significantly improve learning outcomes. In the case of students, the percentage of users of this tool is lower (22%), but both most students and teachers agree that the ChatGPT invention should lead to changes in the teaching system in schools (Walton Family Foundation 2023). It should be noted that the study conducted by Impact Research on behalf of the Walton Family Foundation in February 2023 encompassed a representative sample of 1,002 teachers and 1,000 students from the United States, allowing for the generalisation of the findings to the national population. The samples were appropriately weighted to align their demographic structure with estimates derived from the American Community Survey, conducted by the US Census Bureau (five-year data) (Walton Family Foundation 2023). Although the primary data originates from the United States, it is possible to cautiously speak of emerging global trends in the application of artificial intelligence in education. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that generalising these findings on an international scale would require further, more extensive research. Researchers agree that artificial intelligence, including language models, will be present in education at various levels (Krzypkowska 2023, 5-8).

However, the use of language models in education is associated with controversy and raises concerns among educators (Hong 2023, 37-45). Teachers face the challenge of how to recognize whether specific works are created by students or generated by artificial intelligence. The development of AI, particularly advanced language models, also raises questions about future professions and the type of education that will respond to changing work conditions (Vincent-Lancrin 2019). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, education in the digital age thus faces two significant

challenges: harnessing the benefits of AI tools to streamline the learning process and preparing students for new future jobs (Vincent-Lancrin and Van der Vlies 2020, 1-16).

The aim of this paper was to analyze the ways in which language models are used in education and assess their impact on the teaching process. In the section "Use of Language Models in Education," the ways in which artificial intelligence is used in education by students were described, and the risks associated with using these tools were identified. The research was conducted in relation to the theory of dual articulation of media. In the section "Recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Science," the recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN) regarding the use of artificial intelligence in education were outlined. A total of 38 sources were analysed, including academic publications, reports from international institutions (such as OECD), national studies, governmental documents, and publicly accessible online materials. The temporal scope of the reviewed sources primarily covers the years 2019 to 2024, with the selection based on their relevance, representativeness, and substantive contribution to the research topic.

The theory of dual articulation helps to understand the relationship between society and the media, which is why its selection in the context of the significance of language models in education is justified. According to the creator of this theory, Roger Silverstone, media should be analysed through both symbolic and material articulation. Material articulation refers to the physical and technological aspects of media and their use. Symbolic articulation pertains to meanings, values, and identities associated with media (Silverstone 1994). Stuart Hall understood articulation as the linking of cultural practice with meaning, which changes depending on the author, context, or purpose of the statement (Storey 2003). In the context of this study, material articulation refers to language models as technological tools enabling access to education, while symbolic articulation refers to these tools as new forms of communication and knowledge organization, which influence the ways students acquire knowledge, social relationships, and cognitive processes.

A qualitative research methodology of an exploratory-verification nature was applied, based on the analysis of existing sources (desk research), including subject literature, scientific reports, and detailed guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN) regarding the use of artificial intelligence in education. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the possible ways of using language models in education? (material articulation)
2. How does the use of language models affect the way students acquire knowledge? (symbolic articulation)

This research makes a significant contribution to the ongoing discussion on the application of artificial intelligence in education by highlighting both the benefits and potential risks associated with these tools.

1. The Use of Language Models in Education

Dimension of Analysis	Impact of Language Models
Material Articulation	Language models as a tool supporting learning, facilitating access to knowledge, and personalizing education.
Symbolic Articulation	Language models reshaping the perception of the roles of students and teachers as well as the ways information is acquired.

Source: Own elaboration

From the perspective of material articulation of media, it is important to note that language models play a significant role as part of the information architecture, influencing the personalization of learning and the automation of knowledge access. These tools are available 24/7, effectively acting as a free tutor tailored to the student's age and level of knowledge (Nee et al. 2023). Numerous scientific studies indicate that language models, as virtual assistants, can improve academic performance (Pane et al. 2017) and help students develop their competencies by providing quick and accurate answers to their questions (Janus-Sitarz 2023, 19-20).

Language models make the learning process more individualized, positively impacting not only the speed and efficiency of learning but also its enjoyment. As a result, they enhance the overall effectiveness of education (Tu 2024, 198). Additionally, these tools track students' progress, adjust the difficulty level accordingly, and generate personalized study plans and tests, allowing students to focus on their weaker areas (Lakshmi and Majid 2022, 15-18). For example, they can assist in solving math problems by outlining the necessary steps to arrive at a solution. This level of individualized support is not feasible for a teacher in a traditional classroom setting, where they must oversee all students and cannot tailor their teaching methods to the specific needs of each individual. Furthermore, language models eliminate the risk of teacher subjectivity, which may arise from personal biases toward students (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 19).

They can also provide significant support in essay and dissertation writing by assisting in structuring texts, checking grammar and writing style, and identifying factual errors (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 19).

Moreover, they play a crucial role in supporting students in learning foreign languages. Technology enables conversations on any topic in a foreign language, simulating natural dialogues. Additionally, built-in automatic correction systems assist in learning foreign language grammar (Tarasiuk and Czapski 2023, 54).

Language models also support students with special needs by teaching social norms and aiding in communication. In this sense, they contribute to increasing the inclusivity of education and accommodating the needs of students with

disabilities (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 19). Another important aspect is their integration with specific educational systems. AI-based educational platforms are already available on the market. Among them, Coursera and Khan Academy stand out—these platforms offer academic-level courses, track students' progress, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and recommend suitable didactic content (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 38).

AI-powered educational solutions are most effective in supporting learning when applied to repetitive and predictable tasks, where their efficiency surpasses that of traditional teaching methods (Holmes, Bialik and Fadel 2019). Thus, they are particularly useful for acquiring procedural knowledge (how to do something) (Commint 2025) rather than conceptual knowledge (why something works a certain way) (Training Industry 2025). In this context, it is worth noting the research conducted by Agnieszka Franczyk and Anna Rajchel. Their findings indicate that students of technical and scientific disciplines approach these tools more enthusiastically than students in the humanities (Franczyk and Rajchel 2024, 99). In the case of technical and scientific disciplines, the emphasis is placed on procedural knowledge, while in the case of humanities, the focus is on conceptual knowledge. This distinction may explain the differing attitudes of students toward language models.

At the same time, it is important to note that language models can generate incorrect or biased information. This issue arises mainly from the fact that these tools are not infallible and tend to "hallucinate," meaning they can produce numerous factual errors (Zieliński 2023, 17). A lack of adequate competence among students and teachers in evaluating AI-generated responses may lead to the unintentional incorporation of false information into the learning process. From the perspective of material articulation, risks also include dishonest practices by students who misuse AI tools. These tools are constantly being updated, which results in increasingly accurate responses that better align with users' expectations. Each subsequent AI-generated work is of a higher substantive quality due to the system's ever-expanding database. However, this also has a negative impact on students, who may passively absorb content that does not align with reality (Porwoł 2023, 57-68). It is therefore reasonable to ask how to prevent the dishonest use of language models by students, especially given that there is currently no reliable way to verify whether a particular piece of work has been generated by artificial intelligence (Pięta 2024, 151).

Another risk concerns cybersecurity and the protection of uploaded data. Most users rely on free versions of language models, which means that sensitive data they enter may be intercepted and used by the chatbot. This could lead to breaches of data security and privacy, such as violations of GDPR regulations. Language models can collect and analyse data on students' habits, increasing both the risk of cyberattacks and the use of data for commercial purposes (Jaskuła 2023, 16-18). Monika Podkowińska has highlighted the risks associated with the broader cyberspace, and many of the phenomena she identified can be directly linked

to the dangers of using these tools. Young people spend an excessive amount of time in the virtual world, which leads to technology addiction and a reduction in social interactions. Additionally, they are often unaware of data security risks and misinformation (Podkowińska 2024). This raises the need to enhance digital education in society.

From the perspective of symbolic articulation, it is important to recognize that advanced language models are changing how students approach learning and organize information. The traditional division of roles between student and teacher is diminishing. From the student's perspective, the teacher is no longer solely a provider of knowledge but rather a mentor who should focus on helping students develop soft skills. The learning process becomes much more interactive, allowing students to ask questions, engage in conversations, and request the chatbot to assume specific roles. Scientific research indicates that using AI tools in education can significantly impact the emotional aspect of the learning process. In this context, language models increase students' satisfaction with learning, help transform negative emotions into positive ones, and improve students' attitudes toward education (Nee et al. 2023). Traditional learning environments can generate stress, which lowers the quality of learning. These risks are minimized in the case of language models, which can be used in a private setting. ChatGPT does not evaluate the intellectual level, age, or gender of the conversation partner (Cholewa and Rak 2023, 34).

From the perspective of symbolic articulation, it is important to note that language models may lead to a decrease in independent thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity if students rely solely on the tool's responses (Chinonso, Mfon-Ette and Aduke 2023, 32-33). An important point was raised by Wojciech Czerski, who noted that chatbot-based tools can be useful only when students have mastered critical thinking skills and use these tools to assist the educational process (Czerski 2023, 55-62). Therefore, it can be concluded that improper use of this technology could limit the development of humanistic values, such as reflectiveness and creativity.

Additionally, it should be noted that the responses generated by AI are not neutral; they are the result of algorithms designed by their creators. This can lead to a situation where the flow of information is restricted. These tools can filter access to knowledge and promote certain ideological, political, and economic narratives, thus trapping users in informational bubbles (Krakowska 2022). There is a risk that the use of language models will lead to algorithmic thinking, meaning choosing the most likely answers rather than critically analysing a specific problem from multiple perspectives. In the literature on the subject, this issue has been referred to as Fast Food Education (Aguilar 2025).

These tools also cause a shift in the paradigm of the relationship between the student and teacher, contributing to the dehumanization of this relationship and weakening the teacher's authority (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 26). Interpersonal relationships between students and teachers may be weakened as students focus

solely on this technology (Koziej 2023, 16-17). It should be noted that language models are just tools that do not have empathy mechanisms, so they cannot replace real contact with a teacher. Meanwhile, advanced artificial intelligence tools, such as Carnegie Learning, are already emerging, enabling the learning process without the physical involvement of a teacher (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 18).

In the light of educational philosophy, a process of depersonalization of the teaching process may occur, leading to a redefinition of the previously mentioned teacher's authority. It seems reasonable to ask whether the student-teacher relationship can be replaced by a student-language model relationship (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 18). However, the answer to this question seems to be no, as humans learn not only by acquiring knowledge but also through interpersonal interactions. Moreover, these tools do not teach ethics, responsibility, and moral norms, areas where the role of the teacher and parent is irreplaceable. It is worth noting that research by Katarzyna Nosek-Kozłowska shows that the personality of the teacher plays a crucial role in the education of their students. A teacher should respond to the challenges of the modern world and possess versatile competencies: managing various tasks simultaneously, identifying the individual needs of students, and being knowledgeable in modern technologies. Moreover, a modern teacher should understand and identify the emotions of their students (Nosek-Kozłowska 2024, 102-103). It can therefore be concluded that language models will not replace the teacher, but as previously mentioned, they will redefine their role.

From the perspective of symbolic articulation, language models can also change the way students think about learning. Learning requires engagement, time, reflection, analysis, and critical thinking, but at the same time, it allows for a deep understanding of the subject matter. Irresponsible use of these tools may lead to a situation where the learning process becomes focused on immediate access to information, rather than on a thorough understanding of it. There is a risk that students will begin to treat learning as an on-demand ready-made product. Replacing the process of acquiring knowledge with its production can lead to the aforementioned loss of critical thinking skills.

Language models can contribute both to the democratization of education and to its elitism. These tools can increase access to education for people from less developed areas who cannot afford to hire private tutors. At the same time, there is a risk that people who have access to the latest technologies will gain an advantage over those who, for various reasons, do not use them (Olszowy and Nanek 2024, 32).

2. Recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Science for Teachers

The Ministry of Education and Science has responded to the challenges associated with the use of artificial intelligence solutions, such as language models. The Ministry has published two reports: "Chat GPT w Szkole – Szanse i Zagrożenia" („Chat GPT in Schools – Opportunities and Threats") (Machura 2023) and "Do

czego AI nie służy – Przewodnik dla nauczycieli stworzony przez grupę roboczą ds. AI" ("What AI Is Not For – A Guide for Teachers Created by the AI Working Group") (Łukawski, Łukawski and Rafał 2023). The first document provides an introduction to considerations about artificial intelligence, explaining what AI is, where it is used, and what Chat GPT is. This report also includes a conversation with Chat GPT about possible ways of utilizing it in education. The document describes the risks associated with students using Chat GPT to write homework and recommends that such tasks should be completed by students during class time. It also recommends using Chat GPT in a way that supports students' critical thinking skills, by questioning some of the language model's formulations and verifying information from other sources. An example of using Chat GPT by the teacher could be to ask students to prepare an article with the help of Chat GPT, and then critically review it during class. The report also states that students should receive clear guidelines from the teacher regarding how to use the chatbot in their work (Machura 2023). It is also emphasized that appropriate collaboration with technology can contribute to the development of soft skills, referred to as future competencies. These include critical thinking, creativity, communication, and cooperation (Lamri 2021).

The report also emphasized that to verify if a piece of work was written by a student, attention should be paid to whether the writing style is characteristic of the student, by having a conversation with the student about the details included in the work, and by checking the text using plagiarism detection software or software for detecting artificial intelligence. However, it should be noted that AI detection programs in student works are imperfect, and their effectiveness remains low at the moment. The report highlighted the risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence. However, it lacks specific guidelines for schools regarding the use of technology and assessing student work generated by Chat GPT, as well as the procedures that should be followed in the case of misuse (Machura 2023).

A much more comprehensive report is "What AI Is Not For – A Guide for Teachers Created by the AI Working Group." The document describes the functioning of the technology and highlights significant risks associated with its use. It provides examples of specific prompts that teachers can use when working with students and stresses the importance of asking detailed and precise questions. It also advises against providing sensitive data to the chatbot, as it could be exposed. It is recommended that a teacher be present during the process of students using the technology, monitoring the entire process, paying attention to the ethical aspect, and checking for possible "hallucinations" by the chat (Łukawski, Łukawski and Rafał 2023).

The report also expands on possible uses of the technology by students, such as using Chat GPT as a conversation partner (including in a foreign language), which will point out gaps in the student's speech, or as an assistant helping in creating quizzes and tasks. Additionally, the report points to the possibility of creating custom versions of Chat GPT, tailored to meet the individual educational

needs of students. The report also includes guidelines for teachers, advising that educators should not use the tool to work with documents containing sensitive data, nor should it be used for administrative tasks or to assess students' behaviour and achievements (Łukawski, Łukawski and Rafał 2023).

It is important to note that while this report contributes to raising teachers' awareness of the functioning of language models, it offers relatively few practical guidelines for teachers regarding the responsible use of artificial intelligence solutions in schools. However, such guidelines are already being developed. In this context, attention should be drawn to the guidelines of the Maria Grzegorzewska University of Special Education in Warsaw (Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej 2025). Additionally, study programs related to the use of AI solutions in schools are already emerging. For example: Childcare and Education Pedagogy integrated with Artistic Pedagogy and AI. (Pedagogium. Wyższa Szkoła Nauk Społecznych 2025).

Conclusion

Research has shown that language models can improve the quality of education. In terms of material articulation, these tools are functional tools that have both advantages and disadvantages. This technology leads to the personalization of learning, acting as a virtual teacher available 24 hours a day. Language models can improve learning efficiency by adjusting the level of learning to the student and identifying their weak points, allowing the student to better tackle specific material. The application of these tools in education is vast: they can create tests, check essays, and assist in language learning. In this context, it is worth referring to the OECD report, which also highlights that the development of artificial intelligence can support students with special needs by providing inclusive access to education (Vincent-Lancrin and Van der Vlies 2020). However, there are also many risks associated with the improper use of this technology in education. These include the possibility of hallucination, i.e., providing false answers, as well as the risk of generating ready-made works, effectively replacing the work of students, which contradicts ethics. Moreover, the use of language models in education brings the discussion about cybersecurity risks, technology addiction, and privacy policies back to the forefront (Podkowińska 2024).

Language models also change the way we think about education (symbolic articulation). The use of this technology in education leads to a shift toward a more interactive teaching model. They also change the roles of the teacher and the student. In a situation where such tools exist, the teacher stops being the person who delivers knowledge. Instead, they should become a mentor who accompanies the student in the process of acquiring knowledge and controls this process to minimize risks. However, this is an ideal situation that does not always take place. Moreover, improper use of language models in the educational process by students can result in the decline of critical thinking skills and lead to the dehumanization

of the traditional teaching process. There is also a risk that learning will cease to be a process of acquiring knowledge and instead become a product that the student can receive on demand.

The identified risks can be minimized by introducing clear pedagogical guidelines and educational programs regarding the use of technology in education, as well as educating students in the direction of critical thinking skills and conscious use of AI in education (Franczyk and Rajchel 2024, 99). This requires a balanced approach, in which technology supports but does not replace the traditional teaching process. According to the guidelines from the Academy of Special Pedagogy, a teacher preparing lessons using AI should aim for the student to demonstrate critical thinking (e.g., reviewing content generated by AI), creativity (learning how to write prompts, set tasks for AI), and teamwork skills (group tasks, group discussions, Oxford debates) (Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej 2025).

There is also a need for tools that can recognize which content was generated by technology, which will minimize ethical challenges. It seems necessary to also develop appropriate legal regulations, as the existing ones are not keeping up with the rapidly advancing field of artificial intelligence. Although ministerial reports have been created regarding the use of language models in education, it seems that there is a need for more practical materials that focus on specific educational solutions and take into account the latest scientific research, as well as regulations and best practices applied in other countries.

Considering the presence of language models in educational systems, it becomes crucial to begin a discussion about changing the teaching model and redefining the uniform education system based on the Prussian model of education (Baszyński 2020, 81-82). This system is characterized by standardization in the transmission of knowledge, which does not align with the realities of the 21st century. In contrast, language models adapt individually to each student and support a flexible approach to the education process, thereby improving the effectiveness of learning. Thus, it seems that in the near future, more and more educational institutions will offer a hybrid educational model (blended learning) (Tayebinik and Puteh 2012) that combines traditional approaches with online learning and modern technologies.

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SEMINARE

Axiological Foundations of Youth Media Education

Aksjologiczne podstawy edukacji medialnej młodzieży

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Abstract: This article explores the axiological foundations of media education, particularly with regard to young people. Through a critical analysis of relevant literature and synthesis of research findings on key axiological and ethical areas of the media, the article aims to present crucial aspects of young people's axiological development, including education concerning the inalienable dignity of each person, concern for truth, accountability for one's words, education in critical thinking, and an awareness of the media's impact on key dimensions of human life, as well as the imperative of continuous self-education in this domain. Scholarly, interdisciplinary analyses confirm that contemporary media culture demands urgent and ongoing media competence education, especially for young people, as well as the shaping of their axiological and moral perspectives, without which it is impossible to be a conscious and responsible participant in media culture.

Keywords: axiology, ethics, media education, youth, dignity, truth, responsibility for words, self-education

Abstrakt: Artykuł koncentruje się wokół zagadnienia aksjologicznych podstaw edukacji medialnej, zwłaszcza z uwzględnieniem młodzieży. W oparciu o metodę krytycznej analizy źródeł w postaci literatury przedmiotu, a także dokonując próby scalenia wyników badań nad głównymi obszarami aksjologicznymi i etycznymi mediów, a więc zsyntetyzowania ich, zaprezentowano takie ważne aspekty formacji aksjologicznej młodzieży jak edukacja do niezbywalnej godności człowieka, troska o prawdę, odpowiedzialność za słowo, edukacja w zakresie krytycznego myślenia, a także świadomość wpływu mediów na relewantne obszary życia człowieka oraz permanentna autoedukacja w tym zakresie. Naukowe, interdyscyplinarne analizy potwierdzają, że współczesna kultura medialna wymaga pilnego i permanentnego kształcenia kompetencji medialnych, zwłaszcza ludzi młodych, oraz formowania ich postaw aksjologicznych i moralnych, bez których nie można być świadomym użytkownikiem kultury medialnej.

Słowa kluczowe: aksjologia, etyka, edukacja medialna, młodzież, godność, prawda, odpowiedzialność za słowo, autoedukacja

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Introduction

The contemporary world is characterised by the extraordinary dynamism of media development, which has become an inseparable element of daily life, exerting a significant influence on individuals through three types of impact: direct, communicative, and subconscious. "Each of these influences reveals a panorama of various 'traces' left in the human psyche by contact with mass media" (Lepa 1996, 103). Therefore, from an educational perspective, it is important to recognise the effectiveness of the media's influence and interference in human life, with particular emphasis on young people.

Media outlets have been demonstrated to exert a significant influence on the formation of public opinion, the decision-making processes of individuals, and the evolution of information technology. Consequently, from a social, pedagogical, psychological and ethical standpoint, there is a necessity for media education, particularly for children and young people.

This form of education remains an area of knowledge that has not been thoroughly explored, partly due to its multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature. It concerns the nature of the media and the ability to engage with them responsibly but also requires work and reflection not exclusively the domain of media experts. This field draws upon the achievements of disciplines such as pedagogy, film studies, communication studies, cultural studies, literary theory, sociology, anthropology, political science, art history, aesthetics, and their sub-disciplines, for example, media pedagogy, media sociology, and media aesthetics (Ogonowska 2013, 10), as well as ethics, axiology, epistemology, and even metaphysics. This multidisciplinary approach enables a broader and more profound perspective on media education, recognising a range of important issues that require in-depth reflection, allowing users to navigate the world of media in a beneficial, prudent, and ethical manner.

Contemporary media education cannot be limited to developing technical or informational competencies alone. Its essence, particularly in the context of the media's influence on young people's attitudes and choices, lies in axiological foundations, i.e., the values that should accompany every process of interpreting, creating, and receiving media messages. This education should be rooted in values such as truth, responsibility, freedom, the dignity of the human person, and the common good.

Media education, therefore, cannot be axiologically neutral; it must advocate for truth, freedom, and responsibility for one's words. The axiological foundations of media should be universally applicable to address the challenges of the global infosphere effectively. A key component of media education lies in its axiological foundations, which are indispensable to the very concept of education itself. Axiology in education serves as the fundamental source of educational activities. Suppose we want to achieve our educational goals and reach young people. In that case, we must first establish a catalogue of values that will guide them and serve as

reliable and effective signposts throughout the educational process. The axiology of education undoubtedly helps shape specific attitudes and behaviours in children, young people, and other participants in the educational process, developing the necessary awareness of the importance of values in media reception, the ability to understand them critically and to use them responsibly.

The axiological and moral foundations of media education are inextricably linked to the idea of the subjectivity of every media recipient and their development as a conscious member of the information society. This education not only transmits knowledge but also forms, educates, and prepares young people for responsibility, engagement, courageous critical analysis of content, and defending their beliefs in accordance with their moral compass. In contemporary educational practice in many countries, efforts are made to incorporate media education into the context of media reception; however, their effectiveness varies. In some countries, such as Finland and Canada, media education is an integral part of school curricula and includes, among other things, analysing sources of information, recognising manipulation, and assessing the credibility of content. In Poland, media education remains underdeveloped, often limited to optional classes or projects implemented by non-governmental organisations or non-public educational entities. This is due, in part, to the lack of ministerial programmes for this type of education and the fact that digital media are constantly changing traditional patterns of receiving and interpreting content, which is challenging to keep up with today.

1. Education Towards Dignity

At the core of any mature contemplation on humanity lies the concept of dignity, a cornerstone of morality, human rights, and social relations (Chałas 2021, 35). Janusz Mariański states directly: "No concept holds greater significance for the cultural and moral trajectory of Europe and the world than that of the human person" (Mariański 2017, 7). There is no dignity without the person, just as there is no person without dignity. These two concepts are closely intertwined and form the basis for understanding the phenomenon of the human being. However, the answer to the question 'Who is man?' turns out to be not so easy, especially for a young person who expects an answer to such a question. Throughout the history of anthropological thought, a plurality of answers to this question have emerged. On the one hand, the human person is often portrayed as the centre of the universe, an almost omnipotent "creator and ruler" shaping and directing the world. On the other hand, his status, particularly in contemporary contexts, is not so apparent at all because it is often reified, as if he did not possess the fundamental value that protects him in every situation – personal dignity by being a person. For humans due to their ontological and cognitive structure, they are persons (Chung in-Sang 1988, 83).

The Psalmist's query in Psalm 8 of the Old Testament, "What is the human person?" is met with the following reflection:

> "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
> the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
> what is man that you are mindful of him,
> and the son of man that you care for him?
> Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
> and crowned him with glory and honor.
> You have given him dominion over the works of your hands."
>
> Psalm 8:3–6

These words undoubtedly express one thing: admiration for the human person, rooted in the unique and inherent nature with which they have been endowed. This uniqueness is expressed in what, in the language of anthropology, is called dignity, which is a universal and autotelic value. A value shared by all human beings, regardless of their characteristics. "Dignity is a distinctive value, exclusive to human beings" (Glinkowski 2024, 39).

This value is perhaps best articulated by the philosophical movement of personalism, which elevates human dignity to an inalienable attribute of the individual. Christian personalism captures the essence of human personal dignity by portraying the human being in a personal relationship with God, their Creator, from whom they originate (Granat 1985, 79). This perspective further emphasises the importance of constructing social life to serve the good of each person and stresses the primacy of the human person over social conditions and mechanisms. The origins of this movement can be traced back to Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. In modern times, it is represented by thinkers such as G. Marcel, J. Maritain, E. Mounier, M. Scheler, E. Stein, K. Wojtyła, W. Granat, and C. Bartnik (Bartnik 2001, 510). "Personalism, therefore, reveals the greatness and uniqueness of a human being against the backdrop of the spectrum of existence, differing from other beings precisely because of the inalienable dignity inherent in every person in an essential, equal, and inseparable manner, regardless of any characteristics such as age, gender, disability, illness, origin, views, race, religion, nationality, or other attributes, as well as independently of their behaviour, conduct, and choices." (Zygmunt 2009, 37).

Human dignity is not merely an abstract concept; it constitutes a tangible value that must be recognised, affirmed, and protected. Dignity manifests itself in interpersonal relationships and moral obligations towards others. Education paradigms that ignore this crucial dimension risk fostering deficits in empathy, mutual acceptance, and compassion, potentially exacerbating antisocial tendencies.

It is essential to recognise that human dignity does not derive from heteronomous sources, such as the Constitution or other legal acts, but rather from the very essence of being human. It serves as the foundation of all human rights. The human person perceives their dignity in an axiological sense, albeit one that may vary in intensity

across individuals. Therefore, education should instil in every person the conviction that even those who seemingly lack qualities highly esteemed by society nonetheless embody an image of genuine humanity grounded in human dignity. Dignity is a substantial value inherent to the person, which cannot be lost even through immoral conduct. The principle of human dignity serves, therefore, as a universal foundation for human existence. This concept requires that education be recognised as a space where young people develop their ability to distinguish between lower values (utility, pleasure) and higher values (truth, goodness, beauty, dignity).

Educating young people to understand human dignity is not merely a pedagogical act but, above all, an axiological and moral process that shapes the subjectivity and responsibility of everyone. Each human being exists as a subject who, as a rational, free, and autonomous being in the spiritual realm, is a conscious and free entity, unique within the cosmos due to their inalienable auto-telic value of dignity, with which their Creator has endowed everyone. Personalism strongly emphasises this reality, asserting that every human person should be respected by others at every stage of their life from the moment of conception and regardless of their circumstances. Personalism, in its deepest essence, embodies authentic humanism, referred to as integral humanism, whose rich tradition has always emphasised the greatness of the human person (Maritain 1981, 25).

Robert Spaemann emphasises that the content of the term "dignity" cannot be captured by an abstract concept, as its understanding is possible through examples or paraphrases (Spaemann 2022, 97). Therefore, if someone says that dignity does not exist when they look at their own experience or the experience of others when their humanity or that of others is violated, they will see the good that is the human person. Therefore, in education, understanding dignity plays a crucial role, as without its presence in human life, it is impossible to comprehend oneself, one's humanity, vocation, and the need for respect towards oneself and others. Educating young people to achieve a profound understanding of human dignity is the essence of personalistic education. This type of education protects and develops human dignity. In Centesimus Annus, John Paul II noted that a flawed understanding of the human person as an element of a social mechanism leads to a loss of the sense of individual dignity and moral responsibility (John Paul II 1991, 13). The education of children and young people should, therefore, emphasise personal development, independent thinking and ethically grounded decision-making. Pointing out this attribute of humanity, protecting it, and caring for its inviolability are the basis for the moral development of young people, leading to an increase in awareness, understanding, and affirming others.

Educating young people about dignity shapes their attitudes of responsibility for the community and fosters openness to the pluralism of others' attitudes, worldviews, beliefs, and reasons. Promoting the value of dignity helps eradicate both overt and covert prejudices and stereotypes, creating a more inclusive environment. Furthermore, it has a significant impact on strengthening one's identity and sense of individual worth, which is the basis for healthy mental and

social development in everyone. Raising children and young people is not about imparting knowledge but about supporting them in becoming themselves. To be human is to be aware of one's freedom and responsibility.

Amidst pressing global crises, such as migration, social inequalities, ongoing warfare, and the depreciation of human life, education for dignity is now essential from the earliest years of schooling. In Redemptor Hominis, John Paul II noted that human dignity does not diminish with time but instead becomes increasingly relevant, particularly in the context of scientific and technological progress (John Paul II 1979, 16). Dignity education should, therefore, prepare the youngest generations for responsible participation in social and global life. The cultivation of respect for human dignity is not merely one potential direction for education but rather its fundamental essence. At its centre is the conviction that every human person is a fundamental value, in and of themselves. Education understood in this way not only protects against the instrumentalisation of the human person but shapes a more ethical and empathetic society.

In the face of growing social tensions, disinformation, and the erosion of interpersonal bonds, axiological education becomes a *sine qua non-condition* for preserving the humanistic foundations of culture. Education devoid of philosophy of values becomes merely intellectual training, and a society without values risks becoming merely intellectual instruction; a society lacking values is a society without a future. Therefore, the use of media, as emphasised in the "Decree on the Means of Social Communication," necessitates careful consideration of "the conditions and all circumstances, such as the purpose, persons, place, time, and other factors in which the communication takes place, which can change or even distort its dignity" (Paul VI 1963, 4).

2. Concern for Truth

In the realm of media education for young people, truth also comes to the fore. Truth, much like dignity, stands as an autotelic value – inherently valuable and important, regardless of ulterior motives or advantages. Truth has value in and of itself, for without truth, trust, reliability, transparency, honesty or certainty in human life would not be possible. Truth is essential not because of its potential benefits or utility but because it is inherently good and valuable. Truth has always been the foundation of human knowledge and communication, which is why its role in media education for young people cannot be overestimated. Therefore, truth is an axiological category, without which understanding a value-driven reality would be challenging. As Morbitzer (2014, 131) notes, "a lack of understanding of a specific concept prevents its interception, and thus practical respect and life by a given axiological category".

In today's world, where information spreads at astonishing speed and the media play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and attitudes, truth is an indispensable value in itself. Media education should be grounded in the pursuit and discovery of truth and even in sensitising young people to it because only then is it possible to educate critical

and conscious recipients. In this context, truth serves as the benchmark for objectivity, accuracy, and accountability in information dissemination. Youth involved in media education must learn to differentiate between authentic and fabricated information, identify manipulation and disinformation, and appreciate that the pursuit of truth requires effort, reflective thought, and a commitment to the quality of communication.

Embracing truth with care means that media education for young people should promote values such as diligence in conveying facts, objectivity, reliability, and critical thinking. Teachers, educators, and the media themselves should work to protect the truth, as neglecting it leads to eroded trust, disinformation, and the undermining of fundamental social principles. Concern for truth in media education is not only a duty but also a moral imperative for schools, educational centres, educational programmes, as well as parents and religious educators, which aims to shape conscious, responsible and ethical media users. Its presence and care are paramount in building a community founded on knowledge, mutual trust, and accountability. In this way, concern for truth becomes a concern for humanity, which, as the Stoics emphasised, invariably needs truth, especially when its necessity is questioned, and truth itself is losing its meaning.

The dictatorship of relativism in the contemporary postmodern world diminishes truth. As Krzysztof Zanussi writes in his essay "Prawda czy towar?" (Truth or Commodity?), the owners of a significant global news network openly stated that information is a commodity, and it must be tailored to the consumer's desires. Here, truth is treated as a commodity. As Shakespeare mocked relativism, "it is like as you imagine it" (Zanussi 1996, 255). Axionormative relativism has reduced objective truth to an anti-value. In his article "Prawda w mediach" (Truth in the Media), Krzysztof Zanussi argues that "it is impossible to discuss truth in the media or any other sense today without referring to postmodernism, the fashionable nemesis of Marxism in the humanities. This movement, in its popular form, instils fear of those who proclaim the existence of objective or, worse, absolute truth. It warns that proponents of this truth will impose it by force, threatening totalitarianism, fundamentalism, and a dark dictatorship. I painfully encountered this while guest lecturing in Polish studies in Warsaw a few years ago. Young people were discouraged from seeking any truth in favour of relativism. Consequently, I saw a group of lost young people, dangerous in their way and prone to extremes. It is uncertainty that drives people to violence; those with something to hold onto are more resistant to despair. Fanatics often come from the lost, less so from seekers. However, to seek, one must believe that truth exists, even if it is always incomplete and imperfect in the form, we can assimilate it" (Zanussi 2008, 192).

In today's postmodern culture, the world fragments into numerous mini-discourses, existing as isolated islands in an archipelago on the ocean. Living in a pluralism of subjective truths, which celebrates diverse meaning systems and divergent thinking, undermines the value of objective truth. The very diversity, alternativity, and ambiguity are today recognised as values deserving of respect, leading to the subsequent assertion that all opinions, beliefs, and convictions are equally valid and useful. In a pluralistic world of truth, accommodating multiple viewpoints and "many

truths," there is no place for proclaiming objective truths. Individuals no longer express the truth that is intersubjectively communicative and verifiable but present their intellectual product in a "private" language, engaging in a "language game," sensing that it leads nowhere, as games are for amusement, not for seeking truth. Media education, in the sense of truth, should become a priority and the highest ethical requirement in relations with the media, both in preparing and training future journalists for their profession and in educating young media consumers. Journalists, above all, should be concerned about truth, as stipulated in existing deontological codes. Luka Brajnović, a pioneer of journalistic deontology and former professor at the University of Navarra's Institute of Journalism, stated in an interview with Rafał Grabowski: "I would advise journalists always to tell the truth, that is, always to be convinced that what they say reflects reality. They must fight in defence of truth, not only convey it but also fight for it for the common good, for the good of the audience, and the good of the state in an ethical sense. It is a unique mission. (…) Journalism must be based on truth. If it distorts it, it is not journalism but propaganda and manipulation. Journalism is informing, and there is no informing without reference to truth" (Brajnovič 1996, 21). In journalism, truth is a fundamental norm, an obligation of impartiality, and the accurate reporting of facts, distinguishing it from falsehood. There is a constant need for differentiation. "Either there is truth, or there is a lie; either there is good, or there is evil. Lies cannot be treated as a mild, harmless drug. A lie is the death of a journalist" (Niewęgłowski 1996, 32).

3. Responsibility for the Word

Responsibility for the word is intrinsically linked to truth, particularly given the amplified power of words in contemporary culture, extending beyond media contexts. According to Ewa Badyda, "Thanks to current means of communication and new forms of social communication, it has a wider reach and is practically unrestricted. Thanks to modern media, the scale of its persuasive impact also increases – it can influence the behaviour and attitudes of communities, which is illustrated by many examples, from the successes of Goebbels' propaganda through the newspeak of the communist era, which became a tool for maintaining political power over society, to today's consumer behaviours shaped under the influence of television commercials" (Badyda 2012, 175).

However, behind the media stand specific people who either accept responsibility for the content they publish or, in the name of a falsely understood freedom of speech, distort the truth across various fields of journalistic work. Adam Lepa aptly notes that "the high function of the journalistic profession, far exceeding the mere mechanical transmission of information and shaping the attitudes of individuals and society and thus having in its power the souls of citizens, requires above all a deep sense of responsibility for the transmitted word and image" (Lepa 1996, 111). Contemporary media today have a significant impact not only on shaping so-called public opinion, influencing the social, political and cultural attitudes of their recipients, but also on

shaping individual preferences, worldviews, behaviours, tastes, and beliefs of people, especially young people. In this context, the responsibility for the word – both in the ethical and axiological sphere – is a significant issue. This responsibility is not merely a moral matter but is the axiological foundation upon which the actions of the media and their creators should be based. Therefore, the ethical and professional responsibility of journalists for the word, for their power to create and influence reality, become an issue that not only needs to be addressed in the media but also needs to be controlled.

Zygmunt Bauman, in describing modernity, claims that it is "fluid," "liquid", subject to processes of "liquefaction" and "dissolution," "dissolving everything solid" (Bauman 2000, 7). Therefore, in the era of liquid modernity, media communication has become a tool not only for conveying information but also for shaping new social attitudes and values and for "dissolving" established previously practised ones. Awareness of this situation requires even greater vigilance towards the messages conveyed. In this context, responsibility for words means consciously and ethically selecting content, avoiding manipulation and disinformation, and respecting the rights of the audience. As the "fourth estate," the media must act in the interest of truth and integrity in the name of ethical responsibility in the public sphere. Hence, the requirement of responsibility for the word. This responsibility requires journalists and editors not only to adhere to ethical codes but also to reflect on the consequences of the content they publish.

It is worth remembering that words have the power not only to inform but also to evoke emotions, which can have both positive and negative consequences. Within such a framework, a critical question emerges concerning the accountability of media professionals for the content they transmit to a mass audience, whether through print media, radio broadcasting, television transmission, or the Internet.

Contemporary challenges related to the responsibility for words are particularly evident in the age of social media, where every user, especially young people, can become a content provider. This phenomenon entails risks such as the dissemination of disinformation, hate speech, and fake news. Within this context, it is important to emphasise that this responsibility lies not only with professional journalists but also on all users of mass media, who exercise critical thinking skills and learn to "separate the wheat from the chaff." As Alina Rynio emphasises, "The responsible functioning of a human being is, in fact, one dimension of their maturity, and teaching people responsibility belongs to the fundamental categories of pedagogy. This is because responsibility is the foundation of human self-realisation, morality, and social bonds. The essence of responsibility lies in the fact that a person contributes to achieving their good and the good of others" (Rynio 2021, 14).

4. Education in Critical Thinking

In the contemporary landscape, we are confronted with an unprecedented flood of information, requiring recipients to be able to selectively filter, analyse, interpret, and evaluate media content (Penszko and Wasilewska 2024, 3). Therefore,

educating young people in critical thinking is becoming not only a desirable skill but a necessity for the informed and safe functioning of audiences. Experts from the Educational Research Institute point out in their excellent report, "Critical Thinking, Assessing the Credibility of Information. Findings from international educational research and literature review," that young consumer of social media, while declaring a high awareness of the dangers flowing from the media, often lack the tools to apply critical thinking in practice effectively. Thanks to the Internet, people have access to much more information, but their attention and ability to process this information are limited (Penszko and Wasilewska 2024, 4)

What constitutes critical thinking? Critical thinking represents a form of meta-cognition, as it encompasses the ability to identify fundamental elements within the content (or subject) of thought (e.g., assumptions, origins of facts, the credibility of information sources) and evaluate them using universal criteria such as clarity, relevance, reliability, truthfulness, and the strength of argumentation. The essence of critical thinking lies in the multifaceted and contextual analysis of information, activating reflexivity and meta-language, ultimately revealing underlying assumptions to form independent judgements or make informed decisions. Critical thinking, therefore, involves specific strategies for comprehending the cultural environment, including information and media culture, and associated patterns of behaviour" (Ogonowska 2013, 28). Concisely stated critical thinking involves evaluating information and arguments to formulate rational conclusions and identify innovative solutions. In ethics, this skill is termed prudence. Thus, critical thinking aligns with axiological and aretological contexts and forms the bedrock of media education for young people.

Adam Lepa observes that "criticism" tends to make people share their most important opinions with others. Therefore, one of the most visible symptoms of this attitude is the revelation of one's critical assessments and communication with others. A critical attitude towards the media excludes submissiveness to the opinions of others, even if they are very suggestive. These opinions are often contradictory and can, therefore, introduce mental chaos into people's minds, which is conducive to the formation of a critical attitude towards the mass media. This state, which is conducive to the formation of a critical attitude towards the mass media, is called "independence of thought." (Lepa 1998, 143).

Critical thinking is a self-regulating process that demands scepticism, openness to new ideas, and a willingness to revise one's beliefs considering new evidence. Can critical thinking be learned and passed on to others? Certainly, under specific conditions. Education in the context of critical thinking requires the systematic development of several crucial cognitive competencies. Research by Diane F. Halpern highlights the effectiveness of didactic strategies such as teaching independent problem-solving, analysing case studies, and conducting Socratic discussions (Halpern 1999, 71). Socratic discussions utilise dialogue and questioning to foster deeper reflection and critical thinking on a specific topic. The objective is not to persuade the interlocutor of one's point of view but to collaboratively arrive at the

truth through inquiry and analysis. This form of dialogue is exceptionally effective in educating both young individuals and fully developed adults.

Adam Lepa also recommends considering other postulates that shape critical thinking, including continuously expanding knowledge about the media, systematically engaging with media, and consistently acquiring information from multiple sources to compare diverse perspectives and attain a significant degree of credibility regarding both the medium and the information it disseminates. Furthermore, attitudes such as engaging in dialogue with others about media – where external opinions on media and published content can lead to constructive debate that fosters relatively objective criticism – cultivating intellectual curiosity essential for forming a critical attitude towards media, nurturing a friendly attitude towards media that can benefit individuals and society, and developing sensitivity in the realm of truth are crucial (Lepa 1998, 144-145).

An essential element in the skill of critical thinking is the cultivation of metacognition, which refers to an awareness of one's thought processes or, in other words, a conscious understanding of one's knowledge about thinking and the control thereof. Thus, metacognition is the continuous process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating how we think, learn, and acquire information (Pina, 2024). It encompasses, for example, the ability to gain knowledge about why, how, when, and where to apply what we have learned and discovered. Developing metacognitive skills can enhance the capacity for critical thinking and adaptation, and it can also effectively assist media consumers in learning how to receive and interpret acquired information, thereby fostering greater independence in their reception. Metacognitive skills are valuable not only in daily life, from professional endeavours to solving personal problems, but they also aid in thoughtful decision-making. Furthermore, reflection on one's thinking leads to prudence, resilience against manipulation and propaganda, and informed media consumption.

In the context of critical thinking, I would also like to draw particular attention to protection against manipulation, which enables the identification of persuasive and disinformation techniques employed in the media. Manipulation is ubiquitous in media communication and involves attempting to influence human consciousness by altering the perception of reality through distortion and deception. "This influence aims to distort information and limit the recipient's decisions, which are then not authentic because they are not made in truth and freedom. Manipulation is, therefore, a conscious action, not accidental; it is not a mistake or inaccuracy. It is planned but difficult to detect, and this is precisely where the strength of its influence on the human subconscious and the transformation of consciousness lies. This method of manipulating the means of communication ultimately concerns the individual, meaning it is always the manipulation of the individual" (Czuba 1996, 136-137). Thus, manipulation has two characteristic features: it is planned and concealed. The appropriate intention and its goal, which is always hidden, invariably co-determines the strictly manipulative action (Lepa 1995, 24-26).

The manipulation of the subconscious through visual and auditory means leaves profound imprints on the human psyche (Lepa 1995, 83). However, in contemporary times, especially in the age of artificial intelligence, the manipulation of images, which are easily generated using AI, is also increasingly recognised. Currently, a "civilisation of the image" prevails, which penetrates people's consciousness most quickly and easily.

Manipulation is particularly dangerous for young people because it constitutes a form of control over the individual, effectively depriving them of their freedom and autonomy - the fundamental attributes of human dignity. Therefore, education in critical thinking in media reception is urgently needed for all recipients of social communication, primarily for their conscious, free, and responsible functioning in the media world. However, this requires a well-thought-out didactic strategy that considers the specifics of contemporary media, their quantity, and the ease of access to them. The systemic and systematic implementation of programmes that develop critical thinking is also related to the teaching of logic and hermeneutics, which should become an unquestionable and undeniable priority of educational policy, especially since psychologists unanimously emphasise that critical thinking is not innate but requires systematic education, training, and conscious practice.

5. Awareness of Media Influence on Users

In contemporary society, the media serve as the primary filter through which reality is interpreted. Consequently, from an axiological standpoint, value-oriented media education plays a crucial and indisputable role in shaping the axionormative consciousness of its recipients. Through such education, individuals learn to navigate the media landscape, for instance, to distinguish between information and opinion, between advertising and propaganda, authentic communication and manipulated portrayals of reality, and truth and falsehood. This ability to differentiate is not at all straightforward in today's media environment. Sander van der Linden, a Dutch social psychologist, emphasises that "the illusory truth effect, in a way, precedes conscious reflection because when we see or hear something repeatedly, our brain reacts more quickly to such claims, as they are familiar. This is called 'cognitive fluency,' and unfortunately, the brain often misinterprets this reception of a message as a sign of its truthfulness. In other words, our brain assigns a higher logical value to claims we have encountered before. Research indicates one problematic consequence of this phenomenon: repeated exposure to false news leads people to consider sharing such messages with others as less unethical over time because they begin to perceive it as true" (Van der Linden 2024, 37-38). These studies thus demonstrate that properly formed awareness, in essence, equates to a well-informed media user who can make sound moral, civic, consumer, social, and entertainment choices.

Contemporary pedagogy, psychology, and ethics unequivocally indicate that media not only inform but also shape. They mainly influence uncritical young people. Consequently, research is being conducted on numerous media phenomena that have the most significant impact on media recipients. Phenomena such as information

bubbles, fake news, clickbait mechanisms, and "like beggars"—reactions and comments on social media obtained through deception or evoking pity—are already subjects of intensive research because they are of paramount importance in the perception of the world through media. Jakub Kuś, a psychologist of new technologies, explains that "Google Search—and other services of this company, such as Gmail—filters results, tailoring them to us. The Silicon Valley company, based on which links and topics we have previously clicked on, displays content and advertisements that are potentially appealing to us or align with our interests. Similarly, Facebook personalises sponsored articles, page suggestions, and advertisements" (Kuś 2024). Hence, there is an urgent need to acquire the necessary media literacy skills.

Research on media within the framework of media pedagogy emphasises the necessity of developing media competencies in children and adults, demonstrating that individuals who are better educated in media are less susceptible to unwanted media influences and can recognise the intentions of the sender more effectively and efficiently, and vice versa (Prauzner 2010, 48). This is of paramount importance for media users, enabling them to make prudent and thoughtful choices. In an information society, where people are almost constantly exposed to media messages—from news and advertisements to comments on social media, the question arises regarding the scope and nature of this influence. It must be remembered that the awareness of media users is shaped not only by the content they consume but also by the context in which it is presented, the methods of its presentation, the selection of words and images, as well as the specific technological and cultural conditions that determine the reception of information.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is significant that this process begins at a very early age—children and adolescents come into contact with media content before they acquire the skills to analyse it critically. Therefore, media education that aims not only to teach young recipients how to use media in a technical and technological aspect but also how to understand, interpret, and evaluate them in ethical, ideological, and social terms is of paramount importance. Shaping the awareness of a media user essentially means teaching them to think independently in conditions of information overload and chaos.

From a psychological standpoint, media influence awareness through mechanisms that are often invisible to the recipient. There are numerous such mechanisms today, and recipients are generally unaware of them, even though they effectively influence the reception of the message. The repetition of the message, the way it is framed, the choice of words and images, and the emotional intensity of the messages all contribute to certain content becoming ingrained in the user's mind, regardless of its truthfulness. Research on framing, for example, which involves changing the context or perspective in such a way that a given fact can be interpreted differently than before, shows that evaluation and choice depend on how the problem is presented (Zielonka 2017, 42).

Furthermore, mechanisms such as the repetition effect, the illusion of truth, and cognitive heuristics cause individuals to unconsciously adopt certain narratives as their own, aligning them with their worldview. Social psychology also highlights

mechanisms of social influence, such as the authority effect, conformity, and the repetition effect, which are frequently employed in the media. Media strongly influence emotions and can amplify fears, especially when exposed to sensational or catastrophic content. Children and young people are particularly susceptible to this pressure. Awareness, therefore, is not only a field of reflection but also an area influenced by forces outside the rational control of the recipient.

From a media studies perspective, it is crucial to recognise that media function not only as tools for conveying content but also as social institutions actively participating in the 'production' of knowledge and identity. Contemporary digital media, using personalisation algorithms, engage in an interactive relationship with the user, tailoring content to their preferences. The result of this process can be the creation, through personalisation algorithms, of what is known as an information bubble, filter bubble, or "information cocoon," a situation in which a person using the Internet receives information pre-selected by algorithms based on data collected about them during their previous online activity (Werner 2021, 16). Thus, the recipient primarily receives information that confirms their previous choices, preferences, beliefs, and tastes. In such a context, the user's awareness becomes selective, and the image of the world becomes distorted.

In axiological terms, the influence of media on awareness is linked to the question of the responsibility of broadcasters and the ethical dimension of the message. However, this question is challenging because different media interpret the responsibility and ethics of the message differently. The differences stem mainly from the fact—as Jan Pleszczyński states—that although these two editorial offices refer to the same epistemic and ethical values, they interpret many concepts with axiological references differently and have different worldviews (Pleszczyński 2010, 79). In such a context, the recipient can easily become confused if they do not have adequate axiological preparation.

Media that consciously manipulate emotions spread falsehoods or oversimplify complex social problems, influencing people's choices in an unethical manner and violating their cognitive autonomy and need for truth. Therefore, media education must be based on the values already mentioned, respect, freedom, and responsibility—which form the foundation of conscious and responsible participation in media culture. Only then can a media user recognise the intentions of the message, distinguish information from manipulation, and maintain the ability to think independently.

The awareness of media users is a constantly evolving cognitive, emotional, and axiological construct. It is the result of several factors, including content, the form of the message, cultural context, and individual predispositions. Understanding the mechanisms by which media influence the attitudes and choices of individuals is not only a task for science but also a condition for building a society of conscious and responsible citizens. The awareness of media recipients should, therefore, be supported through educational activities, psychological resilience, and the promotion of ethical journalism. Only an integrated approach combining different fields of knowledge allows for effective recognition and counteraction of the adverse effects of media influence.

6. Media Self-Education

Contemporary media culture presents people with challenges that go beyond mere technical skills in operating digital devices. In an increasingly complex and dynamic information landscape, it is not enough to be a user—it is necessary to be a conscious participant in the media space, capable of independent, reflective, and responsible assessment of messages. Therefore, recipients of media need ongoing media self-education, which appears as a process not only of building competencies but, above all, of forming a responsible moral and axiological attitude towards the media world. It is a form of self-education that assumes the active and continuous pursuit of every individual to develop the ability to recognise values, cultivate an axiological sense, unmask manipulation, nurture truth, and use media messages responsibly and critically.

Media self-education cannot be seen merely as technical independence or proficiency in selecting content or using digital tools. Its foundation is concern for the internal formation of the person—for their moral sensitivity, axiological orientation, and capacity for self-reflection. A media user should be someone who not only consumes the content presented to them but also critically interprets it, considering values such as truth, justice, the common good, the dignity of the human person, and respect for others. In this sense, self-education becomes an ethical act through which individuals define their responsibility towards themselves, others, and the media society.

The fundamental premise of media self-education is the conviction that individuals are not born with a ready-made system of values and norms regarding the reception of media messages. Given the vastness and flood of content, its variability, and the often hidden, not always moral intentions of senders, continuous self-improvement and consolidation of moral resilience are necessary. This is particularly important in an era of axiological relativism and moral chaos, in which media often present values in a simplified, trivialised, or even ideologised manner. Independently shaping the ability to recognise good and evil in media messages requires a deep understanding of the cultural, philosophical, and spiritual context in which the recipient functions. It requires developing one's own, well-considered axiosphere. The basis of effective media self-education is, therefore, the recognition that values are not merely subjective preferences but are objective, communal, and even universal. Media, as tools of social communication, should be interpreted not only through the prism of utility or entertainment but also through the prism of their impact on human dignity, relationships with others, and authentic intersubjective dialogue. A recipient who becomes a conscious participant in the media space must be able to recognise when media become a source of misinformation, violence (real or symbolic), manipulation, propaganda, or "brainwashing" and actively resist it. In this sense, self-education becomes not only a path of personal development but also an expression of concern for the common good.

It is impossible to discuss self-education without acknowledging the importance of internal motivation. It is this that drives the process, which is based on self-reflection, critical analysis of one's own media habits, a willingness to learn from mistakes, and an openness to change, including a more frugal use of media. Media self-education is also the conscious shaping of one's information environment: the ability to choose reliable sources, reject morally or cognitively harmful content and engage in valuable dialogues within the media space. It is a process that does not end at any stage of life because media are constantly evolving, and with them, the threats, challenges, and moral needs of the user also change.

Finally, it is crucial to emphasise that media self-education, while inherently individual, does not occur in a vacuum. Its effectiveness is contingent upon the educational culture in which we function—the values promoted within families, schools, religious institutions, academic circles, and professional environments. These institutions should foster and promote self-reflective attitudes, inspire the pursuit of truth, and encourage empathy, responsibility, and assertiveness in media consumption. Media self-education thus becomes an integral component of a broader process, shaping individuals towards virtuous conduct—individuals capable of using media effectively and ethically.

Conclusion

In an era characterised by the pervasive mediatisation of daily life, media education for young people, but not only, cannot be confined solely to technical proficiency or the ability to access information selectively. It must, above all, serve as a formative process, cultivating responsible, critical, and morally and axiologically sensitive participants in media culture. The reflections presented in this article demonstrate that the essence of media education lies in its axiological foundations: a concern for the dignity of the individual, a commitment to truth, respect for the spoken and written word, responsibility for its use, the capacity for independent thought, and an awareness of the influence of media on human attitudes and choices. Self-education plays a particularly significant role, representing a conscious effort by each recipient to shape their media conscience and moral resilience about the infosphere.

Media education rooted in values is not a superfluous field of knowledge but a necessity if we aspire to use media appropriately and function consciously within an open civil society, within a community of people guided by mutual respect, truth, and acceptance. In the face of dynamic technological changes and the intensifying phenomena of disinformation and manipulation, as well as numerous other phenomena concerning the media landscape, only an axiological approach provides a lasting and substantial foundation for the necessary media competencies. Building axiological autonomy is *a sine qua non* for evaluation and, thus, for valuing what the media presents. However, this autonomy cannot be achieved without axiological experience. It is this experience that enables the

development not only of conscious media consumers but, more importantly, of responsible individuals capable of creating authentic common good in the digital world. The axiological foundations of media education are, therefore, not only a pedagogical challenge but also a moral obligation towards the present and the future, primarily towards children and young people.

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SEMINARE

Biographical Learning in Religious Education in Slovakia*

Biograficzne uczenie się w edukacji religijnej na Słowacji

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Abstract: In this study we explore the issue of biographical learning in religious education, specifically in the Slovak context, where the reform of primary education is currently in progress. Biographical learning is defined as working on one's own biography and dealing with other people's biographies. Through biographical learning, children and adolescents can identify with other people as their role models, which supports the process of forming their own identity. The aim of the study is to implement this innovative method of biographical learning in the teaching process of religious education. Biographical learning is also an important part of the religious education curriculum because it allows students to reflect on significant stages of their life journey and to learn to think about them from a faith perspective. Working with one's own biography as well as the biography of other people enables pupils to form a cognitive, emotional and social relationship with themselves and to reflect on their lifestyle, their values and norms. The result of the study is a proposal of a method how to work with biography in religious education in schools in Slovakia. On the example of the life of Eleonora Zacharova, a native in Nürnberg (Germany), who lived most of her life in Slovakia, we will present a method of biographical learning within the Roman Catholic religious education curriculum in Slovakia with concrete suggestions for didactic implementation of biographical learning in religious education using the example of Eleonora Zacharova's biography.

Keywords: Biographical learning, (auto)biography, Religious Education

Abstrakt: W artykule poruszona została kwestia biograficznego uczenia się w edukacji religijnej, szczególnie w kontekście słowackim, gdzie obecnie trwa reforma szkolnictwa podstawowego. Biograficzne uczenie się definiuje się jako naukę opartą na własnej biografii oraz na biografiach innych ludzi. Dzięki poznawaniu biografii dzieci i młodzież mogą identyfikować się z innymi ludźmi jako wzorami do naśladowania, co wspiera proces kształtowania ich własnej tożsamości. Celem badania jest wdrożenie tej innowacyjnej metody uczenia się w procesie nauczania religii. Biograficzne uczenie się jest również ważną częścią programu nauczania religii, ponieważ pozwala uczniom zastanowić się nad ważnymi etapami ich życia i nauczyć się myśleć o nich z perspektywy wiary. Praca z własną biografią, a także z biografiami innych osób, umożliwia uczniom nawiązanie poznawczej, emocjonalnej i społecznej relacji z samym sobą oraz refleksję nad własnym stylem życia, wartościami i normami. Rezultatem badania jest propozycja metody pracy z biografią w edukacji religijnej w szkołach na Słowacji. Na przykładzie życia Eleonory Zacharovej, pochodzącej z Norymbergi w Niemczech, która większość swojego życia przeżyła na Słowacji, zostanie przedstawiona metoda uczenia się biograficznego w programie nauczania religii rzymskokatolickiej na Słowacji wraz z konkretnymi sugestiami dotyczącymi dydaktycznego wdrażania tej metody.

Słowa kluczowe: biograficzne uczenie się, (auto)biografia, edukacja religijna

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Introduction

Currently, Slovakia is in the process of reforming primary education, which inevitably requires changes in both the content and the form of education. This fact is based not only on years of national and international analyses and comparisons, but also on the experience of the pandemic situation, which confirmed this fact and fully revealed the weaknesses of the education system, which have been discussed for years by analysts, experts and professionals. According to Pupala et al. (2022, 12), the main goal of education reform is to provide pupils with an education adapted to contemporary society, with the intention of increasing pupils' literacy and the skills needed for life in a global and digital economy and society.

Changes in the content as well as in the form of education also concern Roman Catholic Religious Education. Introduction of new didactic methods for effective teaching in Slovakia is also part of this school reform. In this article we concentrate on an innovative method of biographical learning in Religious Education in Slovakia. In doing so, we will seek to answer the question of whether biographical learning is also an appropriate method in Religious Education. We will try to define biographical learning and apply it to the learning process of Religious Education in schools in Slovakia using the example of a specific biography. Biographical learning, understood as working on one's own biography and dealing with other people's biographies, emphasizes the basic equivalence and yet diversity of different life experiences, also in a religious sense. Therefore, as an innovative learning method, it can be a central element of Religious Education that focuses on a personal relationship with God. Biographical learning reminds us of everyday heroes who are "like you and me" and can enable pupils to put their own approaches to religious issues into dialogue with others.

1. Biographical Learning in Schools

Biographical learning is defined as the working on one's own biography and dealing with other people's biographies. Children and adolescents as well as adults identify with other people as their role models, and this supports the process of forming their own identity.

The concept of autobiographical and biographical learning comes from the Greek αὐτός = oneself, one's own, βίος = life, way of life, and γράφειν = to write down, to record, to inscribe. Writing life in the sense of writing, reflecting on and shaping life, therefore, always has a present and even future orientation in addition to its historical dimension (Volck 2016).

Historically, biographical learning in the post-World War II school context has long been condemned for political and historical reasons and came to a crisis in the context of the Cultural Revolution of 1968, as it was massively ideologically abused by totalitarian conceptions of the 20th century. Nevertheless, above all, the American psychologist A. Bandura (1971) developed his social-cognitive theory

of learning, which was based on the term and concept of learning from models. A. Bandura pointed out the importance of learning from models, noting however, that the so-called model or imitation learning is difficult to control, and attitudes can be manipulated, or other attitudes can be adopted without reflection. In this conception, learning was aimed at getting a person to adopt a new behaviour as a result of observing other people's behaviours or to adapt and change the existing behavioural models accordingly (Bandura 1971, 5).

Biographical and autobiographical texts thus came to the attention of world literary studies as a genre in the 1970s. This increased interest was related to the question of the position of (auto)biography in the entire literary field and its position on the border between non-fiction and fiction. The continuing fascination with autobiography in particular is also due to its compositional and genre instability and the absence of a clear norm and definition. Since biography and autobiography entered the field of literary theory, the number of works on the subject has grown to untold proportions, and autobiographical texts have become the subject of research in many other disciplines.

Biographical learning, in particular, has established itself as a pedagogical, didactic and methodological concept since the 1980s. Biography is a source of learning that, according to D. Nittel determines not only the actual paths of learning, learning resistances and modes of acquisition, but also the future learning goals and perspectives of the learner. In addition to communicating and reflecting on biographical experiences, biographical learning promotes the formation of new possibilities for interpretation and action, because a person's biography includes both the subjective and objective aspects of the life course (Nittel 2018, 146-148).

The work on a biography incorporates various aspects of the social world as well. Thus, biography can also be a gateway to the knowledge of society, since its formative structure is directly linked to the life of the individual. In this context, P. Alheit uses the term "biographicality" to refer to the ever-changing interpretation of one's own life contexts that one experiences as formable and shapable (Alheit 2003, 13-16).

Biographical learning assumes its significance primarily in school education. According to S. Volck, pupils are drawn into the action as they work on biographies, which enables them to open their eyes to wider contexts and life experiences and to understand the tensions in life stories. Following the lives of others provides pupils with the opportunity to create a distance that enables them to distance themselves from their own constructions of identity. In addition, they can mentally replay different attitudes to eventually arrive at their own new orientation. This is all the more important because identity today is often a mosaic of identities that requires comparison with other life conceptions: in the search for meaning, in moral development, and in the search for one's own position (Volck 2016).

Thus, engaging with their own and others' biographies enables pupils to relate to themselves cognitively, emotionally and socially and to reflect on and compare their lifestyles, values and norms. According to Volck, therefore, working with

biography acts as a mirror in relation to working with one's own identity, as the external perspective provides them with an opportunity to practice their perspective, to which they can ultimately critically comment themselves (Volck 2016).

According to E. Stiller, biographical learning is inherently oriented towards the acquisition and development of competence, because it comes from and is focused on the learners themselves. By engaging with another's biography, pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their own lives and to describe, reinterpret and reorganise the contexts to which they are exposed. It is thus a holistic learning that goes far beyond mere knowledge transfer. Rather, it is an effective method of initiating, concretely applying and intensifying the procedural competencies that are also articulated in the Roman Catholic curriculum in Slovakia. For this, biographies of other people who are historically more or less well-known and influential personalities, as well as contemporaries from the pupils' real-life environment and pupils' autobiographical self-reflections can be used (Stiller 1999, 199).

Several authors distinguish several approaches to biographical learning: biographical self-reflection, analysis of other people's biographies and learning through other people's life stories. According to A. Knauff, biographical learning can be understood primarily as autobiographical learning, that is, as learning from one's own life story. Autobiographical learning refers to learning processes that are explicitly triggered by one's own life story with experiences, challenges and crises. Biographical learning processes are guided by the learner's own logic and the layering of life-historical experiences as a horizon of meaning within which new learning is categorized. Individual biography is both the background from which learning takes place and the horizon in which learning takes place. It is thus a capacity for biographical self-reflection, which takes place not only through individual reflection, but often also in communicative processes, e.g. through biographical narratives, through which the subject gains a clear picture of himself or herself and puts his or her own history in relation to others and the environment (Knauff 2023). Autobiographical thinking, according to D. Demetrius (1996, 56) awakens images, emotions and memories, but also encourages us to question ourselves and ask questions, and is particularly appropriate where it manifests as introspection, as a process of self-inquiry, of self-discovery around our being. Compared to other narrative typologies, autobiography is defined as "writing reality," an attempt to rediscover truths hidden beneath an apparent surface.

Biographical learning can also be understood as biographically oriented learning, that is, learning with reference to one's own life story. The aim is to make the connection between content and life experience through correlation. In addition, biographical learning can also be understood as learning with the help of other people's life stories. In this way, other people's biographies can be an orientation aid or an aid for one's own life decisions. It is important for the individual as well as for the community that beliefs and traditions are passed on not only through books, but also through people and that they can be read from their life stories (Knauff 2023).

Similarly, B. Dausien distinguishes three forms of biographical learning. The first form is to understand biography as a background for learning, always taking into account previously acquired experiential knowledge. In addition, biography can be seen as a site of learning, whereby the learner can explicate and compare his or her interests, previous history and previously unreflected knowledge with others in communication. A third way is to understand biography as an object of learning. By analysing one's own biography as well as the biographies of others, one can create a space for reflection on one's own identity and belonging. Biographies often represent collective experiences, but they can also offer a counterpoint to socially dominant narratives (Dausien 2011, 116-120).

In summary, we can say that biographical learning is the conscious engagement with biographical issues either by thematizing one's own life story or by engaging with the biographies of others. Both biographical reflection and self-reflection enable pupils to find meaning and prepare them to become subjects of their own lives by dealing with their own or others' past experiences, reflexively re-appropriating them and becoming aware of their relevance to present decisions. The reciprocal exchange and sharing of these reflections by pupils within the classroom about individual experiences even opens up the possibility for some pupils to experience themselves as less deficient and to be able to accept themselves better or even to believe in themselves more (Ziebertz 2010, 360).

2. Biographical Learning in Religious Education

Biographical learning is also an important part of the Religious Education curriculum as it enables pupils to reflect on significant stages in their life journey and to learn to think about them from a faith perspective. Working with one's own biography as well as the biography of other people enables pupils to form a cognitive, emotional and social relationship with themselves and to reflect on their lifestyle, their values and norms.

The interest in both biography and autobiography in Religious Education in the 1980s was characterized primarily in terms of model learning until biographical learning was established as a new concept from 1990 onwards. This modification of the term was associated with another paradigm shift: from a behaviorist-psychological conception of imitative learning to a more learner-centered approach to working on one's own biography.

Since religious learning always takes place through imitation and identification, learning from role models is essential for Religious Education in schools. Living religion can be expressed and made intelligible to pupils through models of Christian life. It is characteristic of the Christian faith that it cannot be understood in the abstract, but is expressed and made tangible in practical behaviour. Such models of lived Christian faith can support adolescents in their search for the meaning of life and individual identity and provide them with orientation, which is increasingly important, especially in view of the changed

religious situation and the complexity and plurality of possible life plans in today's modern society (Sajak and von Eiff 2017, 2).

It is important to note, however, that biographical learning does not primarily imply a model-orientation. Several authors stress the fact that learning from role models is always deficit-oriented: a role model shows me how my life could be better, fairer, more just, more in solidarity, more consistent, etc., and how I could improve it by imitation. Conversely, the self-determination and self-development of the learners themselves take a back seat to the admiration and imitation of the role model. In places, therefore, biographical learning must refrain from direct transfer to one's own life world and therefore also means more than learning from role models (Hofmann-Driesch et al. 2018, 6).

According to K. Lindner (2023, 282), children in primary school are already able to reflect on their life so far and on their self-image, which they gain primarily from feedback on performance and from interaction with peers. Thus, children in primary school reflect on themselves and thus on their biographies in exchange with their environment and other people's perceptions of them. As they grow older, it increasingly becomes their task to develop a life plan to find their place in the social system. Religious Education in school aims at encouraging children to become subjects and therefore must enable them to work on their "biographical role" in the context of the classroom. Dealing with other people's biographies hold potential in this respect, not least because children like to focus on other, usually adult, people. They look for role models whose behaviour or lifestyle they admire because biographical representations of others make it easier for them to visualise their desired future.

K. Lindner points out that biographical learning in Religious Education does not focus on a particular methodology. However, he characterizes some areas of biographical learning in religion classes in primary school, which are working on one's own biography, dealing with the biography of ordinary people, and thematizing biblical figures and saints. Working on one's own biography enables primary school pupils to reflect on themselves and their life plans. In the context of Religious Education, it is also important to consider religious self-projection, the stimulation of a subjective sense of religion. The experiences thus collected and systematized as well as the contextualizations of experiences constitute an expression of biographical self-reflection and - not least motivated by the encounter with other biographical life-plans - allow one to reflect on entanglement, including one's own entanglement in religious contexts (Lindner 2023, 284).

Dealing with other people's biographies runs the risk that strangers are often out of touch and out of context in children's lives. H. Mendl points to the importance of "saints of everyday life", of "local heroes" for orienting the processes of learning. It is people "like you and me" who prove that forms of altruistic Christian behaviour are also possible in our society. The aim here is not to admire and imitate these people, but to have a productive dialogue with them. Another advantage is that working with everyday saints, motivates pupils to actively seek

out "local heroes" in their own environment. In order to embark on this search, children need to develop an idea of religiously based positive behaviour. It is here that religious education takes place unobtrusively, not least because it can lead to reflections on one's own altruistic acts, which are implemented in aid projects. Primary school pupils thus become "local heroes" themselves (Mendl 2005, 125). If this is accompanied by corresponding reflections in Religious Education lessons, children can get an idea of what it can mean to be committed to others on the basis of Christian convictions.

In particular, another source of biographical learning is the study of the Bible, which is not only a document of faith but also a collection of human experiences and life stories. If we note, for example, the experiences with God narratively described in the Bible, they are always connected to life stories, human destinies, and existential biographical experiences. In the same way, the pupils' own experiences of God, or at least their accounts of their experiences of God, are always linked to their own biographies. For the development of religious competence, this means that it can only be recognized and developed in interaction with one's own biography (Sajak and von Eiff 2017, 5-6).

In addition to biblical figures, the theme of saints is an integral part of Religious Education in primary school. Saints as intercessors with God are increasingly appearing in the Catholic Religious Education curriculum. Working with biographies from biblical stories as well as historical saints offers the opportunity for children and young people to consciously shape their own biographies and be inspired by role models from the history of Christianity and other religions. B. Husmann summarizes that church history explicitly comes alive through people, through individually acting heroes who propel history forward, who can be revered and who are appropriate role models, and thus become a relevant teaching subject. However, since individuals are always situated in a particular social, societal and political context, Husmann sees the central role of biographical learning in Religious Education as seeking and finding a middle ground between the hero who acts alone and the nameless prototype who acts as a product of society and politics (Husmann 2011, 58-59). Pupils can be encouraged to look at the ways in which people try to realise their Christianity - even radically. This requires, among other things, contextualizing the people revered as saints in their time. In this way, their provocative potential can be realized, especially if they also become accessible in their weaknesses and with their doubts. It is then that their courage to radically orient their lives to Christ can arouse the curiosity of the pupils and challenge them to take a stand. Whether the saints, men and women, become an inspiration or even a point of orientation for the pupils cannot be planned, but is left to the free decision of the children as subjects of their learning and educational process (Lindner 2023, 290).

Biographical learning does not necessarily have in mind a clearly defined "application knowledge", but is always "open" in some respect, while at the same time it cannot be separated from the actual organization of life (application), and is therefore itself competence-oriented: both the biographies of other people and the

exploration of one's own life story give the learner indirect offers of identification.

This is an opportunity especially for middle and secondary schools, where the heterogeneity of pupils' different life stories is very high. Here, pupils who have already had threatening existential experiences (parental separation, moving away, bullying, running away, exclusion, etc.) meet others who have grown up in sheltered family and social structures and who often still have little differentiated experience of their own existence in the world. The following ideas and methods are therefore intended to encourage pupils to anchor their work on biographies more firmly in the classroom. Most aspects apply to both work on the biographies of others and to autobiographical work.

3. An Example of Biographical Learning in Religious Education in Slovakia

Religious Education in Slovakia is taught as denominational religious education. Religious Education is a required elective course in alternation with ethics education. In addition to the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches, the religions of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Orthodox Church, the Reformed Christian Church and the Church of the Brethren are also taught in schools.

The main aim of Roman Catholic Religious Education in Slovakia is for pupils to develop their religious literacy and to have the opportunity to acquire and deepen their personal and responsible Christian and religious identity. Religious literacy is understood as the pupil's comprehensive ability to deal responsibly with his or her own religiosity and with the religious beliefs of others. A pupil's religious literacy is developed through acquired religious competence. At the same time, Religious Education also develops the ethical-value dimension of pupils, which is common to the subject of ethics education, and thus contributes to integral education in primary schools (Reimer 2020, 137).

Biographical learning is already in its basic orientation directed at the development of pupils' competences, because it comes from the pupils and focuses on the pupils themselves. By engaging with another's biography, pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their own lives and to describe, reinterpret and reorganise the contexts to which they are exposed. Although the description is reproductive, it always takes place simultaneously in a reorganizing setting within a broader context. The active, formative confrontation with one's own or another's biography constitutes an organizing achievement that has already been preceded by an internal process of appraisal. This means that learning from biographies is always a holistic learning that goes far beyond mere knowledge transfer. Rather, it is an effective method of initiating, concretely applying and intensifying the religious competences formulated in the Roman Catholic religious curriculum.

According to S. Volck (2016), children's autobiographical memory develops from the age of 5 or 6 years. The so-called narrative self develops, which helps

to process emotionally exciting events. However, biographical learning is not a completed process, but is ongoing permanently. Working with biography, and especially autobiographical approaches, opens up reflective questions such as: what has given or is giving me strength in difficult life situations? What has brought or is bringing me progress? How does my environment affect me? What characterizes me? What makes me the person I am now? What are my goals? It is also worth thinking about these issues from the perspective of someone else's biography: What would that person answer? In addition to adopting a perspective, the pupils themselves also engage in the questions. The external perspective provides them with an opportunity to practice their perspective, to which they can eventually critically comment themselves. On the other hand, learning from external role models is linked to young people's growing desire for "heroes". These heroes form the starting point for dreams and goals and thus - consciously or unconsciously - define the normative framework for behaviour.

In this regard, the curriculum of the Roman Catholic religion in Slovakia is very rich in opportunities for biographical learning or work on the biographies of others. In the first cycle (grades 1-3) it is more about identification with the saints in the way of following Jesus Christ (St. Nicholas, St. Martin, St. Francis of Assisi). From grade 4 (second cycle) onwards, it is primarily the biblical figures and their belief in God that come to the fore (Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, Daniel, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Elisha, David, Gideon, Samson, Solomon). However, it is more about the historical perception of these biblical figures and not as objects of identification. In the third cycle (grades 6 to 9), the saints, especially the Slovak saints and blesseds of the last century, come to the fore again. Confrontation with ordinary people, in the sense of biographical teaching, is present in the curriculum of the Roman Catholic religion in Slovakia only in the ninth grade of primary school in the theme of lifestyle, where the pupil has the opportunity to confront his or her role models. The acquired competence is expressed in the pupils' ability to perceive the connection between freedom and their own actions in order to construct their own ranking of values. An explicit opportunity for biographical learning also occurs in secondary school, in grade 10, in the topic "Saints of Next Doors", where pupils have the opportunity to reflect on their own lives as a journey towards their own identity and as a journey towards God, while also working to identify their own vocation to holiness (Reimer 2020, 150).

As can be seen from these examples, confronting the lives of biblical characters, saints and ordinary people alike, is a good opportunity to connect the content of the lesson to the life world of the pupils and to make them reflect on the personal meaning of what they have learned through personal and foreign experiences. This moves their own lives to the centre of the learning process. In this way, pupils can experience themselves as actors in their own lives, rather than as "pawns of overarching events" (Lindner 2023, 290).

3.1 Example of a biography: Eleonora Zacharova

The story of Eleonora Zacharova is a good example for biographical learning in Religious Education, despite the fact that, although she does not explicitly talk about her belief in God, she makes many of her life choices with a basic trust in goodness and with immense hope. We encountered this biography as part of the school project "Fates That Wrote the 20th Century" (she was interviewed in the spring of 2024), which introduced various living figures through whom Slovak history of the last century can be better understood. The life of Eleonora Zacharova can be placed in the Religious Education teaching in the ninth grade of elementary school in the topic of lifestyle. We briefly summarise her biography and also present her personal testimony.



Fig.1: Eleonora Zacharova (source: archive)

Eleonora Zacharova is a native of Nürnberg, Germany, who also helped in the Slovak National Uprising. She saved several people at that time. She is incredibly 101 years old and lives in Svit (Slovakia). Of the 101 years of her life, she has lived 80 here in Slovakia, and only 20 in her native city of Nürnberg.

"I was born on 19.2.1923 in Nürnberg. My parents came here once upon a time. My family is from another region, near France, and I had a big family, my paternal grandparents had a cigar factory and my maternal grandfather had a coal warehouse on the Rhine. I had a wonderful childhood".

She could not imagine living anywhere else but in this historical city. However, her young years were forcefully interrupted by events that we know today more from history books: in 1933, she was 10 years old and Adolf Hitler had come to power in Germany. Today, she is one of the last living witnesses who saw him with her own eyes. The rise of Nazism in Germany happened right before her eyes. She has never forgotten how her father threw a radio out the window one day when Hitler was giving a speech. In her family, the Nazi regime was bitterly rejected - not least because many of their friends ended up in Nazi camps as enemies of the Reich for political reasons. *"In every third house there was someone who ended up in Dachau. We also couldn't say what we wanted,"* she said.

As a young girl, she also watched in horror the infamous pogroms against the Jewish population in Nürnberg, which today is also known in the history books as Kristallnacht. When Adolf Hitler triggered the Second World War, these events had a powerful impact on the lives of Eleonora and her family, changing them from the ground up.

"It was a difficult time, but we still tried to live our lives the best we could. My father, who lived through the First World War, used to say it was a huge tragedy. Schools

closed and the war affected our lives. We were handed out ration cards for basic things. Everything was strictly controlled. When the war was on, we were divided. Some went to the factory, others to the market or other businesses. I went to a factory called AEG. There they taught us different things, how to work with Morse code and stenography. The planes came in and we watched them in the telephone central. We had to be prepared for everything. After the alarms, we went back to work. I was doing new things in the factory and we had little breaks there. I remember that period very well. The bombing started first in Berlin. That was the worst for me. We heard the sirens and we all had to go to the basement. In the morning the newspapers said that the whole of Berlin was in the basement. We survived the storm there, too. Later they started bombing Nuremberg as well. The carpet bombing raids were particularly terrible. Everything was destroyed. My girlfriend had a grandmother who died during the bombing."

However, during the turbulent times, she met a Slovak, Anton Zachar, in her hometown, who was returning home from Belgium. They fell in love, married and started a family. And in 1943, they decided to leave for Slovakia with their already several-month-old daughter Charlotte.

"Nürnberg was already being bombed by the American air force at that time, and we often had to run to the basement to hide. It was impossible to sleep at night, so my husband and I said that we would leave in time with our 5-month-old Lotka - as we called her - to Slovakia, where it was probably quieter."

In 1943, they came to Liptov, to the village of Lúčky, near Ružomberok, where Anton came from, it was really quieter, although the first partisan units were already operating in the mountains. It was a big change for Eleonora. The Zacharovs thought they would return to Bavaria after half a year, but they stayed a little longer. When the Slovak National Uprising broke out, her husband Anton immediately joined it, and as a German she also helped him in this activity. *"When eight men from Lúčky were taken by the SS to the prison in Ružomberok because someone had denounced them for helping the partisans, I wrote to the German commander, who accepted me and, after my persuasion, released them. Before I left, however, I had to sign a reversal that I would be shot if it turned out in the future that these guys were cooperating with the resistance after all. It started to be a hard life for me in Lúčky. The shop assistant knew a little German, but when I addressed him in German, the mayor overheard and threatened me to stop and switch to Slovak. I got so scared that even with my husband I spoke only Slovak after that."*

At the end of the war, the Zachars' house burned down, and they moved in with their godparents in an emergency shelter. Their son Janko was born, there was reason to rejoice, but after the liberation, they started to move out the Germans. The "betrayers", as Eleonora calls them, reported her as well and she was summoned before the Russian headquarters in Ružomberok. *"I went with my son Janko to the Russian headquarters and was received there by an officer and a translator. I told him how it was with us. Then Janko started crying, he was hungry. The officer showed me the room next door to go there to nurse the boy. Only I lost my milk out of fear. When*

I told the Russian, he hugged me and said: You are a Slovak mother and you are bringing up Slovak children here, not in Germany. I'll give you a letter for the mayor to let you live in peace."

After the war, Eleonora considered returning to Nürnberg with her family. But other circumstances occurred. In 1948, the communist regime took over in Czechoslovakia and everything changed. After the war, a decree of the President of the Czechoslovakia was issued that deprived ethnic Germans of their civil rights. Until then, there was also an official ban on visits to public rooms, entertainments, forests and parks by members of the German minority. An exception was to be made for German anti-fascists. In 1948, she was employed in a factory in Svit in a telephone exchange. There, she was given a two-room apartment, became involved in public activities in the Red Cross and in the Women's Union. She was not issued a citizenship card until sometime in 1951.

After twenty years, she was finally able to track down her own parents. However, during the communist regime it was not easy to travel to the West. She came to Slovakia in 1943 with a German Reich passport and only later dared to apply for a Czechoslovak passport. At first, the authorities refused to issue her a passport. Then, she was advised by an official to join the Communist Party, otherwise she would not be allowed to go to West Germany. *"Well, I signed the application form. What was I supposed to do? They let me go with my daughter, my sons had to stay in Svit, so that I wouldn't escape. They gave us a promise of ten marks per person in foreign currency for a three-week stay. Ridiculous money, you couldn't live on that.*" In the meantime, however, her father had died, but she was not allowed to attend her father's funeral. Only later was she able to visit her native Nürnberg with her daughter Lotta. By then Charlotte was already 20 years old and they were planning her wedding. It was not until 1984 that she came to Germany again, to Munich for a change, to visit her sister. Today, she has no relatives there. She has been a widow for almost forty years and is survived by a daughter who died when she was 40. Two sons, four grandsons and six great-grandchildren live in Slovakia. She turned 101 years old in February. *"They all came down to Svit to see me and kissed me so much that I got the flu, from which I couldn't recover for a long time,"* she laughs.

3.2 Examples of the implementation of biographical learning in the teaching of Religious Education

Working with the biographies of today's people makes it easier for pupils to draw a correlation between themselves and these ordinary "everyday heroes", as they are not great saints but rather "saints next door" (Pope Francis). The following reasons support the biographical learning on the biography of people today:

- they live in close proximity and are people "like you and me";
- hey prove that different forms of altruistic behaviour are also possible in our society;
- in their everyday life they form a bridge between the prevailing concepts of life of today's people and the added value of Christian social behaviour;

- heologically, the orientation towards the "little saints" can be justified by the "model of succession", because the introduction into the Christian life is not done hastily but in small steps;
- direct face-to-face encounters are facilitated mainly by people in the immediate surroundings and present (Mendl 2015, 260).

Here, we give some examples of the didactic implementation of biographical learning in religious education, using the case of Eleonora Zacharova's biography:

a) As a didactic implementation of biographical learning in the teaching of Religious Education, the map of Eleonora Zacharova's life can be used as a method. Biographies are subject to a certain chronological sequence in which life stages and decisions form moments that characterize and divide a life. Based on the psychology of perception, spatial references are much easier to visualize and remember than temporal ones. It is, therefore, important to transform biography into a locatable schema: the life map describes reality in a model-like and reductive way, while pupils notice and represent the different sections they read in biographical texts and describe their interrelationships spatially on the life map. The life map can be oriented to historical circumstances but also to internal life stages. For example, a country, but also a neighbourhood or entire continents, can be chosen as the basis for the map. Each "space" has its own specificity, which can result from the temporal or content arrangement. The pupils are first of all asked to research Eleonora Zacharova's biography, name the different stages of her life and show them symbolically on the map. The map of Eleonora Zacharova's life could consist of a life journey that passes through three main stages: the town of Nürnberg, the village of Lúčky near Ružomberok and finally the town of Svit under the Tatra Mountains. In the second step, pupils can name how these areas of life are related (are they connected, are they separate?), how they are connected and what consequences follow from this. Assessment of individual pupils' outcomes can be done by looking for common elements and differences in the proposed maps of Eleonora Zacharova's life.

b) The didactic implementation of biographical learning in Religious Education can be concretised as the creation of a fictional photo album of Eleonora Zacharova. Similarly, to the real photo album, pupils are asked to recall specific events in her life: her childhood in Nürnberg, the events of Nazism, her marriage and the birth of her children, her departure to Slovakia, her help and support for the Slovak National Uprising, her life during communism, her visits to her native Germany, her life in Svit. Pictures for this purpose can be found on the Internet. However, pupils can also reconstruct the events, e.g. take pictures of them with a mobile phone and possibly "historically" edit them using suitable software or image editing applications. An important element is a suitable commentary on the photographs. The photo album can be supplemented with additional questions, e.g. What gave you strength at special moments? What exciting and important moments in Eleonora Zacharova's life are worth sharing?

c) Another option for the didactic implementation of biographical learning in Religious Education is the creation of a fictive profile on a social network (Facebook,

LinkedIn or Instagram). The social network profile combines several of the possible methods of working with biographical learning, such as photo album, interview, etc. Different stories can be created that depict life stages, but also attitudes, preferences and external influences. Combining text with photos is very appealing in this respect. A good idea is also a page with fictitious "published" chat messages from different people and "answers" by Eleonora Zacharova. As a next level, it could be, for example, to create a dialogue between Eleonora Zacharová and another person from the present or the past. Similarly, the profile could be supplemented with additional questions, e.g. what obstacles did Eleonora Zacharova encounter? What would be important to her? What would be disadvantageous to her? How would Mrs. Zacharova behave towards contemporary movements, etc.

d) We can also implement biographical learning through an acrostic, made up of the letters of Eleonora Zacharova's name. The acrostic belongs to the methods of creative writing and has proved itself, for example, in writing the characteristics of a person. The most commonly used form of acrostic is the so-called true acrostic, in which we read the name from top to bottom. Pupils can write a characteristic of the person or feelings that occurred to them when reading the biography.

For example:

E m p a t i a	(empathy)
L á s k a k r o d i n e	(love for family)
E n e r g i c k o s ť	(energy)
O p t i m i z m u s	(optimism)
N e o b y č a j n o s ť	(extraordinariness)
O d v a h a	(courage)
R o z h o d n o s ť	(determination)
A d a p t á c i a	(adaptation)

Other opportunities to work with biographical learning in Religious Education might include creating an interview with Mrs. Eleonora Zacharova or a fictional interview, creating a book of her life, a biographical comic, a family tree, designing a diary, a network map, writing a letter/email from Mrs. Zacharova, transferring a biography to a current situation, writing a prayer or poem.

Conclusion

Biographical learning as working on one's own biography and engaging with other people's biographies emphasizes the fundamental equivalence of different life experiences. The central life questions for young people at this age are, "Who am I, who have I been, and who do I want to be?" Young people seek the answer to the question about themselves in the mirror of others. Biographical learning places equal value on different life plans in this field of tension. Biographical learning

is therefore possible in principle for every person. What is important is that the pupils experience and learn things from each other. Or quite elementary: that they perceive the other.

Biographical learning is therefore a central element of Religious Education, which focuses on a personal relationship with God. Biblical texts but also the biographies of the saints speak of the testimonies of people who had experiences with God and passed them on. Here again, biographical learning can open up avenues of reflection beyond right and wrong and enable pupils to put their own approaches to religious issues into dialogue with others.

The featured life story of Mrs. Eleonora Zacharova reminds us of local everyday heroes who are "just like you and me". Engaging with "everyday heroes" motivates pupils to actively seek out "local heroes" in their own environment.

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SEMINARE

Pastoral Counselling of Youth: Specifics and Potential

Doradztwo duszpasterskie dla młodzieży: specyfika i potencjał

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Abstract: Every young person has their own story, joys, and problems that become particularly prominent during adolescence. Amidst the multitude of changes they experience, young people often do not realize they need help from those around them. In these transformations, it is crucial for them to find someone who understands them and who can create a safe space to better comprehend their internal processes. One method of accompanying young people is professional counselling, which has been accredited since 2022 as a professionally oriented bachelor's degree program in the field of social work at the Faculty of Theology of Trnava University. This specific collaboration between humanities and theology offers future graduates a study and training curriculum based on the foundations of social work, specializing in guiding people through challenging life situations. The aim of this study is to present the specifics of pastoral counselling for young people and to identify the potential of accompaniment during their maturing process.

Keywords: counselling, pastoral care, youth, self-development, theology

Abstrakt: Każdy młody człowiek ma swoją własną historię, radości i problemy, które stają się szczególnie istotne w okresie dojrzewania. Wśród wielu zmian, których doświadczają, młodzi ludzie często nie zdają sobie sprawy, że potrzebują pomocy ze strony otaczających ich osób. W tych przemianach kluczowe jest dla nich znalezienie kogoś, kto ich zrozumie i pomoże stworzyć bezpieczną przestrzeń dla lepszego zrozumienia ich wewnętrznych procesów. Jedną z metod towarzyszenia młodym ludziom jest doradztwo zawodowe, które od 2022 roku jest akredytowane jako profesjonalnie zorientowany program studiów licencjackich w dziedzinie pracy socjalnej na Wydziale Teologicznym Uniwersytetu w Trnawie. Ta szczególna współpraca między naukami humanistycznymi a teologią oferuje przyszłym absolwentom program studiów i szkoleń oparty na podstawach pracy socjalnej, specjalizujący się w udzielaniu wsparcia osobom mierzącym się z trudnymi sytuacjami życiowymi. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest przedstawienie specyfiki doradztwa duszpasterskiego dla młodych ludzi oraz zidentyfikowanie potencjału towarzyszenia im w procesie dojrzewania.

Słowa kluczowe: doradztwo, duszpasterstwo, młodzież, samorozwój, teologia

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Introduction

Pastoral counselling represents a vital tool for accompanying individuals in various life situations while also opening new perspectives for contemporary pastoral care, especially in work with adolescents. Current research confirms a growing need for professional guidance among people in this age group. According to data from 2023, approximately "1 in 5 children and young people" aged from 8 to 25 had a probable mental disorder, with increasing instances of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders among adolescents. For example, "12.5% of 17- to 19-year-olds" suffered from an eating disorder, with these issues being four times more common in young women than in men. Economic pressures, social isolation, and online bullying contribute to these problems, significantly increasing the psychological burden on young people (NHS England 2023; CDC.gov 2023; Lichner 2013, 135-156). These statistics indicate a critical need to provide and develop more counselling services to address the deteriorating mental health of adolescents, which may include new methods and approaches in pastoral care.

Therefore, it is essential in youth ministry to approach young people not only with sensitivity but also with an understanding of their dynamic development. A key question becomes how we, as adults, approach them and provide support in their present, where their personal and social growth occurs, and in their orientation toward the future. This duality of their experience—present and future—requires special attention because it shapes their personal development, values, and ability to face challenges. In this context, pastoral counselling offers hopeful solutions based on the quality of relationships and communication with young people, reflecting current needs and challenges in their lives. This article will address these challenges by exploring the potential of pastoral counselling in accompanying young people.

1. Respect and Support in the Process of Adolescence

Counselling can be defined as a professional activity focused on providing guidance, support, and the development of an individual's potential. Its primary goal is to promote a proactive approach to life, stimulate decision-making abilities, and enhance self-awareness. It is a process that helps individuals take responsibility for their decisions and strengthen their self-confidence. For young people, especially adolescents, counselling represents important support at a time when their relationships are being tested, and the world around them often appears uncertain.

Despite the growing need for professional help among young people, many do not seek it. Some are unaware that they need assistance, while others come only when their problems have become severe. In this context, counselling provides a unique opportunity to help young people cope with life's challenges. Counsellors help adolescents feel relaxed and confident, basing their approach on authenticity, sincerity, honesty, and respect. Through these values, they build a personal and trustworthy relationship with the client, which is key to successful counselling work.

Working with adolescents in counselling has specific characteristics. Young people are becoming more independent and changing their relationships with family and adults. Counsellors must respect this need for autonomy and provide space where a young person can make decisions freely (Kulisz et al. 2021, 180-190). At the same time, it is essential to adapt the counsellor's approach to the client's maturity and self-perception, where special skills and communication strategies play a crucial role.

An important starting point in counselling is recognizing the young person as an independent individual with the right to decide about their involvement in the counselling process. This provides them with not only support but also a sense of personal responsibility for the outcome of the process. This respectful approach is the foundation of effective counselling, which assists young people in their development and self-realization.

In adolescent counselling, it is particularly advisable to avoid schematic rigidity and be prepared to use multiple styles and approaches or flexibly combine them. Otherwise, it could easily lead to stagnation of communication. Through comparing and characterizing the most common approaches, we could mention the following advantages.

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is probably one of the most widely used methods when working with adolescents because it focuses on identifying negative thought patterns that may contribute to problematic behaviour. For young people who often struggle with negative thinking patterns, CBT is a method to teach them how to identify and change these patterns, helping them manage stressful situations and improve their overall mental health. Among its advantages, CBT can lead to quicker results. Its focus on solving specific problems can rapidly assist young people in changing their behaviour and thought patterns (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2016, 125). As a clearly structured and practical approach, it can be effective in addressing adolescent issues such as anxiety and depression (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2016, 240). CBT provides young people with tools to change their negative thoughts and behaviours, which can lead to long-term positive outcomes.

Narrative therapy helps young people reframe their life stories and gain control over their own narrative. It encourages clients to see their problems from a different perspective and find new ways to cope with life's challenges (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2017, 190). The main advantage of this approach is that adolescents can easily realize they can rewrite their own life stories, which can be empowering, especially in situations where they often feel helpless.

The ecosystemic approach is based on a model that emphasizes the importance of family and social environment in adolescent development. When used in work with young people, this approach relies on solving problems in the context of their entire environment, namely, school, family, and social relationships. (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2016, 242). The effectiveness of this approach is particularly evident when working with complex family issues where multiple factors influence the adolescent's behaviour. By considering the broader context of young people's lives, it offers a pathway to more comprehensive solutions.

Pastoral counselling can be considered a specific form of counselling that focuses on the client's spiritual development and often integrates theological and spiritual questions into the counselling process. Its uniqueness and advantage, as noted by Benner, lie in the emphasis it places on the need to connect spiritual growth (Lichner et al. 2022, 51-57) with psychological health (Benner 2000, 27-2). This style is particularly suitable for young people seeking spiritual guidance or experiencing a spiritual crisis. This approach integrates theology and pastoral care, allowing young people to address their problems in the context of their personal faith journey and religion.

Humanistic counselling emphasizes self-actualization and the client's personal freedom. At the centre of this approach is an emphasis on empathy, support, and acceptance of the clients as they are (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2017, 123). The advantages it provides include helping adolescents who feel isolated or misunderstood to create a strong therapeutic relationship based on trust and empathy. It creates conditions that support self-knowledge and personal growth, which can be crucial during adolescence.

Each of these approaches offers various benefits as regards working with youth. The Cognitive-Behavioural Approach focuses on changing behaviour and thought patterns; Narrative Therapy allows for reframing the life story; the Ecosystemic Approach addresses problems in a broader context; Pastoral Counselling integrates spiritual development; and the Humanistic Approach emphasizes empathy and self-awareness. Because the person with their own story is always at the centre, the situation of this person naturally offers the interweaving and mutual complementarity of the mentioned approaches.

2. Examples of Applying Approaches in Case Studies

To understand the importance of respect and support in the process of adolescence (Lichner 2023, 71-77), it is useful to look at specific examples from practice. The following model situations illustrate how different approaches in youth ministry can help young people overcome the challenges they face during this critical period of life.

Identity and Self-Perception

A 16-year-old boy is experiencing an identity crisis. He has problems with school obligations and begins to isolate himself from friends and family because he is unsure of who he is and what his goals are. Counsellors use a combination of the Cognitive-Behavioural Approach (CBT) and Narrative Therapy. They help him identify negative thoughts about himself and reframe his story to focus on his strengths and growth opportunities. Discussing his vision for the future helps reduce anxiety and develop a new positive relationship with himself. The boy gradually begins to open up and talks about his interests and talents. This process allows him to find new balance and an identity he begins to value and develop.

School Pressure and Self-Esteem
A 17-year-old girl suffers from stress due to pressure from school and parents. She feels she must achieve excellent grades to meet expectations, but this pressure leads to emotional exhaustion and low self-esteem. Counsellors in this case use the Ecosystemic Model, focusing not only on the girl but also on her relationships with her parents and school. During sessions, they help her, and her parents understand the negative impact pressure has on her mental health. Therapy also includes mindfulness and relaxation techniques that help her manage stress. Through systematic support and open dialogue with her parents, the pressure on the girl decreased. Her self-confidence and ability to handle school obligations improved, and she learned that her value is not only in academic success but also in her personal qualities.

Spiritual Crisis
A 15-year-old boy is experiencing a spiritual crisis. He stops attending church and doubts his faith, causing conflicts with his parents and internal turmoil. In this case, pastoral counselling focused on spiritual growth plays a key role. Counsellors use existential and spiritual approaches. Through open dialogue about his doubts, they help the boy discover his own spiritual needs and support him in finding answers that are personally relevant to him. They help him understand that faith is not static and can evolve. The boy begins to build a personal relationship with faith, which allows him to find new forms of spiritual expression. This approach alleviates his internal conflicts and restores his relationship with his family.

Relationships and Communication
An 18-year-old girl has problems with communication in a romantic relationship. She is very emotional, has trust issues, and often argues with her partner. Counsellors use the Humanistic Approach, which is based on empathy and unconditional acceptance. They help the girl identify her emotional needs and improve her effective communication skills. During therapy, they focus on creating a safe space where she can openly talk about her feelings. The girl learns to recognize her emotions and express them better. She begins to understand that arguments are a way to avoid deeper feelings of vulnerability and gradually learns how to resolve issues in her relationship without conflicts.

These examples demonstrate how different counselling approaches can effectively respond to the specific needs of adolescents. Integrating various methods allows addressing problems ranging from identity, school pressure, to spiritual crises, with each model providing effective support tools tailored to the situation and story of the young person.

3. Counselling Among Continuity and Change

Adolescence is a multidimensional process that involves the gradual transformation of a child into a mature adult (Geldard and Geldard 2009, 10). This process is

complex and not always consciously perceived by all young people. While some challenges of adolescence are less demanding for adolescents, others can present serious difficulties they must cope with.

During adolescence, we often notice physiological changes, emotional fluctuations, questions of identity, social expectations, and moral and spiritual challenges. Biological changes occurring during this period have a fundamental impact on the physiology, sexuality, and emotional development of the adolescent. These changes can be a source of uncertainty, confusion, and the feeling that the young person differs from their peers who are developing at a different pace. On the other hand, cognitive development, such as the development of abstract thinking and the ability to critically reflect, provides the adolescent with new possibilities to process information, solve relationship problems, and think creatively (Geldard and Geldard 2009, 13).

This period is also characterized by egocentrism, which manifests in young people feeling constantly observed, as if they are the centre of others' attention. This trait is part of development that leads to the search for one's own identity. Adolescents try out new poses and behaviours to create their self-image. At the same time, they learn how to separate from the family and integrate into society through relationships with peers and new adults. This socialization process requires the adolescent to find a balance between the need for identification and personal individualization.

On this journey to adulthood, adolescents often face personal crises arising from encounters with changes and new challenges. The transition from childhood to adulthood is not only physical but it also includes psychological, social, and emotional changes. Failure to successfully manage these changes can lead to the development of mental difficulties such as depression, anxiety, or even suicidal thoughts. In such cases, counselling appears as an important tool for providing support and accompaniment on this journey (Geldard and Geldard 2009, 26).

Self-discovery, which the adolescent undergoes, is accompanied by the exploration of the meaning of life, new relationships, and a value system. This process is essential for building stable foundations that the young person needs to successfully reach adulthood. As Marcello Semeraro states, those who embark on this adventure of growth need guides who will listen without prejudice and moralizing. This relationship, based on trust, can ignite the desire to search for the meaning of life and provide the adolescent with the strength to handle the challenges that adolescence brings (Semeraro and Soreca 2016, 15).

4. Key Factors of Integrating Counselling into Pastoral Care

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*, emphasizes that youth cannot be perceived as an abstract entity but as a group of concrete young people living their unique lives. "Youth is not something to be analysed in the abstract. Indeed, 'youth' does not exist: there exist only young people, each with the reality of his or her own life" (Francesco 2019, 71). This leads us to an important challenge, i.e., to approach young people individually, listen to their needs, and examine the

context of their lives. In youth ministry, this becomes the foundation for effectively accompanying young people, where counselling with its approach can play a key role in their personal and spiritual growth.

In pastoral accompaniment of young people, it is important not to ignore a life phase specifically marked by growth, maturation, and decision-making. Pope Francis speaks of youth as "a time of generous commitment, whole-hearted dedication" (Francesco 2019, 108), but also as a time of risk-taking and a strong desire to live the present as good as possible (Francesco 2019, 144). These qualities of young people provide us with a deep insight into how important it is to be close to them not only as 'shepherds' but also as 'guides' in their process of self-discovery and finding their own path in life.

Implementing counselling in pastoral care means more than just applying theoretical knowledge. As Rossano Sala states, effective youth ministry for young people must combine theory and practice to provide inspiring and practical tools for the service of accompaniment. This approach, like seasoning in cooking, gives the whole process the right flavour and meaning. The following key factors for integrating counselling into youth ministry are based on a combination of the authors' proposals and references to prior research cited in the text.

Safety

The first and fundamental element is mutual interconnectedness and a sense of closeness that takes place in a safe space. In pastoral counselling of young people, it is important not only to be present but also to create space for genuine encounters and solidarity. Closeness and safety are the foundation of a culture of encounter, where everyday life provides an opportunity to meet God through human relationships (Sala et al. 2017, 213). In counselling, closeness means the presence of a counsellor who can listen without moralizing, creating an atmosphere of trust and providing a safe space for sharing and self-reflection.

Learning

Another important aspect is discipleship. This dynamic and multifaceted process is not linear, but it is characterized by ups and downs, enthusiasm and disappointment (Martini 2016, 619). In the counselling context, discipleship means creating a relationship based on trust and friendship, helping young people navigate their own path with full awareness that they can grow through their experiences and relationships.

Identity

Within pastoral care, counselling also supports the process of seeking a vocation—that is, developing personal identity and the meaning of life. This search for identity often accompanies questions like "Who am I?" and "For whom am I?" (Francesco 2019, 286). Counselling offers a space for young people to explore these questions in the context of their own experiences, providing support in finding their authentic path and vocation (Francesco and Spadaro 2017, 38).

Selflessness
Pastoral care, like counselling, includes the aspect of self-giving. Self-giving to young people is more than just the presence of an adult – it is active dedication of time, attention, and support (Sala et al. 2017, 221). The counsellor acts as a guide willing to sacrifice their time and energy to help the young person discover and develop their own potential.

Well-being
Contemporary Western society builds a "dream of freedom through a strategy and culture of rights," which is a significant achievement, but which also includes vulnerabilities (Lichner 2024, 78-85). Inner well-being, or in biblical language, the Beatitudes, offer an alternative to this logic—they are Jesus' self-portrait and show a way of life based on solidarity, not power, reward, or exchange (Barcellona 2010, 63). Jesus identifies with those who suffer, and His life path criticizes the will to power. The Beatitudes offer a fundamental change in understanding individual and communal life, shaping new values and attitudes. As Pope Francis emphasized to young people in Rio de Janeiro: "Read the Beatitudes; they will do you good" (Francesco 2013). This challenge shows that the Beatitudes are a valuable tool in pastoral care, especially when working with young people.

Community
Finally, a key element of effective pastoral care is building community. The Church is not just a hierarchical institution but primarily a community of believers that wants to create space for sharing and support (Theobald 2011, 422). Counselling helps young people find their place in this community, supports them in the process of socialization, and helps them develop healthy relationships.

Implementing counselling in pastoral care thus requires more than just theoretical knowledge—it needs active presence, closeness, discipleship, and support in seeking the vocation and identity of young people. It is a complex process that bears fruit when carried out competently, with sincere interest and willingness to be a guide on the journey of young people to adulthood.

Possibilities for Integrating New Approaches
It is evident that it is not only young people who grow and mature as, in a certain metaphorical sense, counselling itself also evolves. Besides the above-mentioned approaches, we could also discuss new "modern" ones whose potential has begun to unfold and develop in recent years.

Eclectic Counselling Model
Certainly, the Eclectic Counselling Model is worth mentioning, combining various theoretical frameworks and techniques according to the individual's needs, which is particularly important when working with adolescents who often go through various emotional and social challenges. Its uniqueness lies in its focus on flexibility.

The counsellor is not bound by one theory but selects tools based on what suits the specific client. For example, for an adolescent suffering from anxiety and depressive states, the counsellor can combine the Cognitive-Behavioural Approach (CBT) to address negative thought patterns with Narrative Therapy, which helps the adolescent reassess and change their personal story. Since the Eclectic Approach is highly adaptable to individual needs, it allows to respond to different stages of adolescent development. The counsellor can simultaneously utilize elements of mindfulness to help calm the mind and manage stress, along with art therapy, enabling the young person to creatively express their inner emotions.

Online Counselling

Modern technology offers the possibility of online counselling (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2017, 317), which became popular especially during the pandemic. It is evident that adolescents often prefer communication through digital platforms. Online counselling can be a suitable alternative for those who have limited access to personal meetings or feel more comfortable in a more anonymous and flexible environment. One important advantage is that for young people accustomed to technology, online counselling can create a safe space for open communication. It also reduces barriers such as geographical distance. This approach also allows counsellors to respond flexibly to clients' needs through text messages, video calls, or emails, which can be very effective for adolescents with busy schedules.

Art Therapy

Another method that should not be overlooked here is Art Therapy, which is also developing in numerous innovative ways. For adolescents, it is often appealing because it provides them with a way to express their feelings and internal conflicts without having to use words. This is particularly useful for young people who have trouble expressing themselves or are experiencing emotional fluctuations. This approach helps young people express emotions they might not otherwise be able to verbalize. Art Therapy is also very effective when working with traumatized adolescents or those undergoing difficult emotional experiences, such as the divorce of parents or the loss of a loved one.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

Finally, we can mention Mindfulness and relaxation techniques. Mindfulness focuses on the present moment and is a technique that helps adolescents manage stress and improve self-confidence (Geldard, Geldard and Yin Foo 2017, 231). This technique can also be integrated into pastoral counselling to help young people maintain focus on spiritual exercises, meditation, and inner peace. Among the advantages it offers, we can specifically mention that it teaches adolescents how to focus on the present and calm the mind in stressful situations. It is a very effective tool for those suffering from anxiety, hyperactivity, or emotional fluctuations. This approach is also very beneficial in connection with spiritual development, which can support deeper reflections and connections with oneself and the world around.

The potential that theological faculties can bring to the area of utilizing new counselling techniques lies mainly in the fact that, thanks to expert personnel who are engaged in both research and practical application, they can provide accredited courses focused on modern counselling approaches. Moreover, their mission coincides with their pedagogical efforts to ensure that future spiritual "shepherds" and counsellors can work effectively with youth in pastoral care.

Conclusion

Pastoral counselling has significant potential in accompanying adolescents, especially when it considers their developmental stage and provides them with guidance and support in seeking their own identity. A key element of this process is active listening and acceptance, but it is equally important to encourage young people to abandon outdated and often copied thinking patterns that hinder their growth. For adolescents, this step represents an important transition from childhood to adulthood.

The role of the counsellor is dynamic and requires an active approach. Given that adolescents often suffer from restlessness and impatience, the counsellor must be creative, prompt, and prepared to seize every opportunity to engage them in their own growth process. Creativity and flexibility are essential for maintaining adolescents' interest and creating a space where they can feel safe and motivated.

As fragile beings, we need the support of others, and this is especially true for young people who are shaping their future. The closeness, time, and experiences we provide them through counselling have a significant impact on their development and represent an act of humanity and a gift that can help them find their place in life.

Theological faculties (Lichner et al. 2020, 73-85), which are engaged in research and connected with practice, have great potential in popularizing and developing modern counselling techniques. Their mission lies not only in academic education but also in preparing future spiritual "shepherds" who will be able to work effectively with youth in pastoral care.

Church communities can play an important role in creating networks of trustworthy adults who regularly meet with young people, support open communication, and empathy. These networks can serve as bridges between youth and the community, strengthening the sense of belonging and mutual support.

The potential of pastoral counselling thus lies not only in individual support of adolescents but also in the broader development of community spirit and the formation of future leaders who will be prepared to lead young people to maturity and a fulfilling life.

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SEMINARE

Non-linear Note-taking as an Innovative Method in Teaching Religion: Explication of the Concept and Analysis of Own Research

Notowanie nieliniowe jako metoda innowacyjna w nauczaniu religijnym. Eksplikacja pojęcia i analiza badań własnych

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Abstract: The development of knowledge about humans, including the cognitive mechanisms, accelerates the dynamics of changes in both the general and the specific didactics. The methods of teaching-learning that used to be effective are no longer sufficient today. The harmonious development of cognition and the concern for brain-friendly, that is, efficient education, is an incredibly weighty desideratum, which requires a deeper analysis. This article explains the nature and advantages of creating non-linear notes and presents an analysis of own research involving secondary school students and focusing on verification of their level of religious knowledge following the implementation of the innovative tool of non-linear note-taking. The presented results unambiguously indicate the effectiveness of mind mapping. The traditional forms of linear note-taking are characterized by numerous shortcomings and limitations, which reduce the effectiveness of the transfer, assimilation, and retention of knowledge. The educational potential of the presented tool, which supports the teaching and learning process, remains closely linked to the mechanisms of elaborative encoding and dual coding. Writing and making associations often constitute the core of cognitive dynamics. It is therefore advisable to create valuable, well-structured notes in a specific way due to their efficiency and expansiveness. From the perspective of religious teaching didactics (though not only limited to it), non-linear note-taking can constitute a valuable addition and diversification of the pedagogical toolkit of teachers.

Keywords: pedagogical innovation, non-linear note-taking, pedagogy of religion, level of knowledge, efficient teaching, elaborative encoding, dual coding

Abstrakt: Rozwój wiedzy o człowieku, w tym o mechanizmach kognitywnych, akceleruje dynamikę zmian w dydaktyce ogólnej oraz dydaktykach szczegółowych. Metody nauczania – uczenia się niegdyś uznawane za skuteczne okazują się niewystarczające. Harmonijny rozwój kognicji oraz troska o edukację przyjazną mózgowi, a tym samym skuteczną, to niezwykle ważki, wymagający pogłębionej analizy dezyderat. Niniejszy artykuł stanowi eksplikację istoty oraz walorów tworzenia notatek nieliniowych oraz analizę wyników badań własnych młodzieży szkół średnich w kontekście weryfikacji poziomu wiedzy religijnej po implementacji narzędzia innowacyjnego w postaci notatki nielinearnej. Zaprezentowane wyniki badań jednoznacznie wskazują na skuteczność tzw. mind mappingu. Tradycyjne formy notowania linearnego charakteryzują się wieloma mankamentami i defektami, obniżając efektowność transferu, asymilacji oraz memoryzacji wiedzy. Potencjał edukacyjny

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tkwiący w prezentowanym narzędziu wspomagający proces nauczania – uczenia się pozostaje ściśle powiązany z mechanizmami kodowania elaboracyjnego oraz podwójnego kodowania. Zapisywanie i konotowanie niejednokrotnie stanowią rdzeń dynamizmu poznawczego. Dlatego ze względu na wydajność i skuteczność pożądany jest odpowiedni sposób sporządzania wartościowych notatek. Z punktu widzenia dydaktyki nauczania religii choć nie tylko, notowanie nieliniowe może stanowić cenne rozwinięcie i urozmaicenie warsztatu pedagogicznego nauczycieli.

Słowa kluczowe: innowacje pedagogiczne, notowanie nieliniowe, pedagogika religii, poziom wiedzy, skuteczne nauczanie, kodowanie elaboracyjne, podwójne kodowanie

Introduction

Organizing effective support and efficient learning in the field of religious education in schools remains an ongoing educational challenge. Even casual observation of teaching practices reveals that much still needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of knowledge transfer, as evidenced by the rising level of religious knowledge, one of the aspects of religiosity. It should be emphasized that religiosity inherently encompasses an affective element, manifested in attachment to religion, as well as a behavioural element, expressed in adoption of appropriate behaviours. Moreover, the cognitive dimension of religiosity extends beyond mere acquisition of religious knowledge. However, within the scope of this article and the empirical study conducted to assess the level of religious knowledge among secondary school students following the use of both innovative and traditional teaching methods, the author has limited the analysis to the knowledge-forming dimension only.

The aim of this article is to present the findings of the author's own research on secondary school students' level of religious knowledge after employing an innovative teaching tool – the mind map. The discussion is carried out through a theoretical analysis of the components of the formulated problem and a review of the author's own research findings.

The undeniable uniqueness of non-linear note-taking, especially in the context of religious education, lies in its inherent potential to enhance the effectiveness of religious instruction, an improvement that is greatly needed. The conducted research clearly confirmed the effectiveness of this method, which derives from cognitive mechanisms triggered through its use, specifically elaborative encoding and dual coding, as confirmed by empirical verification.

1. Non-linear note-taking: General characteristics and application

It seems reasonable to state that note-taking accompanies various intellectual activities aimed at the memorization of specific knowledge. As such, this activity is performed during school lessons, academic lectures, workshops, training sessions, and conferences. When carried out deliberately and thoughtfully, it enhances mental efficiency.

Traditional forms of note-taking are marked by numerous shortcomings and deficiencies. The first is undoubtedly their excessive length, caused by an overabundance of words, within which students may become confused and lose

the ability to concentrate and their motivation to learn. This stems from the need to read through unnecessary words and sentences in order to reach the primary keywords. Such a format acts as an inhibitor and anti-stimulant for the brain's creative work. Within these traditional notes, two further negative catalysts can be identified. One results from excess and consists of unreflective note-taking – writing down nearly everything without discernment. The other stems from deficiency and involves a lack of skill in selecting important facts, which can lead to abandoning note-taking altogether or producing notes that are fragmented and therefore insufficient (Farrand, Hussain, & Hennessy 2002, 426-431).

The argument of visual theory mentioned above further supports the claim that graphic forms such as mind maps make information not only memorized but also retained for an additional reason. They transfer information to memory more effectively than text alone by carefully and clearly arranging individual elements in the form of keywords, as well as through their spatial layout and interconnections. In doing so, they engage fewer working memory resources and require fewer cognitive transformations. The cognitive effectiveness of mind mapping has been scientifically verified by Farrand, Hussain, and Hennessy (Farrand, Hussain & Hennessy 2002, 232-233). Their study, conducted on a group of 50 second- and third-year medical students, revealed that the use of mind maps as a learning tool improves the quality of content recall one week after reading a text.

Writing and annotating often constitute the core of cognitive dynamism during reading. A desirable approach, both in terms of efficiency and expansiveness, is the ability to take meaningful and well-structured notes. The didactic process should encourage students to independently create their own frameworks and organize notes. The note-taking process must be creative rather than merely reproductive, as the dynamics of creativity consistently enhance cognitive effectiveness. It is also advisable to develop the habit of organizing and categorizing notes, as well as incorporating drawings, personalized markers, tables, or diagrams.

Mind maps (Szafranowska 2008), also known as non-linear notes, interactive notes, or multidirectional notes, represent one of the most interesting and creative forms of noting. As early as in previous studies (Buzan 2001), the effectiveness of mind maps as a tool for activating memory was already emphasized. The creator and unmatched promoter of this form of note-taking is Tony Buzan (Buzan 2014), one of the leading authorities in the field of cognitive brain functioning, learning techniques, and memory enhancement. Mind maps are a realization of synergistic and multidirectional thinking (Forzpańczyk 2015, 232). They are a graphic technique that efficiently exploits the potential of the note-taker. Moreover, they can serve as a tool for overcoming educational barriers, particularly for students struggling with cognitive dysfunctions such as dyslexia or attention deficits (Weyhreter 2004).

Mind maps are nothing more than visualized and non-linear representations of intellectual concepts and the connections and relationships between them. During traditionally conducted lessons or lectures, where conventional and transmission-based methods prevail, learners are overwhelmed by a multitude of information,

among which they struggle to find any connections or links to previously acquired material. Mind maps help prevent such problems because key concepts and their relationships are clearly laid out on the page, enabling students to recognize what is truly important and how individual elements complement one another to form a logical and coherent whole. They even consider complex, non-linear relationships as well as references and elaborations that go beyond the core subject matter. It follows, then, that presenting content graphically enables the process of reasoning more effectively than text alone (Robinson & Kiewra 1995, 455-467; Winn 1991, 211-247). Moreover, creating non-linear notes allows knowledge to be organized clearly and transparently, providing students with coherent, meaningful, and ready-to-use segments for storage and later recall. Without a logical, rational, and properly structured organization, knowledge becomes distorted and degraded to the level of marginal facts that are easily forgotten (Svinicki 2004). In the context of the effectiveness of mind maps as a tool for supporting the assimilation of material, it is also important to consider how content is received by the student. As Włodarski (1998b) points out, the effectiveness of the didactic process depends not only on the structure of the message itself but also on the learner's cognitive activity and their ability to extract key information from the overall educational content. This kind of selection and organization of content – characteristic of mind maps – fosters deeper processing and increases the likelihood of long-term retention.

Moreover, by incorporating colours, keywords, and pictograms, mind maps engage both hemispheres of the brain, thereby enhancing its cognitive potential (Biktimirov & Nilson 2006, 72; Szyndler 2014). Structurally, mind maps resemble a tree. Their creation involves the use of colourful pens, pictographic techniques, and keywords. This method is particularly beneficial for individuals whose dominant cognitive preference is visual – commonly referred to as visual learners (Biktimirov & Nilson 2006, 73). Since cognitive preferences significantly influence an individual's overall learning style, they should be consciously considered by all educators, teachers, tutors, and catechists. Doing so encourages the use of diverse didactic methods, enabling students to achieve their best possible outcomes.

Using spatial relationships, colours, codes, and pictograms, non-linear note-taking illustrates how concepts, ideas, or processes are interdependent – reaching learners who perceive the world and its phenomena in an impressionistic and spatial manner (Clark & Paivio 1991, 149). Such visual aids support internalization of knowledge, enabling a shift from surface-level understanding to deeper cognitive processing. In line with the theory of visual arguments, it can be stated that all forms of spatial graphs are effective due to their ability to present and convey information not only through individual elements but also through their spatial distribution (Larkin & Simon 1987, 65-100).

The conclusion regarding the numerous advantages of mind maps seems self-evident. Their usefulness becomes particularly apparent in today's world, where nearly everyone struggles with a lack of time, and the accelerating pace of development across all areas of life demands rapid yet accurate problem-solving, creativity, time

management skills, as well as the capacity to lead teams or projects while setting and efficiently achieving goals. Moreover, competencies such as clear articulation of ideas and thoughts, the ability to learn quickly and effectively, and the capacity to retain and integrate knowledge form a core skill set – without which achieving educational and life success becomes, if not impossible, then certainly far more challenging.

On the other hand, mind maps can be described as universal tools that enhance intellectual efficiency across a wide range of domains. These include attention and focus, multidirectional, abstract, and synergistic thinking, creativity, rapid and effective learning, levels of intelligence, and the development of multiple intelligences (Gardner 2002; Suświłło 1994). They also support planning and organizational activities, stimulate intrinsic motivation (Lock 2004; Niebrzydowski 1972; Reykowski 1977), and improve decision-making abilities (Forzpańczyk 2015, 232-233).

The practical applications listed clearly imply the value of this form of intellectual activity. Through skilful use of the tool, students gain the opportunity to enhance their cognitive efficiency (Davis 2001) by consolidating knowledge more rapidly, improving concentration, and developing the ability to properly select, organize, and structure information in a clear and coherent format. By using keywords, the learner retains key information, ideas, or theses, and the graphic form in which the non-linear note is created becomes a ready-to-encode learning material. Moreover, mind mapping enables radial thinking – that is, multidirectional and conceptual thinking – which significantly enhances the cognitive potential of the human mind (Dryden 2003, 5-60). Bjorklund (1985) points out that the development of conceptual knowledge plays a crucial role in the ability to organize material in memory, a process effectively supported by the use of non-linear notes. Therefore, if it is also the concern of religious educators to convey content meaningfully and to seek methods that aid learners in retaining it, especially when they are inundated with vast amounts of information to absorb or update, it is worth considering enriching their teaching toolkit with such an effective strategy as non-linear note-taking.

Moreover, a mind map can serve as a creative form of thought expression that fully engages attention – an aspect of great importance, especially for students experiencing cognitive difficulties (Clauss 1987; Davis 2001). This is due to the fact that such notes contain only key information. As a result, a well-constructed mind map clearly highlights what is essential. Furthermore, its graphic format facilitates the decoding of meaningful connections between individual keywords and the content they represent. These advantages point to the invaluable filtering function of non-linear note-taking. The formal requirement to use only keywords in creating mind maps also allows for relatively easy memorization of the specific knowledge to be acquired.

Analysing the impact of creating spatial notes on knowledge retention, one cannot overlook the influence of handwriting, which remains dominant in classrooms, on the ability to remember the recorded material. Aleksandra Sanigórska, together with Monika Kaźmierska, conducted a study examining the quality of memory retention depending on the writing techniques employed. The study anticipated that handwriting would have an advantage over computer-based writing. The analysis

revealed a difference between the groups in the number of recalled items, approaching statistical significance. The group writing by hand achieved higher results than the group using a computer. It can thus be inferred that, because handwriting engages visuomotor memory and requires more time to write a given phrase, information processing is prolonged and involves additional motor processes – all of which contribute to better memory retention (Sanigórska & Kaźmierska 2021, 119-126).

Another unquestionable advantage of mind mapping, considered both as a teaching and learning method (Bubrowiecki 2010), is its potential use as a tool for reviewing material. A commonly overlooked truth in the educational process is the fact that learning is not just about memorizing a specific portion of material. For it to be permanently assimilated, a system of reviews is essential; without such reinforcement, the retained content will atrophy and fade from memory (Henderson 2005).

A distinctive feature of mind mapping, and one that contributes to its effectiveness is the organization of material, which involves giving content a structure that facilitates learning and aligns with the learner's cognitive framework. Creating a non-linear note by seeking connections – including spatial ones – between elements, grouping, arranging and categorizing them, all of which align with the definition of structured learning. This can involve various relationships: external similarities, spatiotemporal sequences, or cause-and-effect links (Jagodzińska 2008, 241-242).

Following Z. Włodarski's research, it should be stated that structured organization serves as a factor that strongly modulates memory performance (Włodarski 1985; 1998a). Firstly, organized, that is, systematized material becomes easier to remember than scattered or chaotically disorganized material. Secondly, individuals who structure material engage in the process of structuring content, which leads to better results in both recognition and reproduction of the material (Bousfield 1953, 229-240). W. A. Bousfield found that the tendency to arrange content is so strong that even in the absence of clear conceptual relationships, people impose their own subjective frameworks, perceiving similarities and connections. The criteria used for such structuring are often highly subjective (Tulving 1962, 344-354). Mind maps share the same characteristic, though subjectivity in organization does not imply randomness.

Structuring in general, as well as the distinctive form of arrangement characteristic of mind maps, occurs in various forms – grouping, chunking, and ordering. Grouping involves clustering similar elements based on criteria selected by the person structuring information. A variant of grouping is chunking, which consists of combining individual elements into meaningful units. Chunking information is a tool that helps optimize the use of short-term memory capacity and facilitates long-term encoding of information. An example of chunking is combining letters into syllables and syllables into words. Another form of grouping is ordering, which involves arranging elements according to a chosen principle, such as chronological sequence of events.

In mind maps, organizing involves forming a specific, concentric structure of content. Detailed information is grouped around the central topic. A high level of

material organization, achieved through well-constructed mind maps, has a strong impact on memory, particularly when the arrangement of the non-linear note is based on meaningful relationships between pieces of information and is tailored to the cognitive structures of the person creating it. This finding aligns with Włodarski's research, which indicates that the higher the degree of content organization, the better the recall — a phenomenon known as the structure effect (Włodarski 1998a, 10-20). The effect is further reinforced by elements that emphasize structure – in the case of mind maps, through spatial arrangement and text layout, and just as importantly, through the active engagement of the person constructing the map. The specific conditions influencing the structure effect depend on multiple factors, including the type of content, learning objectives, and the individual characteristics of the learner.

2. Non-linear note-taking as a tool for elaborative and dual coding

Undoubtedly, the process of non-linear note-taking can be classified as a form of elaboration, that is, the active processing of material. This view is supported by the fact that creating such notes involves contextual analysis of new information in relation to previously acquired knowledge, thereby deepening understanding, and forming connections within a broader knowledge system. Learning through the use of mind maps requires deeper levels of information processing. According to Craik and Lockhart's levels-of-processing framework, only elaborative processing leads to a stronger memory trace (Craik & Lockhart 1972, 671-684). Mind maps, and the cognitive processes closely tied to their creation – organizing, rehearsing, verbalizing, and often generating imagery (essential, for example, for creating pictograms) – render this technique particularly effective. It is precisely through elaborative encoding that learning occurs, understood as the integration of new content with previously acquired knowledge. Thus, elaboration plays a particularly important role in memorizing complex content, such as that found in textbooks (Czerniawska 1999). In many cases, understanding the content alone suffices for it to be remembered. The same applies when reading and creating a mind map simultaneously. The act of producing a mind map requires the use of keywords and the creative, active search for connections – both among those words themselves and between them and previously acquired knowledge – a process constituting elaborative encoding (Jagodzińska 2008, 235). For this process to occur, the meanings embedded in the text must first be decoded. Therefore, the process of producing non-linear notes can be regarded as a form of elaboration. It should also be noted that such elaboration results in the formation of numerous connections between elements of knowledge, which in turn facilitates their subsequent retrieval.

Moreover, creating elaborative non-linear notes can function as a memory strategy. A memory strategy may be defined as a set of intentional actions undertaken to recall, support or enhance memory performance. For a process to qualify as a memory strategy, the individual must engage in it with the explicit

intention of facilitating or improving the execution of a memory task (Jagodzińska 2022, 28-38). Through the deliberate processing of information in relation to the learner and under their active control, non-linear note-taking, when conceptualised as a memory strategy, maximizes cognitive efficiency.

When considering any of the leading scientific theories, it becomes clear that properly constructed mind maps are virtually unforgettable. In support of dual coding theory, discoveries and research findings from neuroscience and cognitive psychology indicate that people process and store verbal and visual-spatial information in separate cognitive systems, referred to respectively as semantic memory and episodic memory. The literature also suggests that graphical representations of verbal material, such as mind maps, facilitate learning by allowing learners to store knowledge in both systems, rather than solely in the one responsible for encoding linguistic forms. Information acquired through both modalities, that is, verbal and visual, is typically retained more effectively and for longer than information acquired in only one form. Moreover, it can be accessed and manipulated through both channels (Paivio 1971; 1990; Svinicki 2004; Vekiri 2002, 261-312).

3. Level of religious knowledge and non-linear note-taking

In the research I conducted on the effectiveness of non-linear note-taking, I formulated the following research problem and the corresponding hypothesis:
Research Problem:

Is there a difference in the level of religious knowledge among third-year secondary-school students following the implementation of an innovative teaching method in the form of non-linear note-taking?
Hypothesis:

The use of non-linear note-taking results in an increase in the level of religious knowledge among the students studied.

Analysing the results obtained in the study of third-year secondary-school classes, a model was developed to examine the influence of two variables – Teaching method and Questions on religious knowledge – on the outcome variable Accuracy of responses to open-ended questions posed to respondents after a lesson on bioethics, specifically concerning organ transplantation. The traditional method employed was classic (or linear) note-taking, while the innovative method was mind mapping. The accuracy of responses to the questions included in the open-ended test was found to be higher when the innovative method was used.

To verify the differences between measurements and between groups (control group and study group) in terms of the variable relating to response accuracy, a two-way mixed-design analysis of variance was conducted. In this analysis, the grouping factor was the Teaching method variable, with two levels: Mind map in the study group and Traditional note-taking in the control group. As a within-subject factor, the analysis incorporated the measurement of responses to five consecutive open-ended questions from the post-instruction religious knowledge test (labelled from O1 B to O5 B).

The analysis of the effectiveness of non-linear note-taking versus Traditional note-taking proved to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The analysis of the main effect, namely, the influence of the teaching method (traditional vs. innovative), revealed a significant impact of the grouping variable, i.e., the selected teaching method, on the accuracy of responses: $F(1, 83) = 27.06$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.25$. The partial η^2 coefficient indicated that the differences between the tested groups for the Teaching method variable, with the study group using mind maps and the control group using Traditional note-taking, accounted for approximately 25% of the variance in the Accuracy of responses variable. Nonetheless, to identify the specific differences between the compared groups, a post hoc comparison analysis was conducted. The analysis showed that the difference between Mind Map and Traditional note-taking was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The average level of response accuracy in the group taught using the innovative method was significantly higher compared to the group where the lesson was conducted solely with the classical method of traditional note-taking. The statistical analysis revealed that the mean scores were $M = 2.49$, $SD = 0.75$, and $M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.06$. The strength of the difference between these groups was small, with a Cohen's d of 0.48.

The results for this effect are presented in Figure 1 and Table 1.

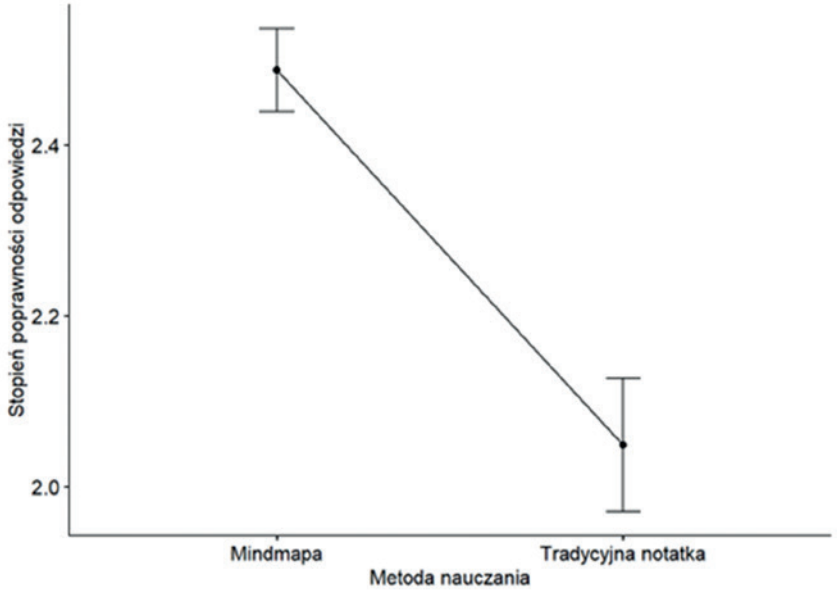


Figure 1. The impact of the variable Teaching Method (Mind Map and Traditional note-taking) on the outcome variable Accuracy of Responses in the open-ended post-test. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

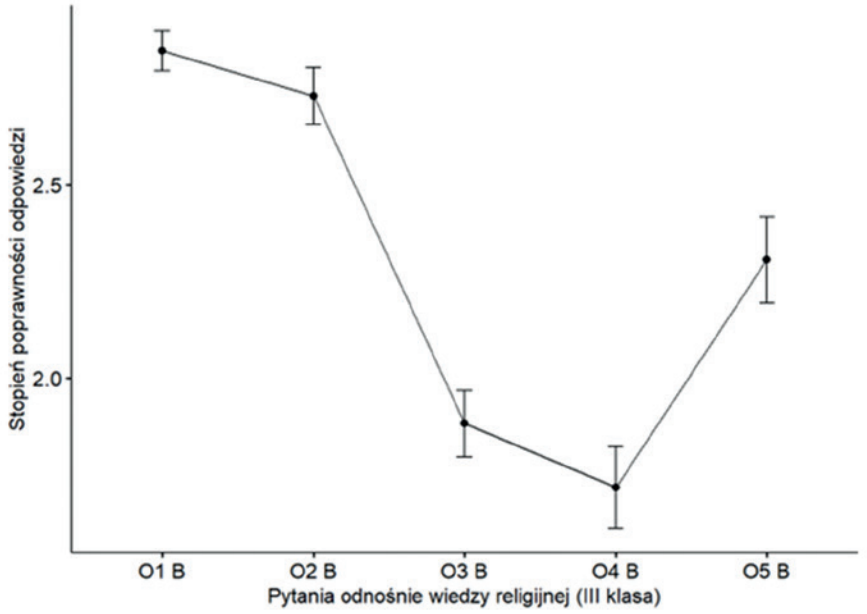
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the impact of the variable Teaching method on the outcome variable Accuracy of responses

Group	n	Min	Max	M	SD	SE
Mind map	48	0	3	2.49	0.75	0.05
Traditional note-taking	37	0	3	2.05	1.06	0.08

Note: n = Number of observations in the studied groups; Min = Minimum value; Max = Maximum value; M = Arithmetic mean; SD = Standard deviation; SE = Standard error of the mean.

The analysis of the main effect for the accuracy of responses to individual questions revealed significant differences between the five measurements in terms of the degree of response accuracy: $F(3.29, 272.97) = 38.77$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.32$. The partial eta-squared (η^2) coefficient indicated that the differences between the tested question measurements accounted for approximately 32% of the variance in the Accuracy of responses variable. The results for this effect are presented in Figure 2 and Table 2.

Figure 2. Differences between the measurements of individual questions in terms of the Accuracy of responses variable



Note: Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the differences between the measurements of individual questions in terms of the Accuracy of responses variable

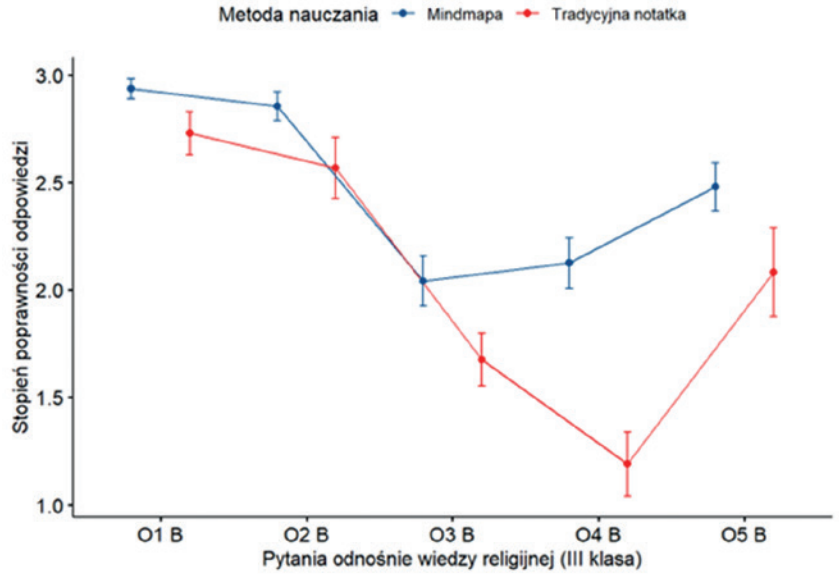
Measurement	N	Min	Max	M	SD	SE
O1 B	85	0	3	2.85	0.48	0.05
O2 B	85	0	3	2.73	0.68	0.07
O3 B	85	0	3	1.88	0.79	0.09
O4 B	85	0	3	1.72	0.97	0.10
O5 B	85	0	3	2.31	1.02	0.11

Note: n = Total number of observations; Min = Minimum value; Max = Maximum value; M = Arithmetic mean; SD = Standard deviation; SE = Standard error of the mean

An analysis of the interaction effect between the variable Question on religious knowledge and the variable Teaching method (non-linear note-taking or traditional note-taking) was also conducted. The analysis revealed a significant effect of both factors on the intensity of the variable Accuracy of responses: $F(3.29, 272.97) = 3.03$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta^2 = 0.04$. The partial eta-squared (η^2) coefficient indicated that the combined influence of both examined factors accounted for approximately 4% of the variance in the Accuracy of responses variable. The results are presented in Figure 3 and Table 3.

The graph illustrates the greater didactic effectiveness of the modern noting method. The arithmetic mean of responses is higher for each open-ended question when the innovative method is applied.

Figure 3. The impact of the variable Teaching method on the outcome variable, Accuracy of responses across individual question measurements



Note: Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

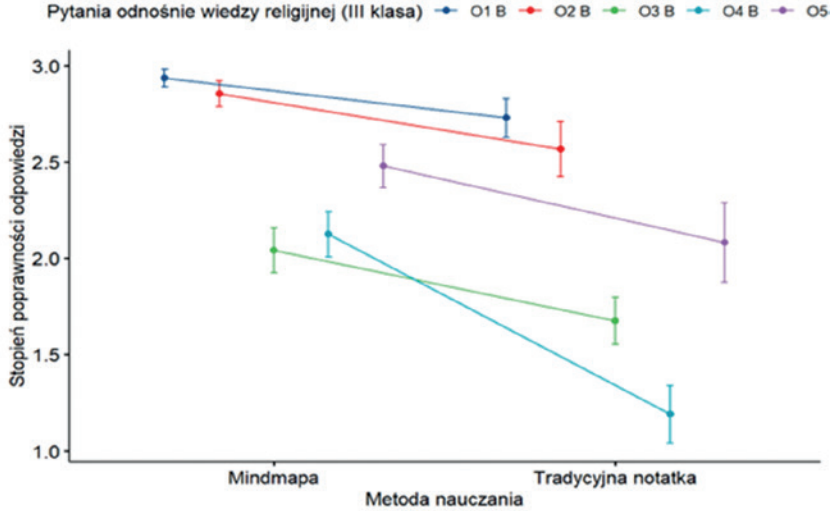
Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the impact of the variable Teaching method on the outcome variable Accuracy of responses across individual question measurements

Teaching method	Measurement	n	Min	Max	M	SD	SE
Mind map	O1 B	48	1	3	2.94	0.32	0.05
Traditional note-taking	O1 B	37	0	3	2.73	0.61	0.10
Mind map	O2 B	48	1	3	2.85	0.46	0.07
Traditional note-taking	O2 B	37	0	3	2.57	0.87	0.14
Mind map	O3 B	48	0	3	2.04	0.80	0.12
Traditional note-taking	O3 B	37	0	3	1.68	0.75	0.12
Mind map	O4 B	48	1	3	2.12	0.81	0.12
Traditional note-taking	O4 B	37	0	3	1.19	0.91	0.15
Mind map	O5 B	48	0	3	2.48	0.77	0.11
Traditional note-taking	O5 B	37	0	3	2.08	1.26	0.21

Note: n = Total number of observations; Min = Minimum value; Max = Maximum value; M = Arithmetic mean; SD = Standard deviation; SE = Standard error of the mean

The analysis of results within the group taught using the modern method of mind mapping revealed significant differences between measurements for individual questions in terms of response accuracy: $F(3, 141) = 18.27$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.28$. The partial eta-squared (η^2) indicated that the differences between the five measured questions explained approximately 28% of the variance in the variable Accuracy of responses. Similarly, the analysis of results in the group taught using the traditional note-taking method showed significant differences between question measurements in terms of the intensity of the variable Accuracy of responses: $F(3.09, 111.32) = 20.11$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.36$. The results are presented in Figures 4 and Table 4. In each question, a clearly higher level of response accuracy was observed following the application of mind mapping.

Figure 4. Differences between measurements for individual questions in terms of the



variable Accuracy of responses across the groups defined by the Teaching method

Note: Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the differences between measurements of individual questions in terms of the Accuracy of responses score across different Teaching method groups

Teaching method	Measurement	n	Min	Max	M	SD	SE
Mind map	O1 B	48	1	3	2.94	0.32	0.05
Traditional note-taking	O1 B	37	0	3	2.73	0.61	0.10
Mind map	O2 B	48	1	3	2.85	0.46	0.07
Traditional note-taking	O2 B	37	0	3	2.57	0.87	0.14
Mind map	O3 B	48	0	3	2.04	0.80	0.12
Traditional note-taking	O3 B	37	0	3	1.68	0.75	0.12
Mind map	O4 B	48	1	3	2.12	0.81	0.12
Traditional note-taking	O4 B	37	0	3	1.19	0.91	0.15
Mind map	O5 B	48	0	3	2.48	0.77	0.11
Traditional note-taking	O5 B	37	0	3	2.08	1.26	0.21

Note: n = Total number of observations; Min = Minimum value; Max = Maximum value; M = Arithmetic mean; SD = Standard deviation; SE = Standard error of the mean

Conclusion

Non-linear note-taking has proven to be an effective form of elaborative encoding of religious knowledge, student-friendly and – according to other studies (e.g., Buzan 2001) – potentially a valuable didactic tool from the teacher's perspective as well. Its exceptional effectiveness stems from the fact that content elaboration occurs during the note-taking process itself, which requires active and creative engagement in the lesson. While constructing a mind map, contextual analysis of new information takes place in relation to previously acquired knowledge. Elaborative processing – even of religious content – results in a stronger memory trace. Based on the conducted research, writing non-linear notes can be described as a form of deep elaboration of religious knowledge, fostering the formation of new connections between elements of knowledge and thereby facilitating later recall and retrieval. Moreover, the creation of non-linear notes during the study met the criteria of a memory strategy, enhancing retention of religious knowledge and maximizing cognitive efficiency. The structuring of knowledge that accompanies the process of producing a mind map further serves as a strong factor shaping memory performance, as confirmed by the study. The high degree of content organization in mind maps directly translates into improved recall performance – the so-called structure effect.

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SEMINARE

Feelings of Loneliness and Eating Problems in Young People: an Analysis of Psychological and Social Mechanisms

Poczucie samotności a problemy z odżywianiem u młodych ludzi – analiza mechanizmów psychologicznych i społecznych

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Abstract: The article explores the impact of loneliness on the development of eating disorders among adolescents. Loneliness during adolescence is considered a significant risk factor for emotional issues such as low self-esteem, distorted body image, and difficulties with emotional regulation. The aim of the study is to analyze the psychological and social mechanisms through which loneliness shapes unhealthy eating behaviors. The article discusses emotnal eating, body dysmorphic disorder, social media pressure, and negative family and peer dynamics. The author highlights that a lack of social support deepens isolation and contributes to compensatory behaviors related to food and body image. The findings suggest that the co-occurrence of loneliness and eating disorders may lead to long-term emotional and health problems in adulthood. The article emphasizes the importance of cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychoeducation, family interventions, and the development of social skills as effective therapeutic strategies. It also draws attention to the need for early prevention and further research on this phenomenon to reduce its long-term psychological and physical consequences in later life. Understanding how loneliness contributes to eating problems can improve clinical interventions and support systems for at-risk youth, helping to create more resilient and emotionally healthy future generations.

Keywords: loneliness, disorders, nutrition, adolescents

Abstrakt: Artykuł podejmuje problem wpływu samotności na rozwój zaburzeń odżywiania u młodzieży. Samotność w okresie adolescencji uznana została za istotny czynnik ryzyka dla występowania problemów emocjonalnych, w tym niskiej samooceny, zniekształconego obrazu ciała i trudności w regulacji emocji. Celem opracowania jest analiza psychologicznych i społecznych mechanizmów, poprzez które osamotnienie wpływa na kształtowanie nieprawidłowych nawyków żywieniowych. W artykule omówiono m.in. emocjonalne jedzenie, zaburzenia dysmorficzne, presję mediów społecznościowych, a także negatywne wzorce rodzinne i rówieśnicze. Autor wskazuje, że brak wsparcia społecznego prowadzi do pogłębienia izolacji oraz kompensacyjnych zachowań wobec jedzenia i ciała. Wyniki analizy sugerują, że długotrwałe współwystępowanie samotności i zaburzeń odżywiania może prowadzić do trwałych trudności emocjonalnych i zdrowotnych w dorosłości. Artykuł podkreśla znaczenie terapii poznawczo-behawioralnej, edukacji psychologicznej, interwencji rodzinnych i rozwijania umiejętności społecznych jako skutecznych strategii terapeutycznych. Zwraca również uwagę na konieczność wczesnej profilaktyki oraz dalszych badań nad tym zjawiskiem, by minimalizować jego długofalowe skutki psychofizyczne w życiu dorosłym.

Słowa kluczowe: samotność, zaburzenia, odżywianie, młodzież

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Introduction

Contemporary social, technological, and cultural changes significantly impact the mental well-being of young people, presenting them with increasing challenges. The growing importance of digital technologies, changing patterns of interpersonal communication, and rising demands regarding educational and professional achievements mean that young people are increasingly experiencing feelings of loneliness and social exclusion (Twenge et al. 2018). The feeling of loneliness during adolescence is a particularly significant problem because young people are at a crucial stage of psychological and social development. This is a period when a sense of identity, self-esteem, and the ability to build relationships with others are formed. Young people are searching for their social role and learning how to cope with emotions, stress, and the challenges that life presents. Loneliness during this period can lead to a feeling of isolation, which negatively affects the ability to form deep bonds and develop healthy coping mechanisms for difficulties. The lack of adequate emotional support, as well as the pressure associated with ideal social patterns, can result in emotional disorders that will have a long-term impact on the further development of a young person. Chronic loneliness can lead to a number of negative consequences, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and physical and mental health disorders (Cacioppo and Cacioppo 2018). Eating disorders, whose etiology is multifactorial and includes biological, psychological, and social determinants (Fairburn and Jones 1997), hold a special place among the various psychosocial consequences of loneliness. Among the psychosocial factors of eating disorders, which can manifest, among others, as anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating, loneliness plays a particularly important role because it affects how young people cope with stress and negative emotions. Numerous studies indicate that the lack of satisfying interpersonal relationships can lead to the use of food as a compensatory mechanism – both through its restrictive limitation and excessive consumption (Levine and Murnen 2009).

The aim of this article is to analyze the impact of the feeling of loneliness on the development of unhealthy eating habits and eating disorders in young people. Particular attention will be paid to the psychological, neurobiological, and socio-cultural mechanisms underlying this phenomenon. Furthermore, possible intervention strategies that can help prevent the negative effects of loneliness and eating disorders among adolescents will be presented.

1. Feeling of loneliness as a stress factor during adolescence

Loneliness is a phenomenon that has accompanied humanity since the beginning, yet it is not easy to define unequivocally. It is a complex problem that depends not only on internal factors, such as an individual's sensitivity or self-esteem, but also on external factors, such as the socio-cultural conditions in which a person functions. Loneliness can be described as a subjective feeling of lacking satisfying

social relationships. Although it is often equated with social isolation, in reality, its experience is mainly subjective, and thus it can occur even when an individual is not objectively isolated from others.

The feeling of loneliness in young people is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can appear at various stages of their development. During adolescence, encompassing both adolescence and young adulthood, the individual experiences significant emotional, social, and cognitive changes that influence the shaping of their identity (Erikson 1968; Marcia 1980). During this time, the young person faces challenges related to personal, social, and professional development, which can lead to difficulties in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, as well as to the development of a feeling of loneliness. Baumeister and Leary (2017) indicate that the need to belong to a group is a fundamental human desire, and its absence can lead to a feeling of rejection. When a young person does not experience acceptance within their peer group or lacks support in relationships with close people, they may begin to feel isolated and rejected.

Loneliness is a phenomenon with a complex structure that manifests itself in various forms, depending on the individual's socio-psychological context and their social environment. Scientific literature distinguishes several types of loneliness that reflect different aspects of this experience. One of the most frequently distinguished types is emotional loneliness, which refers to the lack of deep, intimate bonds that provide a sense of support and security. People experiencing emotional loneliness often have a wide circle of acquaintances, but they lack relationships that would fulfill emotional needs, such as understanding or acceptance (Cacioppo et al. 2002). This loneliness can occur even within close relationships if the relationships are unable to provide the individual with emotional satisfaction (Moore and Weiss 1973). Social loneliness concerns the lack of a broad network of interpersonal contacts, leading to a feeling of alienation. People experiencing social loneliness not only lack close relationships but also do not feel part of any social group, which can lead to a feeling of isolation and alienation (Hawkley and Cacioppo 2010). In the context of this type of loneliness, a person may feel like a stranger among others, despite the presence of people around, which indicates the importance of the quality of social bonds, not just their number. Situational loneliness is a form of loneliness that arises as a result of specific life circumstances, such as moving to a new place, breaking up with a partner, or losing a loved one. In this case, loneliness is temporary, and its intensity depends on the individual's ability to adapt to the new situation (Perlman and Peplau 1981). Chronic loneliness, on the other hand, is a form of loneliness that is long-lasting, often appearing as a result of prolonged social isolation. It can be a result of difficulties in establishing and maintaining social bonds, as well as stemming from deep emotional problems, such as depression or anxiety disorders (Cacioppo and Patrick 2008). Chronic loneliness is associated with numerous negative health consequences, both in the psychological and physical spheres (Hawkley and Cacioppo 2010).

Contemporary research also points to digital loneliness, a phenomenon, which is increasingly present in the age of technology and social media. Although technology enables quick contact with other people, it can also lead to superficial interactions that are unable to satisfy the need for deep connections, which in turn can deepen the feeling of loneliness (Primack et al. 2017). Digital loneliness is particularly noticeable among younger people who spend a lot of time in the virtual world, neglecting real human relationships (Shakya and Christakis 2017).

There are many theories explaining why people experience loneliness, how it arises, and what mechanisms drive it. These theories are diverse and are based on different approaches to human nature, the role of social relationships, and psychological processes.

One of the most important theories is the need to belong theory, proposed by the aforementioned Baumeister and Leary (2017). The authors argue that the need to belong to a social group is one of the basic human needs. People have an innate tendency to strive to establish and maintain close relationships because they fulfill a number of emotional needs, such as a sense of security, acceptance, and support. When this need is not met, a feeling of loneliness may arise. Loneliness is therefore the result of a lack of satisfying interpersonal bonds. According to this theory, an individual can feel lonely even in a crowd if their relationships with others are not deep enough and do not give them a sense of belonging to a social group.

The social deficit theory assumes that loneliness results from a lack or deficiency of social interactions, which causes a deficit in important interpersonal relationships. Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) indicate that a lack of social bonds, both in a qualitative and quantitative sense, leads to a feeling of loneliness. Loneliness in this view is a consequence of inappropriate or too infrequent contact with other people that does not meet the individual's emotional needs. From the perspective of this theory, loneliness is a symptom of a lack of relationships or connections that could provide the individual with a sense of security, understanding, and support.

The stress theory, particularly in the context of loneliness, assumes that a lack of appropriate social relationships can lead to chronic stress, which results from the emotional burden that accompanies loneliness. Cacioppo and colleagues (2002) indicate that chronic experience of loneliness is associated with elevated stress levels and the activation of negative bodily reactions, such as sleep disturbances, changes in stress hormone levels (cortisol), and problems with the immune system. From the perspective of this theory, loneliness not only affects the individual's emotions but also has a real impact on their physical and mental health. Furthermore, loneliness can lead to the activation of defense mechanisms, such as withdrawal from social contact, which in turn deepens the problem of isolation and makes it difficult to establish new bonds. One such mechanism is also problems with eating, representing two extreme situations – avoiding food or excessive overeating. This situation is extremely often recognized in adolescents.

2. Picture of disorders in teenagers

Eating disorders are a serious health problem among teenagers and are increasingly diagnosed in this age group. During adolescence, young people experience intense physical, emotional, and social changes that can affect their perception of their own body and their relationship with food. Eating disorders can lead to serious health consequences, both physical and psychological. According to research, these disorders are linked to various factors, including biological, psychological, and social ones (American Psychiatric Association 2013). One of the most common eating disorders among teenagers is anorexia nervosa. It is characterized by extreme restriction of food intake, fear of gaining weight, and a distorted perception of one's own body, which is perceived as "too fat," even though the person is actually extremely emaciated (Fairburn 2008). Bulimia nervosa is also a common disorder in adolescents, in which episodes of binge eating occur, followed by compensatory behaviors such as vomiting, excessive exercise, or the use of laxatives. In this case, people suffering from bulimia often experience a loss of control over eating and feelings of guilt and shame after eating large amounts of food (Fairburn 2002). The third main disorder is binge eating disorder (BED), which differs from bulimia in that it is not compensated by any weight-controlling behaviors. Despite the lack of compensatory actions, people with this disorder also struggle with emotional problems, including feelings of guilt and shame related to eating (Hudson et al. 2007).

Many researchers point to the complex nature of eating disorders, which are the result of the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors (Levine and Smolak 2020). Among the biological factors, genetic predisposition to the development of eating disorders is distinguished. Studies indicate that there is an increased risk of nutritional abnormalities in people who have close relatives with a history of struggling with them (Hudson et al. 2007). Psychological factors, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression, also play a key role in the development of eating disorders. Teenagers who struggle with these problems may use controlling food as a way to cope with emotions or strive for perfection (Garner et al. 1980). In turn, social factors, including social pressure related to cultural norms regarding appearance, have a huge impact on how young people perceive their bodies. The presence in the media of images of ideal figures, promoted by celebrities or influencers, contributes to increased pressure, which can lead to the development of eating disorders (Levine and Murnen 2009).

The complexity of eating disorders, resulting from the interaction of all its factors, leads to the need to consider the impact of loneliness on the occurrence of problems in this area. Loneliness can exacerbate teenagers' emotional difficulties and deepen their problems with self-esteem. In the face of isolation, young people seek control in the area of food, treating it as a way to cope with emotional emptiness. Increased need for social acceptance, in turn, combined with pressure regarding appearance, leads to the development of eating disorders, which are an attempt to regain control over one's own body.

3. The impact of loneliness on eating problems in young people – psychological and social mechanisms

a) Eating as a dysfunctional form of emotion regulation

One of the key mechanisms linking loneliness and eating disorders is a deficit in the ability to regulate emotions. Loneliness can lead to an increase in stress and/or anxiety levels, thereby limiting access to adaptive coping strategies, such as social support (Wang et al. 2018). Consequently, adolescents are more likely to resort to avoidance strategies. In the absence of social support, eating becomes one of the mechanisms for escaping negative emotions. The use of food to regulate emotional states is particularly evident in cases of binge eating, bulimia, or anorexia, where individuals attempt to control their emotions by controlling their body and food (Fairburn, Cooper and Shafran 2003).

According to the "escape theory" model by Fairburn and colleagues (Fairburn, Cooper and Shafran 2003), individuals suffering from eating disorders use body weight control as a mechanism to escape negative emotions and low self-esteem. Similar results were obtained in studies on emotional eating – it was shown that individuals experiencing loneliness are more likely to engage in binge eating as a way to alleviate unpleasant emotional states (Spoor et al. 2007). The main purpose of eating thus becomes escaping sadness, anxiety, or stress, rather than its basic function – satisfying the body's physiological need. The long-term use of this strategy leads to disturbances in the relationship with food, which are difficult to break, and their self-perpetuating mechanism deepens the individual's emotional state.

Studies show that individuals who engage in emotional eating often also have difficulty recognizing and adequately expressing their emotions (Dol et al. 2023). This process leads to a vicious cycle in which emotions are not properly regulated, and eating becomes the primary way to manage them. As a result, control over food, although initially perceived as a way to cope with emotions, becomes a trap in which the individual loses control over both food and emotions.

b) Body Dysmorphic Disorder and the Influence of Social Media

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is a serious mental disorder in which a person experiences intense and persistent anxiety related to imagined or marginal physical defects. Although individuals with BDD are often physically capable, their perception of their own body is distorted, leading to obsessive thoughts about perceived imperfections that can affect various body parts, including the face, skin, hair, or physique (Veale 2004). BDD often co-occurs with other disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Young people, especially during adolescence, are particularly susceptible to developing this disorder due to intense changes in physical appearance and a strong need for social acceptance, which becomes a key element in shaping their identity (Cash 2004).

In the context of loneliness, BDD becomes particularly problematic because a lack of social support and a sense of isolation can intensify obsessive thoughts about body image. Young people who experience loneliness may be more prone to negative self-perception, which can lead to the development of body image disorders. Loneliness increases feelings of alienation and low self-esteem, which are major risk factors for the development of BDD (Rosen 1995). Social isolation, which in adolescence can result from difficulties in forming close relationships or experiencing difficulties in social integration, affects the internal representation of the body and intensifies focus on its perceived flaws.

Contemporary social media has become a significant factor influencing the development of BDD, especially among young people. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok promote images of "ideal" bodies that are often retouched or unrealistic. Younger individuals who experience loneliness may spend a lot of time browsing these media, which can lead to social comparisons and deepen feelings of inadequacy (Fardouly et al. 2015). Research indicates that viewing photos of people with unrealistic beauty standards leads to increased dissatisfaction with one's own appearance and can lead to eating disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia (Tiggemann and Slater 2013). Increased comparisons to these idealized images in social media can lead to a negative body image, particularly among young people who are in a phase of intense emotional and social development.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in individuals who struggle with loneliness, as a lack of social support can lead to a stronger identification with the negative body image promoted by the media. Loneliness combined with comparisons to others can result in a deepening feeling of inadequacy and lack of acceptance, which consequently leads to the use of drastic methods of weight control, such as restrictive diets, fasting, or excessive exercise (Grabe, Ward and Hyde 2008). Furthermore, loneliness can influence the dietary choices of young people, who, feeling isolated, may use food as a way to cope with emotions, which also leads to eating problems. Loneliness can also intensify negative self-perception, especially among adolescents subjected to the pressure of meeting unrealistic aesthetic standards promoted by social media. Studies have shown that individuals with high levels of loneliness are more likely to engage in social comparisons and show greater susceptibility to internalizing thinness ideals (Perloff 2014). Long-term exposure to unrealistic body images can lead to the development of BDD, which often co-occurs with eating disorders (Holland and Tiggemann 2016). Loneliness in this context acts as a mediator – the lack of satisfying social interactions leads to a compensatory pursuit of an ideal, resulting in unhealthy eating patterns.

4. Other mechanisms infuencing the occurrence of abnormal eating habits

In addition to the previously mentioned ways in which loneliness influences the formation of inappropriate eating habits, it is worth noting disturbed relationships with family and peers. During adolescence, young people intensely form their identity and social norms. At this time, young people face numerous challenges related to establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. A lack of emotional support from family, as well as the presence of family conflicts, can lead to a decrease in self-esteem, which often results in seeking control over the body and food. In a situation where a young person does not receive adequate emotional care, eating becomes a mechanism for coping with feelings of helplessness, and controlling body weight provides a sense of agency and control in the face of unfriendly home relationships (Van Strien 2018). In such a situation, eating disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia, become an attempt to regain control over life and the body, which seem to be slipping out of control in other areas of life.

Similarly, negative relationships with peers, including social exclusion, bullying, and comparisons regarding appearance, have a significant impact on shaping attitudes towards food. Young people who feel rejected or marginalized by their peer group often experience anxiety, depression, and a sense of isolation, which leads to seeking ways to reduce negative emotions. In this context, eating becomes a way to compensate for emotional pain or, in the case of excessive control over diet, to strive to meet the aesthetic expectations promoted by peers. The desire to achieve acceptance in a social group can lead to obsessive control over body weight and food intake, which is often fueled by contemporary cultural and aesthetic norms, idealized body images in social media, and the desire to conform to these norms. Such mechanisms lead to unhealthy eating behaviors that, in the long run, can lead to serious eating disorders (Puhl and Heuer 2009). Loneliness, especially in people living in isolation, can lead to serious disruptions in life rhythm, which include irregular meal times and inappropriate eating patterns. The lack of companionship, social support, and emotional bonds leads to a weakening of social structures that regulate our behavior on a daily basis, including the rhythm of eating. As a result of this isolation, lonely people may neglect their nutritional needs, which manifests in a lack of fixed meal times, irregular food consumption, and difficulty in maintaining healthy eating habits. Research shows that a lack of daily structure and social interaction leads to instability in eating behaviors, which can result in both excessive and insufficient food intake (Van Strien 2018).

Loneliness and social isolation affect emotional coping mechanisms, which are crucial in the context of eating disorders. People experiencing loneliness may seek comfort in food, leading to compulsive overeating or, conversely, to restrictive avoidance of food as a way to cope with negative emotions such as sadness or anxiety (Meneguzzo et al. 2024). The literature emphasizes that a lack of social interaction increases the risk of depression and anxiety disorders, which in turn can

affect eating behaviors. Eating then becomes a means of coping with the emotional suffering associated with loneliness, and inappropriate eating habits, such as irregular meals or consuming large amounts of food, can lead to eating disorders such as bulimia or binge eating disorder (Puhl and Heuer 2009). Loneliness also changes emotional self-regulation mechanisms,which makes it difficult to control impulses related to eating and leads to excessive food consumption as a form of self-control in the face of a lack of social support (Agarwal 2014). Long-term isolation and weakened social ties can also lead to changes in metabolism and lifestyle, such as lack of physical activity and irregular sleep, which, combined with unhealthy eating patterns, worsen health and lead to obesity or other eating disorders (Heinrichs et al. 2003).

5. Long-term consequences of the coexistence of loneliness and eating disorders

The long-term consequences of loneliness, particularly in the context of its impact on the development of eating disorders in adolescents, can lead to serious problems in adulthood, both in the sphere of mental and physical health. Loneliness experienced at a young age can solidify destructive patterns of thinking and behavior that have a long-term impact on an individual's adult life. In particular, prolonged social isolation during adolescence can lead to a chronic sense of loneliness that persists into adulthood, increasing the risk of mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and also addictions (Cacioppo et al. 2006).

In the context of eating disorders, the problem of loneliness becomes not only a temporary issue but can also lead to chronic difficulties with weight control and eating behaviors in adult life. Young people who experience loneliness and alienation often develop compensatory mechanisms, including restrictive diets or excessive eating.

The negative consequences of loneliness during adolescence can be reflected in later social and professional life. Individuals who experienced deep loneliness in their youth may struggle with problems in establishing and maintaining close interpersonal relationships in adulthood. These problems can be exacerbated by internal beliefs about their own worthlessness and fear of rejection, resulting in difficulties in forming lasting social and family bonds. Prolonged social isolation, resulting from unresolved past problems, can also lead to professional burnout, problems in the workplace, and withdrawal from social activities (Cacioppo and Patrick 2008).

Chronic loneliness in childhood and adolescence can also lead to changes in metabolism that last throughout life. The increased risk of obesity, metabolic disorders, and heart disease in individuals who struggled with loneliness at a young age may be related to long-standing eating patterns, such as excessive food consumption in response to stress or lack of physical activity (Heinrichs et al. 2003). Consequently, these problems can have long-term health consequences, leading to the development of chronic diseases.

6. Intervention strategies and preventive actions

Chronic loneliness, especially during adolescence, leads to further social isolation, which in turn exacerbates the symptoms of eating disorders and creates a vicious cycle of difficult-to-break mechanisms. Loneliness becomes both a consequence and a cause of the development of pathological eating patterns, and its long-term impact leads to increasingly deeper health and emotional problems. In the face of such a state, therapeutic interventions must be comprehensive and tailored to the individual needs of young people, combining various therapeutic approaches that allow for effective work on the symptoms of eating disorders and improvement of social quality of life. For this reason, a multidisciplinary approach is crucial, combining elements such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), interventions aimed at improving social skills, and psychoeducation regarding the impact of social media on body perception.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one of the most effective methods for treating eating disorders, including anorexia and bulimia, by identifying and modifying harmful thought patterns and behaviors related to eating (Fairburn 2008). Within CBT, patients learn to recognize negative thought patterns that lead to low self-esteem and work on improving body image, which is particularly important in the context of youth whose body perception is strongly shaped by social media and social aesthetic norms (Levine and Murnen 2009). This therapy can also help reduce anxieties related to eating and allows for the development of the ability to express emotions in a healthy way, without resorting to food control.

Another key element of intervention is working on improving the social skills of young people. Strengthening the ability to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships is an important protective factor against loneliness and its negative consequences. Educational programs aimed at developing communication skills, assertiveness, and conflict resolution can contribute to building a sense of belonging to a peer group and support young people in coping with negative emotions. Research indicates that social support is one of the key elements in the recovery process and preventing relapses of eating disorders (Linville et al. 2012). Psychoeducation is another important intervention strategy aimed at increasing young people's awareness of the impact of social media on their body perception and the shaping of aesthetic norms. There is much evidence that intensive use of online platforms that promote idealized body images can lead to unhealthy comparisons, feelings of low self-worth, and excessive focus on external appearance (Fardouly et al. 2015). Psychoeducational programs can help young people understand that images presented in the media are often unrealistic and filtered by cultural norms, and also teach them how to cope with social and digital pressure. Working on psychological resilience and promoting a healthy lifestyle can be a key element in the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

Furthermore, in the context of treating eating disorders and coping with loneliness, it is worth considering an approach based on family therapy, especially

in cases where eating problems originate from difficult family relationships. Family therapy helps in resolving internal conflicts and building more supportive interactions within the family, which in the long term contributes to reducing feelings of isolation and weakening compensatory mechanisms related to eating (Minuchin and Fishman 1981).

However, all these interventions must be tailored to the individual needs and problems of young people, and their effectiveness largely depends on early recognition of the problem and commitment to therapy. Properly selected strategies can effectively reduce symptoms of loneliness and eating disorders, supporting young people in the process of recovery and building healthy eating and social habits.

Conclusion

The article presents the complex interaction between loneliness and eating disorders in adolescence, pointing to their long-term consequences that can persist into adulthood. Social isolation, combined with a lack of emotional support, fosters the development of destructive coping mechanisms, including pathological body control, while aesthetic pressure, particularly in the context of social media, deepens dissatisfaction with one's appearance. The article emphasizes the crucial role of cognitive-behavioral therapy and social support, which are essential for both treating eating disorders and preventing emotional problems. An important conclusion is also the need for continued research on these phenomena, especially in the adolescent group, to better understand the mechanisms of their development and to develop more effective preventive and therapeutic interventions that can minimize long-term psychological and physical consequences in adult life.

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SEMINARE

Effects of Experiencing a Close One's Suicide on Children and Adolescents: Significance of Implementing Postvention Measures

Wpływ doświadczenia samobójczej śmierci bliskiego na dzieci i młodzież. Znaczenie podejmowania działań postwencyjnych

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Abstract: The reported high incidence of suicides in Poland and worldwide is associated with a growing need to support those experiencing bereavement due to suicide. In this context, the increase in suicidal behaviour among children and young people observed in recent years is particularly worrying. Literature emphasises the difficulty of engaging in dialogue about the taking of one's own life by a loved one, as well as the tendency to exclude this topic from conversations and to stigmatise it. Meanwhile, research dedicated to analysing the role of creating narratives about the experience in question suggests that being able to describe feelings and experiences and share them with others has a beneficial effect on the way grief is experienced. The aim of this paper is to consider the benefits and difficulties of sharing the loss of a loved one to suicide in the context of children and young people's bereavement. To provide answer to the research question, a systematic review of source literature was conducted, which is enriched by references to testimonies of people experiencing the loss in question. Based on the materials collected, the author presents findings and suggestions relevant to providing support to children and adolescents affected by bereavement caused by suicide.

Keywords: suicide, bereavement, children, adolescents, communication

Abstrakt: Odnotowywana wysoka częstość występowania samobójstw w Polsce i na świecie wiąże się ze zwiększoną potrzebą niesienia wsparcia osobom przeżywającym utratę bliskich spowodowaną targnięciem się na własne życie. W tym kontekście szczególnie niepokojący jest obserwowany w ostatnich latach wzrost liczby zachowań samobójczych w grupie dzieci i młodzieży. W literaturze podkreśla się trudność prowadzenia dialogu o odebraniu sobie życia przez bliską osobę, a także skłonność do wykluczania z rozmów tego tematu i jego stygmatyzacji. Tymczasem badania poświęcone analizie roli tworzenia narracji o omawianym doświadczeniu wskazują, że możliwość opisania uczuć i przeżyć i podzielenie się nimi z otoczeniem ma korzystny wpływ na sposób przechodzenia żałoby. Celem artykułu jest rozważenie korzyści i trudności związanych z dzieleniem utraty bliskiej osoby w wyniku samobójstwa w kontekście przeżywania żałoby przez dzieci i młodzież. W odpowiedzi na postawiony problem badawczy przeprowadzony został systematyczny przegląd literatury przedmiotu, który wzbogacony jest odwołaniami do świadectw ludzi przeżywających omawianą utratę. Na podstawie zgromadzonych materiałów sformułowane zostały spostrzeżenia istotne dla praktyki udzielania wsparcia dzieciom i młodzieży dotkniętym utratą bliskiej osoby spowodowaną samobójstwem.

Słowa kluczowe: samobójstwo, żałoba, dzieci, młodzież, rozmowa

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Introduction

According to the WHO report, over 720,000 people die by suicide worldwide every year (WHO 2000-2023). The scale of this phenomenon in Poland is reflected in statistical data provided by the National Police Headquarters (KGP) and the Central Statistical Office (GUS), which indicate an upward trend in the number of suicidal behaviours. According to KGP and GUS data from the period of 2017-2023, approximately 12,016 suicide attempts are made in Poland every year, and approximately 5,220 suicidal behaviours end in death.

Literature on the topic provides estimations on the extent to which the experience of loss affects the immediate environment of a suicide victim. It is estimated that, on average, this type of death has an impact on 5-10 people close to the deceased (Shneidman 1973: "at least 5"; Wrobleski 2002: "10"; Berman 2011; Gmitrowicz 2010: "6-10"), who, when afflicted by the loss, inevitably face a difficult mourning process. It should be noted, however, that the majority of studies devoted to the analysis of this process focus on the impact of suicide on the closest relatives of the deceased (e.g. Chen and Laitila 2023; Runeson and Wilcox 2023; Creuzé et al. 2022; Spillane et al. 2017), which may result in underestimating the significance of experiencing bereavement by those who shared their life with the deceased, although were not related with him or her by blood ties.

In response to this observation, Jordan and McIntosh (2011) suggest that when analysing the effects of suicide on those left behind, it is necessary to take into account the nature of the relationship between suicide survivals and the deceased, which they refer to as a psychological bond, rather than a blood bond (Jordan and McIntosh 2011, 7). Such a broader approach to experiencing a loved one's suicide allows, among other things, to reflect on the scars that may be left on the lives of children when a member of their peer group takes his or her own life (cf. Andriessen et al. 2024; Chatizow 2018; Czabański 2009). Addressing this issue is particularly important due to the alarming increase in the number of suicidal acts among children and adolescents.

According to KGP data, in 2023, people aged 13 to 18 made over 2,000 suicide attempts, which indicates a significant growth in the number compared to previous years (cf. KGP and GUS data from 2017-2023). The increasing frequency of suicidal behaviours among children and adolescents is addressed in the literature on the topic (Szadkowski and Podemska 2022; Schonfeld et al. 2023; Morris-Perez et al. 2023) as well as in social debate (e.g. Dziewit 2020). The occurrence of these disturbing changes is often linked with the COVID-19 pandemic, which constituted a particular challenge for young people (Liu et al. 2023; Kim et al. 2022; Mayne et al. 2021; Gracia et al. 2021). The sense of increased anxiety related to the need to face threats to health and life, global organizational chaos reinforced by disinformation (related to gathering and creating knowledge about the new phenomenon) as well as the imposed social isolation (experienced at the stage of development when relationships with a peer group are crucial for building future social competences) must have had an impact on young people.

The increased incidence of suicidal behaviours undoubtedly requires a response such as developing programs aimed at supporting young people. However, it should be noted that literature is dominated by studies devoted to providing support to people experiencing a suicidal crisis, while those emphasizing the importance of undertaking postvention activities among people who have experienced the suicide of a loved person are published much less frequently. Considering that suicide-related bereavement constitutes a significant risk factor for the occurrence of suicidal tendencies in survivors (Logan, Krysinska and Andriessen 2024; Pitman et al. 2020; Pitman et al. 2016; Brent and Mann 2006; Roy and Janal 2005), it may be stated that undertaking postvention actions in a group of young people affected by suicide of a loved one simultaneously constitutes a preventive measure.

The observed neglect in addressing the topic of providing support to suicide survivals may stem from society's ongoing tendency to marginalize and stigmatize this experience. Research focused on the examination of the taboo around suicidal death (Marek and Oexle 2024; Overvad and Wagoner 2020; Pitman et al. 2018; Chapple, Ziebland and Hawton 2015), noted a tendency to avoid discussing suicide with mourners. It was found that people affected by such a loss are treated by society with less sympathy and are often held responsible for the death of their loved ones (Feigelman and Cerel 2020; Pitman et al. 2018; Sveen and Walby 2008). Suicide survivors are also more likely to feel shame associated with the experience (Levi-Belz and Hamdan 2023; Tal Young et al. 2012). This way, the tabooization and stigmatization of the phenomenon of taking one's own life leads to exclusion and progressive social isolation of people affected by the suicide of a loved one (Hanschmidt et al. 2016).

Taking into account difficulties associated with sharing this experience in a social reality that fails to facilitate the process of working through suicide bereavement, researchers (including Calhoun and Tedeschi 2006; Rynearson 2001; Sands 2008) emphasize the benefits of providing suicide survivals with the possibility of creating a narrative about their loss. The possibility of creating a space for dialogue that could provide those left behind with support in the process of understanding their bereavement seems particularly important in the case of young people. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the benefits and difficulties associated with sharing bereavement by children and young people inflicted by such a loss.

The first part of this article presents the results of a systematic review of literature on the impact of a loved one's suicide on the lives of children and young people. The next part reconstructs the results of research on the role attributed to creating a narrative about this experience by suicide survivors. In the final part, the article focuses on the importance of creating a narrative in the process of healing from the loss of a loved one to suicide, taking into account both the benefits and difficulties associated with engaging in a dialogue. This part presents the results of literature review, as well as testimonies of people experiencing bereavement. Reflection on the power of dialogue in supporting people suffering after the suicide of a loved one was supplemented by a review of methods based

on narrative techniques that are used in the work with suicide survivors as well as by highlighting what is most important for the practice of providing support to people affected by suicide.

1. The impact of the experience of suicidal death of a loved one on children and adolescents

Literature devoted to the analysis of how children and adolescents cope with the suicide of a loved one repeatedly emphasizes the challenge that going through the experience of such a loss constitutes for young people and how it can affect their lives.

Research conducted in a group of children who experienced a parent's suicide allowed to observe a higher incidence of behavioural problems (i.e. hostility, aggression, risky behaviour) and inclination to withdrawal, reduced affect, and a tendency to burden themselves with a sense of guilt (Silvén Hagström, Forinder and Hovén 2024; Watson et al. 2021). Those findings were confirmed by research in which symptoms indicating the development of depression were more frequently observed in children affected by a parent's suicide (Berg, Rostila and Hjern 2016; O'Brien et al. 2015, Wilcox et al. 2010; Brent et al. 2009; Melhem et al. 2008). Such children showed greater difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships, reported persistent low mood, and were also observed to be less effective in their actions, which led to their progressive withdrawal from taking on new challenges and activities (Pham et al. 2018; Pfeffer et al. 2000). It was found that these symptoms, which may indicate the development of disorders (mainly affective disorders and anxiety disorders), were most severe in young people in the first months after the suicide of a loved one (Cerel et al. 1999). In addition, children who experienced parental suicide are more likely to engage in risky behaviours such as the use of psychoactive substances (O'Brien et al. 2015; Hamdan et al. 2013; Brent et al. 2009), or violence. They may also demonstrate suicidal behaviours (such as self-destructive acts, suicidal thoughts and attempts) (Guldin et al. 2015; Geulayov et al. 2014; Jakobsen and Christiansen 2011; Cerel and Roberts 2005).

Children who witnessed a sibling commit suicide were similarly affected. In the first six months after such a loss, the children under research were seven times more likely to experience depression than the control group (children who had not experienced a sibling's suicide) (Brent et al. 1996). It was noted that the risk group for the occurrence and development of symptoms of depression includes primarily children who have been diagnosed with mental disorders in the past or have a family history of mental disorders (especially affective disorders) (Halonen et al. 2021; Elsayed et al. 2019; Qin, Agerbo and Mortensen 2002).

While scientific literature predominantly emphasizes the experiences of children losing close relatives, it is essential to consider the risks faced by children and adolescents encountering the death of non-related close individuals. In studies conducted by Julie Cerel's research team, 15.5% of adolescents reported that in the past year they had experienced a suicide attempt by a peer, and 3.2% confirmed that

they had experienced a suicidal death of a peer during that time (Cerel, Roberts and Nilsen 2005). The aforementioned increase in suicidal behaviours among young people prompts reflection on the impact of a child's suicide on their peer group.

Research analysing the impact of suicide committed by a child on its peers reports (based on data from interviews conducted with these children four times over three years after their peer's death) that children affected by such an experience are prone to developing symptoms of depression, or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It may also lead to suicidal thoughts (Brent et al. 1993). It was also noted that children undergoing such an experience show an increased tendency to engage in risky behaviours (e.g. psychoactive substance abuses, violence) or to attempt suicide in the future (Cerel, Roberts and Nilsen 2005). It is also important to highlight the significance of the bond that the child had with the deceased peer, namely, research has shown that the closer the mourner is to the deceased, the higher the risk that the child will develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Melhem et al. 2004). In this regard, it should be noted that adolescence is the period of first romantic relationships, which may also coincide with the experience of a loved one's suicide.

The reported incidence of suicide among both near relatives and non-relatives in the cohort of children and adolescents is associated with an increased need to provide support to those affected by the bereavement (cf. Parrish and Tunkle 2005). Unfortunately, the literature on the topic indicates that suicide survivors find it difficult to talk about this experience (Rinne-Wolf, Finkeldei and Kern 2024). Moreover, there is even a tendency to exclude and stigmatize people who were in a close relationship with the suicide victim (Zyl 2020; McMenamy, Jordan and Mitchell 2008), which hampers the willingness of mourners to share this experience with others.

2. Talking to a child about the experience of a loved one's suicidal death

Research indicates that most children are not told that a loved one died by suicide (Cain and Fast 1966), even when the circumstances of the loss clearly suggest this cause, and the children may have been indirectly engaged in the event, e.g. they were present when the body was found (Cain and Fast 1966).

No comprehensive research has been undertaken to evaluate the effects on children of receiving inaccurate information regarding the true cause of a loved one's death. The literature contains numerous testimonies given by people from whom the truth was concealed, and analysing these accounts underscores the dangers of withholding the exact cause of a loved one's death from a child (Lukas and Seiden 2007; Mueller Bryson 2006; Swan Miller 2000). Cases of individuals who suffered such a loss in childhood draw attention to the risk of learning the truth under circumstances that are not adapted to the child's understanding of the world or linguistic abilities. Minors sometimes overhear information about the real cause of a loved one's death when family members or peers are talking

about it; children may also be deliberately informed about it. Such an indirect way of conveying the information may not be appropriately adapted to children's sensitivity. Consequently, in order to protect children from finding out the truth in inappropriate circumstances, parents primarily rely on their own evaluation of the child's developmental stage, the scope of their knowledge of the event (including whether they were a witness or participant) and their ability to manage past crisis situations when determining whether to engage in such discussions (Cain 2002). This evaluation allows them to adjust the type of message to the child's competences. Recognizing the difficulty of conducting such a conversation, it is recommended to return to the subject of the experience of a loved one's suicide also after some time has passed since the event, in order to evaluate the child's understanding of this experience and get to know what meaning the child ascribed to it.

Analysis of the significance of narrating the experience of a loved one's suicide is the focus of research conducted by, among others, Diane Sands (2008, 2009). The researcher attempted to describe changes in the narrative related to suicide in the form of the Tripartite Model of Suicide Bereavement. The author notes that construction of such a narrative depends on an individual's relationship with his or her environment, with the deceased, and with his or her self-perception. The researcher observes that each of these narratives is subject to changes over time, and she distinguishes three stages in their formation: *Trying on the shoes*; *Walking in the shoes*; and *Taking off the shoes*. The analyses conducted by Sands illustrate how these narratives evolve as individuals derive meaning from their experiences through communication, discourse, and recounting the loss. The results of this study highlight the significance of people (particularly children) having the opportunity to talk about their bereavement and thus share it with others.

3. Giving meaning to the experience of a loved one's suicidal death

Source literature consistently emphasizes the intense need of mourners to understand the meaning of losing a loved one to suicide. Neimeyer devoted a series of works to discussing the key question of how giving meaning to the experienced loss affects the way in which the suicide of a loved one is dealt with (Neimeyer, Prigerson and Davies 2002; Neimeyer and Wogrin 2008). The importance of deriving meaning from one's own experience of suicide survivals is also emphasized by the results of empirical studies (Keesee, Currier and Neimeyer 2008; Currier and Neimeyer 2006; Holland, Currier and Neimeyer 2006) and clinical data (case studies), which affirm the "primacy" of the process of reconstructing the meaning for the possibility of accepting the loss (Stewart and Neimeyer 2007; Neimeyer, Herrero and Botella 2006; Neimeyer, Keesee and Frotner 2000).

Based on conducted observations, researchers identified three basic methods by which mourners try to incorporate the experience of a loved one's suicide into their life narratives.

The first of these involves an attempt to integrate the experience of death into the narrative of one's life in order to make it coherent, i.e., to make it a part of one's life. The deceased's relatives then strive to identify the crucial moments of this experience - to name the most important factors and recognize significant situations - and try to understand them by finding the role they played in the course of events:

Every memory had to be analysed.
And every word. (cf. Bärfuss 2017, 40)

A similar strategy for integrating one's life after the suicide of a loved one is the second method identified by researchers, namely, an attempt to give meaning to the experienced loss by isolating its significant aspects and recognizing their beneficial influence on the course of events. Mourners reflect on the influence of the deceased's suicidal death on the life they shared together, seeking to identify the necessary changes caused by that death, e.g. the departure put an end to the psychological pain that afflicted the loved one:

I feel so bad. I lost my only daughter on February 21st, 2020. It feels like a 25-pound weight on my chest. It seems surreal. I don't know exactly how we're going to cope with it, but I keep telling her I'm not angry. That her mommy would rather carry the weight of pain in her heart than for her to have to go through life feeling sad, alone, unsure of herself and her future. The unknowns. You are not alone in your grief (Arlene engels 2020).

The final method distinguished by researchers for processing the experience of a loved one's suicide is related to the mourners' endeavour to establish a new identity that incorporates the sense of loss. A crucial aspect of this process of internal transformation is cultivating an attitude of openness to identifying oneself with a group of people affected by bereavement, and thus the ability to look at oneself from the perspective of another person who has experienced the suicide of a loved one.:

Why did all this happen? What part did other people play in it? Why did the survivor of this loss suffer so much? How long is the list of its painful consequences that are related to my own problems? (…) And why, in the more than 40 years since my mother died, has no one ever told me that what I was going through was part of what most people go through when someone close to me dies? That would have helped. (cf. Lukas and Seiden 2007, 20).

The narrative styles regarding the experience of suicide discussed above help the bereaved in rendering this event essential in their life. In their narratives, they express and simultaneously construct their relationship with the deceased, with others and with themselves.

This observation leads to the conclusion that engaging in conversation may facilitate the processing of the discussed loss; however, as highlighted in the literature on the topic, this contradicts the difficulty associated with sharing such an experience (McMenamy, Jordan and Mitchell 2008; Cvinar 2005; Ellenbogen and Gratton 2001), a difficulty which, notably, arises from both sides. For this

reason, knowing the benefits of initiating a dialogue, it is necessary to consider the possibilities of supporting people affected by the loss as well as their environment in starting a dialogue.

Conclusion

Based on the review of source literature, it can be stated that preparation for providing support to young people experiencing the suicide of a loved one should be preceded by in-depth research that will allow to gain a better understanding of children affected by bereavement. The current research, that is mostly focused on analysing the experience of parental suicide, should be expanded to include the impact of suicide on a peer group. The increase in the number of suicidal behaviours among young people indicates a high probability of children and adolescents facing the suicide of a close person.

In addition, most of the cited research include cross-sectional studies conducted for a short period of time and in clinical groups (i.e. children hospitalized due to the occurrence of developmental disorders). Meanwhile, the research results presented in the article, pointing to the changing perception of the discussed experience over time (cf. Sands 2008, 2009), underline the need for conducting longer observations which would take into account, as postulated by Sands (2008, 2009), the mediating influence of relationships with the environment, with the deceased loved one and with oneself on the way of experiencing such a loss. Researchers positing the impact of these relationships suggest that it is not the act of suicide itself that leads to the occurrence of problems in children, but rather that these difficulties are indicative of the dysfunction of the family and environment that occurred before and after the experience of loss (Lindqvist, Johansson and Karlsson 2008; Cerel et al. 2000; Shepherd, Barraclough 1976). In this context, it is also very important to enhance communication with the child, so that he or she can share their experience with the environment and begin to construct a personal narrative on this topic.

Observing how those affected by the loss in question try to talk about this experience in a space that is unfavourable to it, researchers drew attention to the effectiveness of using narrative techniques in the process of supporting the sharing the experience of a loved one's suicide. Researchers noted the effectiveness of narrative techniques in facilitating the expression of feelings related to the suicide of a loved one, particularly in environments that are not conducive to such discussions. The creativity in the scope of suggested approaches to engaging in conversation with mourners makes it impossible to discuss all methods of work proposed in literature on the topic. Therefore, I will now present the most frequently occurring and thoroughly described techniques.

The first one is the so-called restorative retelling (Rynearson 2001, 2006). The approach is based on attempts to describe or imagine the death of a loved one in such a way as to deliberately avoid the overwhelming focus on the tragedy of their death and to aim at redirecting thoughts to other aspects of this event. This

may involve, for example, focusing on the issue of transformation experienced by the person moving into the spiritual realm (e.g.: at the moment of death an angel takes and carries the soul of the deceased). In turn, re-story is a technique of coping with the death of a loved one that aligns with the individual's experience of loss (Steward and Neimeyer 2007; Shear and Frank 2006). An alternative method for articulating challenging, traumatic experiences is through creating free notes or, more methodically, maintaining a diary. This practice supports the process of searching for meaning in the experience of a loved one's suicide, facilitates the coherence and integration of the narrative, and mediates its incorporation into the broader context of the mourners' experiences (Neimeyer, van Dyke and Pennebaker 2008; Steward and Neimeyer 2007; Pennebaker and Chung 2007). It is also worth mentioning here the writing of letters aimed at rebuilding the relationship with the deceased. In this context, an interesting example is the book *Letters to Mitch* (Dunn 2016), which, among various themes (including "reconciliation with the deceased"), presents elements of the experience that the literature in the field of suicidology refers to as "post-traumatic growth" after the experience of a loved one's suicide (cf. Neimeyer et al. 2002).

The use of specific narrative techniques in work with young people affected by the suicide of a loved one may serve as an effective starting point for initiating a dialogue about this experience, as well as an indication of readiness to offer support during the mourning process. The various means of expression utilized by individuals affected by the discussed loss, such as letters, notes, books and diaries, suggest that art therapy may be particularly useful in work with the discussed age group (e.g. Edmonds 2016).

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SEMINARE

Leisure Time and Narcissistic Strategies in Young Adults: Towards Searching for Mutual Connections

Czas wolny i strategie narcystyczne u młodych dorosłych. W kierunku poszukiwania wzajemnych powiązań

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Abstract: The article attempts to look for correlations between forms of spending free time and strategies of narcissism in the age group of young adults. It begins with a theoretical introduction on the concept of free time, then it presents the basic assumptions of the NARC model, based on which the author distinguishes two strategies of narcissism: narcissistic competition and narcissistic admiration. The aim of the research was to search for correlations between leisure activities and narcissism strategies in a group of young adults. The presented study used the author's own questionnaire, prepared for the needs of the research, and the NARQ-PL questionnaire in the Polish adaptation by Rogoza et al. (2016). The obtained research results identify the most common ways of spending free time by young adults as well as the existence of correlations between some ways of spending free time and narcissistic strategies. The research results seem interesting from a theoretical and practical perspective. They show the existing connections and outline opportunities for further research into the correlates of leisure time activities undertaken by young adults.

Keywords: free time, young adults, narcissistic competition, narcissistic admiration

Abstrakt: W artykule została podjęta próba poszukiwania powiązań pomiędzy formami spędzania czasu wolnego a strategiami narcyzmu w grupie młodych dorosłych. Dokonano teoretycznego wprowadzenia w zagadnienie czasu wolnego, przedstawiono podstawy modelu NARC, w oparciu o który zostały wyodrębnione dwie strategie narcyzmu: narcystyczna rywalizacja i narcystyczny podziw. W prezentowanym badaniu wykorzystano kwestionariusz ankiety własnego autorstwa, przygotowany na potrzeby badań oraz kwestionariusz NARQ-PL w polskiej adaptacji Rogoza i in. (2016). Uzyskane wyniki badań wskazują na najczęstsze sposoby spędzania czasu wolnego przez młodych dorosłych oraz na istnienie powiązań korelacyjnych pomiędzy niektórymi sposobami realizowania czasu wolnego i strategiami narcystycznymi. Uzyskane wyniki badań wydają się interesujące z perspektywy teoretycznej i praktycznej. Ukazują one istniejące powiązania, jak również nakreślają możliwości dalszego pogłębiania badań poprzez kontynuowanie poszukiwania korelatów czasu wolnego u młodych dorosłych.

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In lieu of introduction

Discussion on the question of leisure time falls into the scope of social sciences (e.g. Larson and Richards 1984; Fine et al. 1990; Czerepaniak-Walczak 1997; Orłowska 2007; Orłowska and Błeszyński 2016; Pięta 2014). Along with the development of societies and the observed transformations, people's habit related to the forms and ways of spending free time are also changing, irrespective of age. In order to function effectively in society, individuals need to adopt specific behavioural patterns and models. In this way, young people prepare for their roles within the social structure, assimilate into culture, and ultimately establish their positions in society. Political transformation in Poland, brought significant changes: the previous system of norms and values collapsed, social aspirations and goals changed which, in turn, induced changes in the scope of cultural patterns (Kargul 1995), namely, the former traditional patterns began to be replaced by Western ones. As a consequence, leisure-time habits also underwent changes.

Explanation of the term "free time" turns out to be challenging due to its inherent ambiguity. One of the older definitions of free time indicated that it is the time at the disposal of an individual following the completion of obligatory responsibilities including professional work, school education and essential domestic chores (Okoń 1975, 43). Leisure time is rationally used for rest (restoration of physical and mental strength); entertainment, social activity, development of interests and talents (Prokosz 2000, 70). Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak (2007, 222) delineates three areas for defining this concept, namely, structural, functional and attributive. A structural definition is exemplified by Aleksander Kamiński's (1972, 297) assertion that "free time is the segment of the time budget that is not allocated to regular and supplementary paid work or systematic university education, or the fulfilment of basic physiological needs (sleep, hygiene, meals), or by regular domestic duties and can be used either for leisure or familial activities that bring immediate benefits". Functional definitions of free time emphasize the roles that free time plays or ought to play in an individual's life. An example here is the definition proposed by M. Czerepaniak-Walczak that "free time contributes to personal development and allows to restore and maintain psychophysical balance in the human body" (1997, 29). Attributive definitions, on the other hand, refer to an individual, and underscore the subjectivity of that individual's leisure time (Orłowska and Błeszyński 2016, 20). Małgorzata Orłowska points out that free time is profoundly influenced by the surrounding environment and the associated culture (2007).

Bohdan Jung (1987) proposed a comprehensive definition of free time, indicating its several categories: a) psychological-subjective definitions – free time is equated with the "act of contemplation" and "style of conduct;" b) residual definitions which perceive free time as a remnant of other types of time (duties, work hours); c) autonomous-personal definitions, based on the essential characteristics of free time; d) normative, instrumental and functional definitions, which regard free

time as all activities undertaken by an individual for rest, voluntary social activity or creative pursuits; e) behavioural definitions, which specifically define free time as any activity conducted outside of work hours; f) hedonistic definitions, which highlight the significance of free time in self-fulfilment; g) economic definitions, which stress that "time has no price" (Jung 1987; Orłowska 2007; Orłowska and Błeszyński 2016). The scope of the present study prevents a more detailed discussion of these definitions. Aleksander Kamiński's idea (1972) is worth noting here.1 It refers directly to J. Dumazedier, a distinguished global authority on the definition of leisure. Aleksander Kamiński perceives free time as a component of time, "free time is (…) part of the time budget" (Kamiński 1972, 297), and he also provided a list of activities that may or may not be classified as free time.

Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak, referring to Aleksander Kamiński's concept, pointed to the core of his interpretation of free time. The author resigned from enumerating the constitutive characteristics of this idea, following Kamiński's example, and instead associated them with an individual's subjective decisions (cf. Ostrowska 1996, 24). Małgorzata Czerepaniak-Walczak asserts that "free time is an interval of subjective existence during which an individual experiences intellectual, emotional and physical well-being (...), absence of any of these components results in the fact that a person's time is filled with obligations or becomes a source of coercion, enslavement and deprivation (...). Leisure time constitutes the fabric of personal existence, affirming one's identity as an individual, while simultaneously providing the opportunity for engagement in the public domain" (2007, 236). A review of the definitions of free time reveals the many perspectives on the subject matter. Gordon Walker and Fenton Litwiller (2011) attempted to ascertain whether the institutional emphasis on research regarding ways of spending free time in North America has changed over the last 20 years (whether it has decreased, increased or remained constant). They compared data for the years 2000-2008, comprising articles and abstracts on this subject with data for the years 1990-1999 previously gathered by other researchers. The conclusion indicates that despite extensive research on free time, institutions exhibit only minimal engagements applying these findings in practice. Jan Pięta presents an extended definition of free time, characterising it as: "that part of the time budget that is not occupied by regular or supplementary paid employment, systematic university education, essential physiological needs (sleep, meals and hygiene), or routine household chores (cooking, cleaning, etc.) and can be used either for leisure, or for family life, social obligations and activities that bring immediate benefits" (Pięta 2014, 25).

In foreign literature, leisure is regarded as an economically unproductive activity undertaken for personal enjoyment (Larson and Richards 1994). It is noted that each person has specific preferences as regards leisure activities and people differ greatly in this respect (Tinsley and Tinsley 1986). The forms and ways of spending free time may change throughout life, with some remaining consistent

[1] A more in-depth approach to the concept of free time was presented in the publication edited by M. Walczak (1996). *Koncepcja czasu wolnego Aleksandra Kamińskiego*.

while entirely new ones may emerge due to factors such as human development and progression through various developmental stages (Raymore 1995). Free time is a social phenomenon that occupies a central place in the lives of young people, i.e., modern adolescents and young adults (Agnew and Petersen 1989). Adolescents and young adults perceive leisure as an activity that brings them a sense of fulfilment (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1984). Moreover, leisure time provides a space in which young people can learn social norms, and which offers them an opportunity to practice and validate their newly acquired skills in a social setting (Fine et al. 1990; Đuranović 2024).

Free time can be indirectly defined by its forms and functions, primarily categorised into recreational activities and play (Dumazedier 1960). Marian Grochociński (1980, 8) distinguished five functions of free time activities: 1) creative – enhancing personality through individual creative endeavours; 2) perceptive – fostering personality development by engaging with and appreciating others' creativity; 3) recreational – restoring and sustaining psychophysical equilibrium; 4) socializing – activities that shape social attitudes; 5) harmful – involving activities that adversely affect participants and may lead to pathologies. Maria Truszkowska-Wojtkowiak (2012, 117) identifies four fundamental purposes of leisure in Polish literature: 1) physical and mental recreation, 2) play, 3) self-development (self-fulfilment), 4) socializing function.

Robert Parol (2009) drew attention to the preventive function of free time, emphasizing that the challenge of facilitating active recreation for students is a major educational concern, and that the structuring of free time is as critical as the organization of academic activities. Proper organization of free time supports the process of upbringing and socialization, thereby constituting a preventive measure facilitating appropriate development of young people's personality (2009, 398).

Teresa Freire (2013) emphasized the importance of free time for youth in the context of developing a constructive identity. She perceived free time in adolescents as an experience that is realized between people and their environment. Individual forms of spending free time depend, in this sense, on the environment in which young people live, as well as on their individual intrapsychic characteristics. Studies indicate a wide range of factors related to free time that influence the development of youth (Verma and Caldwell 2003). Shaw et al. (1995) emphasized the importance of free time for the formation of young people's identity. Linda L. Caldwell (2016) highlights the importance of free time and relaxation for healthy development of teenagers and young adults. Numerous studies indicate the significant importance of free time and rest for proper formation of young people's identity, their mental health and overall well-being. Matthew McDonald et al. (2015) indicate the role of the correlation between narcissism and consumption-oriented behaviours. They also highlight the impact of narcissistic culture on changes in behaviours and forms of spending free time by young people. Research conducted by Anne Becker (2004) on a cohort of adolescent females on the Fiji Islands, demonstrated detrimental effects of watching television on developing patterns related to individual's body image. The research was

conducted on a cohort of 30 young women, 3 years subsequent to the introduction of television on the island. The findings revealed indicated a preoccupation with the body image portrayed in the media and its impact on individuals' perceptions of their own bodies among the examined group. Research conducted by Helga Dittmar (2005) showed that compulsive shopping is driven by the desire to attain the "ideal self" via material possessions. Such difficulties are more often experienced by women, while in men a significant predictor were materialistic values. Kasser and Ahuvia (2002) in a study conducted in a group of students showed that people who attached greater importance to material values exhibited lower levels of happiness, well-being, and poorer indicators of psychophysical well-being. Research conducted at the Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Science in a cohort of 121 young adults aged 18-40 demonstrated a correlation between participation in leisure activities and mental well-being (Grover and Imran 2024). The research revealed that people characterized by the highest physical activity in their leisure time also attained high indicators of mental well-being. Analyses conducted by Miller et al. (2024) presents similar results. The literature aims to demonstrate links between the sense of alienation, the sense of self and the use of mass media, or more generally, the use of advantages of mass culture. Michael Sipiora (2000) points to the relationship between free time devoted to watching television and the feelings of alienation. He emphasizes that contemporary media coverage exacerbates the sense of alienation of modern people. Research including 703 adolescents indicated that free time spent on structured activities correlated with a reduced propensity for antisocial behaviour. On the other hand, engaging in unstructured leisure activities was more likely to incite antisocial behaviours (Mahoney and Stattin 2000). Similarly, interesting results were obtained by Joseph Mahoney in a longitudinal study conducted in a group of 607 boys and girls, which showed that participation in organized extracurricular activities during school years correlated with reduced dropout rates and a diminished propensity for criminal behaviour in adulthood (Mahoney 2000). Longitudinal studies revealed behavioural trends in leisure activities throughout the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood (Raymore et al. 1999, 98-99). The findings of these studies reveal distinct variations in normal behavioural tendencies between the examined men and women. Among the women, the most typical patterns of behaviour in free time were identified as: proactive engagement, diffuse pattern, risk-taking pattern, and home-based activities. The predominant patterns identified among the male cohort are: risky, active (formal) pattern, and diffuse, active (informal) pattern. The literature also emphasizes the importance of free time in children and adolescents as an important element in fostering their creativity and facilitating social engagement (Katavić et al. 2024).

Another question addressed in this article is the topic of narcissism as a strategic concept. An extensive introduction to the issue of narcissism goes beyond the scope of this study, however, for theoretical purposes, a general concept will be presented that is the basis for the conducted study. The conceptual foundation for the examination of narcissism is the NARC model (Narcissistic

Admiration and Rivalry Concept) (Back et al. 2013). Its assumption is to explain the processes behind narcissism, as well as to integrate previous methodologies for addressing it. Matija D. Back et al. (2013, 1013) assert that narcissism is an internally contradictory phenomenon comprising opposing processes. On the one hand, narcissism manifests as self-assurance and a charismatic disposition, which can give the impression of energy and charisma. On the other hand, these individuals tend to show a deficiency in empathy and violent inclinations, which can lead to difficulties in social interactions. This model distinguishes two strategies. The first one is the "tendency to attain social acknowledgement through self-enhancement (admiration strategy), whereas the second one is the propensity to avert social failure through self-defence (rivalry strategy)" (Rogoza et al. 2016, 413). These techniques exhibit unique cognitive, behavioural, and affective-motivational elements (Back et al. 2013; Rogoza et al. 2016). The NARC model delineates two elements of narcissism: admiration and rivalry. This notion is predicated on the premise that the principal objective of a narcissistic individual is to preserve a grandiose self-image. They can accomplish this by employing two distinct social strategies: "the inclination to seek social admiration via self-promotion (assertive self-enhancement) and the inclination to evade failure through self-defence (antagonistic self-defence)" (Rogoza et al. 2016, 414). This approach conceptualises narcissism as a process, indicating that an individual exhibiting narcissistic traits will select one of the aforementioned strategies. "Selection of a strategy may result in social potential (ego-enhancing) or social conflict (ego-threatening), so implicitly reinforcing the chosen course of action" (Rogoza et al. 2016, 414-415).

Research on the relationship between narcissism and diverse leisure activities, particularly online engagement, suggests that people using Facebook are more inclined to attract attention by posting a profile picture featuring captivating material. In addition, they are more likely to use self-referential pronouns in describing themselves and use more words characterised by antisocial intensity (DeWall et al. 2011). Other studies on Facebook users have demonstrated the manifestation of narcissism and self-esteem on this social networking platform. Correlation analyses indicate that individuals exhibiting elevated narcissism and diminished self-esteem engaged more actively on the Internet and utilized self-promotional information (Mehdiziadeh 2010). A study by Eileen Y.L. Ong et al. (2011) investigating the relationship between several aspects of psychosocial functioning and narcissism revealed that narcissism was the most significant predictor of daily time spent on Facebook, applicable to both students and non-students. Narcissism emerged as the most significant predictor of daily logon frequency among non-students. Research in Poland by Paweł Izdebski and Martyna Kotyśko (2012) demonstrated that individuals with and without a profile photo on Facebook had no significant differences in their overall narcissism scores and its subscales. This result parallels the findings reported in this article. Izdebski and Kotyśko (2012, 202) found that various factors differentiated the studied group

regarding narcissism, including: the angle of the photograph, facial expression, the photographer, motivation for posting the photograph, negative self-description, type of educational institution, and duration of Facebook account usage. The study by Marius Vieth and Piet Kommers revealed a strong correlation between Facebook usage, narcissism, and loneliness among a group of undergraduates (2014). It seems interesting that the existing study on the relationship between narcissism and leisure time predominantly focuses on the time spent in the online reality.

The research detailed in the article aimed to identify correlations between leisure time and narcissistic strategies. This study investigates the correlation between intrapsychic characteristics and leisure activities, specifically examining the relationship between the inclination to employ narcissistic strategies (narcissistic admiration/narcissistic rivalry) and leisure activities among young adults.

1. Research problem and objective

Following a review of the existing literature, the following research objective was formulated: Investigate the correlation between leisure time and narcissism in young adults.

Detailed research questions:

1. What forms of spending free time do young adults prefer?
2. Do correlations exist between leisure activities and narcissistic strategies in young adults?
3. What types of correlations between leisure time and narcissistic strategies can be distinguished in the study group?

The following research hypotheses were established:

1. The research participants can be distinguished by various forms of spending free time
2. Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry are correlated with different forms of spending free time.

2. Research method and characteristics of the research sample

The research used a self-developed questionnaire to gather data on how young adults spend their time, in addition to the NARQ-PL questionnaire, which was translated into Polish by Rogoza et al. (2016). The NARQ questionnaire questionnaire comprises 18 assessment items. Respondents provide answers to questions using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Polish adaptation was performed on a large population of adult Poles, demonstrating external validity, reliability, and a consistent factor structure. The authors of the Polish version of the scale indicate that the NARQ questionnaire could serve as an effective instrument for evaluating narcissism (Rogoza et al. 2016).

The study included 122 participants; however, due to incomplete data, the final analysis was based on the results of 102 individuals. The research group was chosen using purposive random sampling. The snowball method was also used. The study was conducted as an online survey. The study participants consisted of students aged 18-26 from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. The majority of the study participants were women. The group consisted of 92 women (90%) and 10 men (10%). The study participants gave their consent to participate.

3. Data analysis methodology

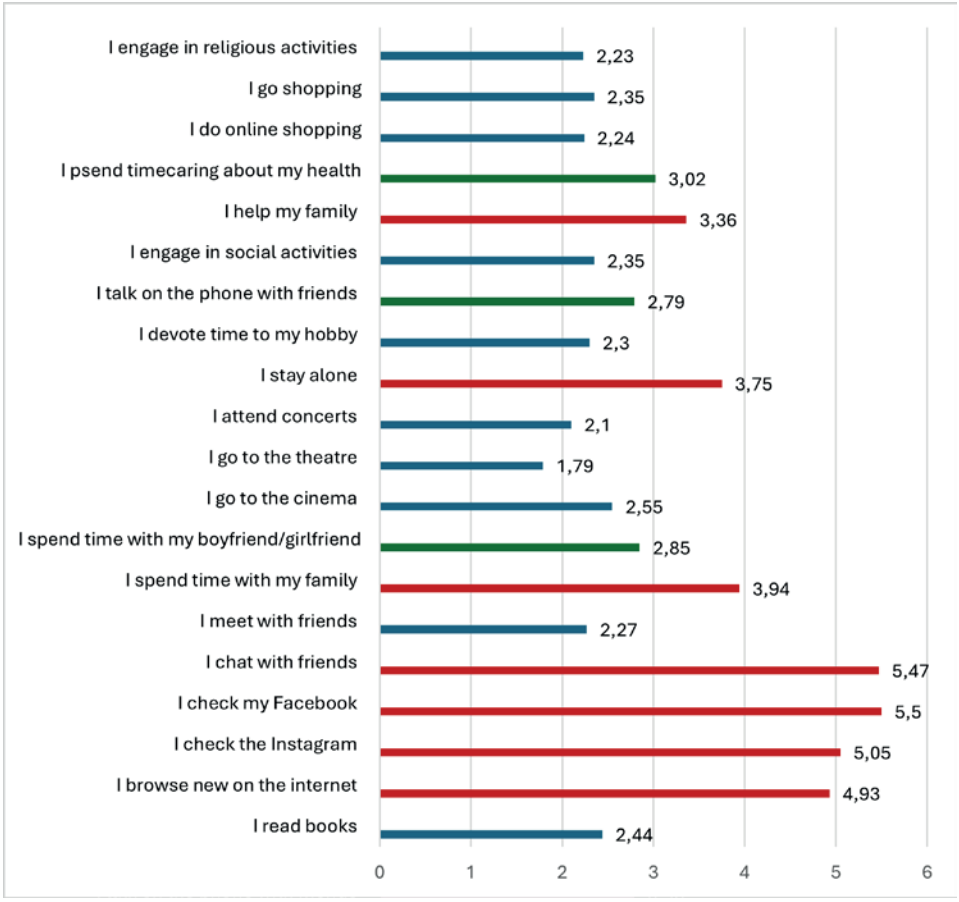
Descriptive statistics for the variables of narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, and leisure activities among young adults were calculated using the SPSS program. A correlational analysis of the examined variables was performed. Particular attention was paid to the correlations between individual narcissistic strategies and forms of spending free time, which pertained to the intended focus of the data analysis.

The presented research findings are part of a larger project conducted among a cohort of young adults.

4. Results

The survey respondents were asked to specify their leisure activities. Chart 1 presents a graphical representation of the overall average results obtained by the participants. The most common ways of spending free time in the group of surveyed young adults included: checking Facebook (M=5.5), chatting with friends (M=5.47), browsing Instagram (M=4.93), spending time with family (M=3.94), spending time alone (M=3.75) and helping family (M=3.36). It is clear that the free time of young adults is organized mainly around online activities. The four predominant responses regarding the way of spending free time refer to engagement in the virtual reality. Another common leisure activity involves spending time with family and, at a comparable level, spending time alone. The next most popular activity undertaken by young adults was spending time with a boyfriend/girlfriend (M=2.85), followed by talking to friends on the phone (M=2.79). It is interesting that remote communication activities are more frequent than direct, live interactions with friends. It seems that these results accurately represent the social functioning of contemporary young people. On the opposite side are the average results regarding the least frequently used forms of spending free time, including going to the theatre (M=1.79) and attending concerts (M=2.1).

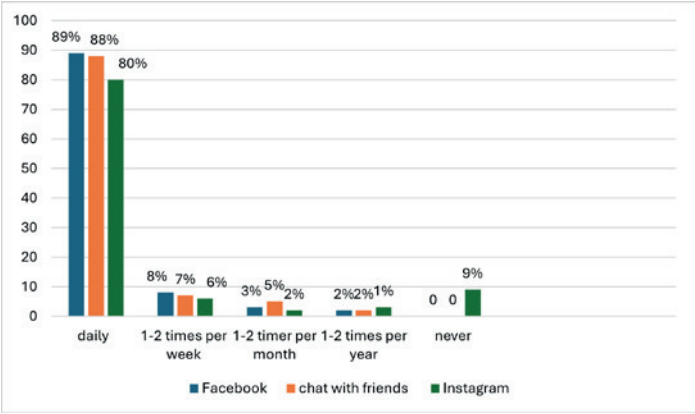
Chart 1. Average scores on how young adults spend their free time



Source: Own research

The following section will present comparisons of results regarding the frequency of engaging in a given form of spending free time. Due to the volume of this study, only results referring to the most common forms of leisure activities undertaken by respondents have been presented. Each listed leisure activity was to be specified by the respondents on a 5-point scale of frequency of its performance: daily, 1-2 times per week, 1-2 times per month, 1-2 times per year, never. Chart 2 presents detailed comparative data on the online activity of young people. These results indicate that, as regards daily activities, the majority of surveyed young adults use social media (Facebook 89%; Instagram 80%,) and chat with friends (88%). Only a few surveyed respondents indicated that they use these forms of free time activities less frequently, i.e., 1-2 times a week, month, year or even never.

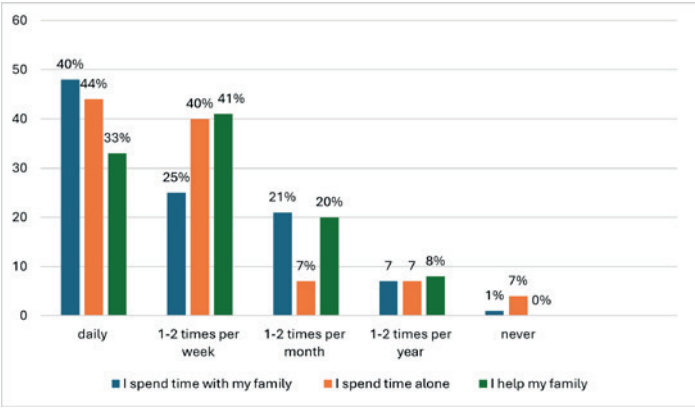
Chart 2. Frequency of responses regarding the amount of free time spent checking Facebook, chatting with friends, and checking Instagram



Source: Own research

The comparisons of results regarding the frequency of spending free time with family, alone or helping family reveal some differences. The results are much more diverse compared to the duration of time spent online. The young people surveyed declared that in more than half of cases they spend their free time daily with family (49% of respondents), alone (44%) or helping family (33%). For a frequency of 1-2 times per week, the most common answer was helping family (41%) and spending time alone (40%). On the other hand, in relation to activities undertaken 1-2 times per month, the most common answers were related to spending time with family (21%) and helping family (20%). The answers regarding undertaking these activities 1-2 times per year or never were much less frequently chosen by respondents.

Chart 3. Comparison of the frequency of responses regarding the amount of free time spent with family, free time spent alone, and free time spent helping family



Source: Own research

The subsequent analysis of obtained results involved a comparison of two narcissistic strategies: admiration and rivalry in relation to leisure activities of young adults. Detailed results are presented in Table 1. The existing literature suggests that the chosen approach of narcissism is likely to coincide with leisure activities in the virtual world. However, the obtained results did not confirm this hypothesis. It turned out that the strategy of narcissistic admiration co-occurs with the following forms of spending free time: going to the cinema (.196*; $p<0.05$) and engaging in activities related to appearance (.236*; $p<0.05$). Both correlations are positive. On the other hand, the strategy of narcissistic rivalry co-occurs with the following forms of spending free time: engaging in activities related to health (.231*' $p<0.05$) and engaging in religious activities, negative correlation (-.375*; $p<0.01$). The latter correlation is the strongest. In the current study, it turned out that none of the narcissistic strategies correlated with spending free time in the virtual world.

Table 1. Correlational links between the strategies of narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry and forms of spending free time by young adults

Forms of spending free time	Narcissistic admiration			Narcissistic rivalry		
	Correlation coefficient	Significance (bilateral)	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance (bilateral)	N
I go to the cinema	.196*	0.048	102			
I engage in activities related to my appearance	.236*	0.017	102			
I engage in activities related to my health				.231*	0.020	102
I engage in religious activities				-.375*	0.000	102

Source: Own research

In the last stage of the analyses, an attempt was made to differentiate comparisons and co-occurrences of individual forms of spending free time in the young adults under research. Detailed results are presented in Table 2. The analysis of the results reveals the following correlational relationships. Using Facebook in free time correlates negatively with meetings with friends (-.219*, $p<0.05$) and pursuing hobbies (-.256**, $p<0.05$) and positively with spending time with a boyfriend/girlfriend (.206*, $p<0.05$) and engaging in appearance-related activities (.251*, $p<0.05$). Using Instagram correlates positively with spending time with a boyfriend/girlfriend (.221*, $p<0.05$). On the other hand, browsing the news on the Internet correlates negatively with talking on the phone with friends (-.207*, $p<0.05$) and positively with browsing Instagram in free time (.255*, $p<0.05$). The research revealed a positive correlation between reading books in

free time and going to the theatre (.236*, p<0.05) as well as going to concerts (.224*, p<0.05). Conversely, behaviours related to spending free time with family correlate positively with helping the family (.443**, p<0.01). Behaviours related to spending free time with a boyfriend/girlfriend correlate negatively with helping the family (-.253**, p<0.01), spending time alone (-.265**, p<0.01) and shopping activities (-.196*, p<0.049).

Table 2. Correlations between individual forms of spending free time among young adults.

Forms of spending free time	I browse Facebook	I browse Instagram	I browse the news on the Internet	I read books	I spend time with my family	I spend time with my girlfriend/ boyfriend
I meet friends	**-.219** *					
I spend time with my girlfriend/ boyfriend	**.206***	**.221***				
I pursue my hobby	**-.256****					
I engage in activities related to my appearance	**.251***					
I talk on the phone with my friends			**-.207***			
I go to the theatre				**.236***		
I go to concerts				**,224***		
I browse Instagram			**.255***			
I help the my family					**.443****	**-.253****
I spend time alone						**-.265****
I go shopping						**-.196***

Source: Own research; *p<0.05; **p<0.01

The results of conducted research confirm the theory concerning the forms of spending free time by young adults. In accordance with the assumptions, the activities are varied, nonetheless, the predominant ones are those related to spending free time in the virtual world, through frequent use of social media. The conducted research and analyses of the obtained data allowed to identify correlational relationships between narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry. The current study revealed that narcissistic strategies had no correlational

relationships with behaviours related to the use of virtual space in free time. This result does not confirm the results of existing research in this area, which suggest the existence of such correlations.

5. Discussion of results

Comparing the results of the conducted research with the data from studies reviewed in literature, discrepancies in the relationship between various dimensions of narcissism and activity in the virtual world become evident. For example, Piotr Sorokowski et al. (2015) conducted a study in a group of 1296 people aged 14-47 revealing correlations between narcissism and the use of social media, particularly in posting selfies, with these correlations being stronger in men than in women. The research by Santokh Singh et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between narcissism traits and the frequency of posting selfies and engaging in other self-promotional behaviours on social media. Global research revealed a substantial correlation with many behaviours in social media, including the frequency of posting selfies, perceived attractiveness of selfies, tagging/commenting/liking behaviours, as well as variables specific to individual social media platforms. This result also confirmed the relationship between narcissistic traits and social media use and engagement. The presented research did not confirm a comparable result.

Silvia Casale and Venessa Banchi (2020) reviewed and analysed 14 articles examining the relationship between narcissism and problematic social media usage. The authors' analyses suggest a hypothesis that narcissism may be associated with problematic use of social media. However, the existing body of research on this subject remains insufficient to, according to the authors, definitively validate such a concept. On the one hand, their review of studies indicates the existence of studies that confirm this assumption, but at the same time, these studies have their limitations which must be considered when interpreting the results. The authors also indicate that the analyses conducted so far did not distinguish between the online platforms used by the respondents, which, in the researchers' opinion, could eventually affect the results. In the research conducted and reported in this article, an initial attempt was made to differentiate the social media used by the respondents. This factor should be taken into greater consideration in future studies conducted in this area.

Previous analyses by Jessica McAin and W. Keith Campbell (2018, 322) demonstrated that grandiose narcissism correlates with behaviours in social networks under certain, but not all, conditions. In yet other studies, it was shown that boredom in free time correlated with increased Internet usage, particularly on forums. This fact may explain the influence of boredom, difficulties in managing free time on surfing the Internet. Narcissism turns out to be a good predictor of Internet usage, particularly on social media (Chi-Him Poona and Wing-Chi Leung 2011), however, in the research data presented in this article could not substantiate these correlations. The respondents examined in the presented group did not demonstrate such correlations.

Research conducted by Małgorzata Niesiobędzka and Karol Konaszewski (2022) including a group of 323 Polish students identified correlations between narcissistic strategies (measured using NARQ), Facebook activity and luxury goods consumption. Narcissistic rivalry directly affects the propensity for purchasing such goods, and narcissistic admiration is associated with self-verified activity on Facebook. It is also linked with difficulties in the psychosocial functioning of young people (Kurtyka-Chałas 2023). In turn, engaging in Facebook enhances acquisition and display of expensive, spectacular products as external indicators of social status. The findings presented in this article contrast with those of Niosobędzka and Konaszewski (2021) in the scope of co-occurrence of narcissistic strategies with time spent using social media (the occurrence of these links in previous studies and the lack of these links in the results of our own research presented in the article). In turn, research conducted by Elke Rohmann et al. (2024) including a group of 149 participants revealed a correlation between narcissism and aggressive online behaviour including trolling (people who secretly engage in aggressive online activities towards other people).

6. Research limitations

The research was conducted using a quantitative methodology for empirical research. This enabled assessment of the variables' levels, as well as the correlations and relationships among them, in line with the formulated research questions. It is worth noting that the group of respondents was moderately large. Initially, a larger number of questionnaires were collected, however, as some were rejected due to being incorrectly or incompletely filled out, data from 102 questionnaires were used for final analyses. For this reason, the presented research results are preliminary in nature regarding the analysis of the subject addressed in the study. However, the provided empirical data serve as a basis for developing further research hypotheses and may facilitate expansion of the study to a larger and more diverse research group. It is also important to extend the formula for enquiring about forms of spending free time in future studies, which will allow for obtaining more varied results in this area in the future.

Conclusions

Considering the results obtained in the conducted research and the analysis of data available in literature, it can be stated that the hypothesis related to the forms of spending free time by young adults was confirmed. These forms are varied and largely focus on virtual activity. Comparative analysis of the relationship between narcissistic strategies and forms of spending free time indicates that the examined narcissistic strategies had no correlation with spending free time in the virtual world. This hypothesis was formulated based on the existing literature review. It turned out that the strategies of narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry co-

occur with non-virtual forms of spending free time. This result appears interesting because of the unforeseen relationship revealed in the presented study. It would be interesting to expand this research with a bigger and more varied research group. The acquired data may serve as an inspiration and incentive for further research into this field.

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SEMINARE

Cyberbullying as a Predictor of Social Anxiety among Students of Faculty of Social Sciences at the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (Nigeria)

Cyberprzemoc jako predyktor lęku społecznego wśród studentów Wydziału Nauk Społecznych na Uniwersytecie Nauk i Technologii w Stanie Enugu (Nigeria)

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Abstract: Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. In fact, comments, photos, posts and contents shared by individuals can often be viewed by strangers as well as acquaintances. Cyberbullying is one of the factors that leads to social anxiety. This study seeks to fill critical gaps in the current literature by examining the relationship between cyberbullying and social anxiety among students of faculty of social sciences in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. One hundred (100) undergraduate students (42 male and 58 female) participated in this study. They participants comprised of. The summary of the findings is that gender, age, department and level were not significantly related to social anxiety among students. Again, cyberbullying was positively significantly related to social anxiety among students. It is crucial to educate undergraduates on the safety of cyberspace.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, social anxiety, prevention

Abstrakt: Cyberprzemoc obejmuje wysyłanie, publikowanie lub udostępnianie negatywnych, szkodliwych, fałszywych lub złośliwych treści na temat kogoś innego. Może obejmować udostępnianie osobistych lub prywatnych informacji o kimś innym, powodując zażenowanie lub upokorzenie. W rzeczywistości komentarze, zdjęcia, posty i treści udostępniane przez osoby mogą być często oglądane zarówno przez nieznajomych, jak i znajomych. Cyberprzemoc jest jednym z czynników prowadzących do lęku społecznego. Niniejsze badanie ma na celu wypełnienie krytycznych luk w bieżącej literaturze poprzez zbadanie związku między cyberprzemocą a lękiem społecznym wśród studentów Wydziału Nauk Społecznych na Enugu State University of Science and Technology w Nigerii. W badaniu wzięło udział stu (100) studentów (42 mężczyzn i 58 kobiet) będących na studiach licencjackich. Wyniki badań wskazują, iż płeć, wiek, wydział i poziom studiów nie były istotnie związane z lękiem społecznym wśród studentów. Cyberprzemoc była okazała się natomiast istotnie związana z lękiem społecznym wśród studentów. Wskazuje się jako bardzo ważny aspekt edukowanie studentów na temat bezpieczeństwa cyberprzestrzeni.

Słowa kluczowe: Cyberprzemoc, lęk społeczny, zapobieganie

Introduction

There are some students who feel nervous and uncomfortable in a social situation especially before making a presentation. Obviously, they suffer from social anxiety. Social phobia, also known as Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), is a mental health condition characterized by an intense and persistent fear of social situations and performance situations. Individuals with social phobia often fear being judged, embarrassed, or negatively evaluated by others, leading to avoidance of social interactions. This disorder can significantly impact various aspects of daily life, including relationships, work, and overall well-being. Social Anxiety is feeling tense, nervous, or frightened in situations that involve other people. Social anxiety is a normal part of life, but it can sometimes have a negative impact on an individual's life (Hope, Heimberg and Turk 2010).

Fear is a basic human emotion. In humans, fear is controlled, in part, by an area of the brain called the limbic system. The limbic system includes some of the deepest, most primitive structures of the brain, structures shared by many less evolved animals. In fact, there is reason to believe that the emotion of fear is present across most, if not all, animal species. Most people use the term fear and anxiety interchangeably. Anxiety is a future-oriented feeling of dread or apprehension associated with the sense that events are both uncontrollable and unpredictable. In other words, anxiety is a nagging feeling that occurs when a person believes a negative event occur in the future and that nothing can be done to prevent it. People who feel anxious tend to dwell upon and ruminate about the possibility of danger (Antony and Swinson 2008).

In a nutshell, we can state that social anxiety disorder is characterized by an intense fear of social or performance situations. In these situations, people with social anxiety disorder are worried about embarrassment, humiliation, or scrutiny by others. Some situations that people with social anxiety disorder often fear include; conversations, meeting new people, calling acquaintances or strangers on the phone, talking to authority figures, expressing a controversial opinion or disagreement, being assertive, speaking in front of a group, participating in a meeting, entering a crowded room, being the center of attention, eating or drinking in front of others, writing in front of others, making mistakes in front of others, etc. (Antony and Rowa 2008).

It is interesting to know that many researchers (for example, Clark and Wells in 1995) have been studying to find out the cause of social anxiety disorder. In fact, some of their results show that social anxiety disorder sometimes runs in families, but no one knows for sure why some family members have it while others do not have it. Researchers have found that several parts of the brain are involved in fear and anxiety. Some researchers think that misreading of others' behavior may play a role in causing or worsening social anxiety. For example, you may think that people are staring or frowning at you when they truly are not. Underdeveloped social skills are another possible contributor to social anxiety. For example, if you have underdeveloped social skills, you may feel discouraged after talking with

people and may worry about doing it in the future. By learning more about fear and anxiety in the brain, scientists may be able to create better treatments. Researchers are also looking for ways in which stress and environmental factors may play a role (National Institute of Mental Health 2016).

There are several factors contributing to social anxiety. Cyberbullying is one of the factors that lead to social anxiety. At this point, we need to ask a fundamental question. What is cyberbullying? Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. In fact, comments, photos, posts and contents shared by individuals can often be viewed by strangers as well as acquaintances. The content share online (both their personal content as well as any negative, mean, or hurtful content) is permanent and it may be seen by classmates, teachers, and relatives in the present or in the future. Cyberbullying can harm the online reputation of everyone concerned: the bully, the victim, the audience (Balloni and Sette 2020).

Cyberbullying is a recent phenomenon and is another form of bullying behaviour. Cyberbullying, like other forms of bullying behaviour, is about relationship, power and control. There is no doubt the nature of adolescent aggression has evolved due to the proliferation of technology and their access to information. As technology evolved, cyberbullying has increased. The impacts of cyberbullying cannot be underestimated. The psychological and emotional impacts of cyberbullying on young people are similar to those of offline bullying behaviours. The difference is that offline bullying usually stops when the school ends. In cyberbullying there is no escape, technology follows into what was the safety of their own home (Chadwick 2014).

The causes of cyberbullying include internal factors such as highlighting the ego to hurt others because they have certain motives and external factors such as communication relationships in the family, peer pressure, revenge, etc. With regards to revenge, the perpetrators carry out the action in several ways. For instance, flaming (anger) which refers to the existence of hatred between two or more individuals who occur through each communication technology. Usually, flaming occurs in public environments such as chatrooms or discussion groups rather than electronic mail. Next is harassment in the form of messages that contain abusive, insulting or unwanted messages, repeatedly sending dangerous messages to someone online (Nurfarhanah et al. 2019).

Undergraduate students access the internet for a variety of reasons. These purposes include creation, such as communicating in online groups or playing games; academics, such as doing assignments, researching scholarships, or completing online applications; and students, who increasingly use the internet for social communications. Victims of online bullying experience negative psychological outcomes such as depression, anxiety, social dissatisfaction, negative school attitudes, and, in some cases, substance abuse, as well as suicide attempts and physical harm (Vaghchipawala 2023).

1. Purpose of Study

This study seeks to fill critical gaps in the current literature by examining the relationship between cyber-bullying and social anxiety among students of faculty of social sciences in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Specifically, it aims to investigate cyber-bullying as a predictor of social anxiety, considering the unique cultural and social factors within this sample population. Furthermore, the study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the behavioral manifestations resulting from cyber-bullying experiences and their subsequent impact on social anxiety. By addressing these gaps, the research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform interventions and support mechanisms to mitigate the negative effects of cyber-bullying and promote the psychological well-being of the above-mentioned undergraduate students.

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have shown interests in our variables of study but we will like to limit ourselves to two theories namely social learning theory and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Social learning theory exists because Albert Bandura felt that that behavioural theory could not explain everything about learning. Bandura was influenced into developing this theory after observing children's behaviour as an adult act aggressively. In 1978, he stated that people are not born with preformed repertoires of aggressive behaviour; they must learn them. Most aggressive activities-whether duelling, military combat, or vengeful ridicule-entail intricate skills that require extensive learning. Virtually all learning resulting from direct experience can also occur on a vicarious basis by observing the behavior of others and its consequences (Bandura 1977). Therefore, this theory emphasizes the function of social conditioning, in particular reference to the way that parental educational systems, social and cultural expectations (of peers and family members) and some reference models (parents, teachers and, friends) exert a significant influence on children (Gil 2001).

On the other hand, Bandura supports the theory that fear and anxiety are learned, but enumerates four social mechanisms for learning: First, fear may be learned through classical conditioning in exactly the same way as described. Second, the proxy experience can be considered important. This process is also called role modeling. Third, symbolic education, which refers to learning through education, reading, or saying that certain things are threatening, painful, or forbidden. Fourth, refers to symbolic logic, which is potentially important in creating anxiety. One may conclude that something is dangerous. This process may be logical or irrational (Orouji and Saeid 2022).

Social learning theory equally offers insights into the relationship between cyberbullying and social anxiety, particularly among adolescents and young adults. In the context of cyberbullying, social learning theory highlights the following points: it

asserts that individuals learn by observing the behaviors of others and the consequences of those behaviors. In the case of cyberbullying, victims may observe aggressive and hurtful online behaviors directed at them, which can contribute to heightened social anxiety (Bandura 1977). Cyberbullying often involves aggressive behaviors, including verbal abuse, harassment, and humiliation (Beth and Bynum 2016).

Cognitive behavioral therapy is based on the concept that our thoughts, perceptions, and emotions all have a strong influence on our behaviour. How we think about a specific situation in our life can directly influence how we deal with it. Cognitive behavioral therapy follows the premise that our thoughts and feelings play a fundamental role in determining our behaviour, and that over time, we tend to develop specific patterns of thinking and feeling. If these patterns are destructive, unhealthy, or unrealistic, they can have a negative impact on behaviour. The way we perceive a situation may have more of an influence on our reaction to it than the situation itself (Wells and Goleman 2021). In the case of social anxiety, negative experiences may reinforce the individual's anxiety and avoidance. Cognitive-behavioral theory assumes that individuals can learn new coping skills and strategies to manage their anxiety.

Cognitive-behavioral theory assumes that thoughts and beliefs play a key role in shaping our behavior. In the case of social anxiety, negative thoughts and beliefs about oneself, others, and can lead to avoidance and other unhelpful behaviors. This theory helps individuals identify and challenge their thoughts patterns. Through this process individuals can change their behaviors and emotional responses leading to improved mental health and overall well-being (Shapiro 2019).

3. Hypothesis

Cyberbullying will significantly predict social anxiety among students of faculty of social sciences in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) undergraduates.

4. Participants

One hundred (100) students participated in this study. The participants comprised of 42 male and 58 female undergraduate students. These students were between ages of 19-23 years, with a mean age of 20.33 and a standard deviation of 1.96. They were selected by making use of availability sample technique from the population of student of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu State. Demographic variables such as gender, age and class were explored.

5. Instruments

Two instruments were used to gather information in this study. They include: Cyberbullying Scale (CBS) (Stewart et al. 2014) and Social Anxiety Scale (Liebowitz 1987; Greist et al. 1995).

6. Procedure

A total of one hundred and thirty (130) copies of the questionnaires on cyberbullying and social anxiety were randomly distributed to the target population. The researchers established a rapport with the participants. To this effect, participants were informed that responses were confidential and that participation was completely voluntary. The administration of the questionnaire took place in their respective classrooms. They were selected by the use of convenient sampling technique from population of undergraduate students from faculty of social sciences; 19 from political science department, 23 from education department, 44 from psychology department, 14 from sociology department in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani Campus, Enugu State. The aim and the nature of the study were explained to the participants, while being assured of confidentiality of their responses. The administration of the questionnaires was done in the various classes during the lecture free periods. The participants were all undergraduates drawn from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The participants were selected making use of availability sampling technique. A total number of 130 questionnaires were distributed, 130 were returned while 100 were properly filled after a recheck and were used for data analysis.

7. Design and Statistics

The design used for this study is cross-sectional survey design; while stepwise multiple regression analysis was the statistics used to evaluate the predictor variable (cyber-bullying) on social anxiety which is dependent variable.

8. Results

Table 1: Correlations of demographic variables (gender, age, department and level), cyberbullying and social anxiety

Variables		**M**	**SD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1	Gender	1.58	.50	--					
2	Age	20.33	1.96	-.29**	--				
3	Department	2.53	.96	-.04	-.12	--			
4	Level	2.37	.85	-.18	.71***	.01	--		
5	Cyber Bullying	40.15	11.75	-.09	.02	-.02	-.05	--	
6	Social Anxiety	31.91	8.68	-.13	.01	-.07	.11	.08**	--

NB: **p < .01, *p < .05

Result of table one above showed that none of the demographic variables, gender (r = -.13) age (r = .01), department (r = -.07), and level (r = .11) have significant relationship with social anxiety among students. Cyberbullying was positively significantly related to social anxiety among students (r = .08, p < .01). The significant relationship implies that an increase in cyberbullying tend to increase social anxiety among students.

Table 2: Step wise multiple regression predicting social anxiety from cyberbullying

Variables	**Step1**	**Step 2**
Gender	-.15	-.16
Age	-.21	-.20
Department	-.10	-.10
Level	.23	.22
Cyberbullying		.08**
R	.22	.24**
R^2	.05	.16**
R^2 change	.05	.26**
F value	F (4,95) = 1.24	F (5, 94) = 1.11

Note: *=p<.05

The results of the Step Wise Multiple Regression in Table 2 above indicated that the demographic variables, gender (β = -.15, p> .05), age (β = -.21, p> .05), department (β = -.10, p> .05, p> .05), and level (β = .23, p< .05) were not significant predictors of social anxiety among students. The demographic variables however accounted for none significant 22% variance as predictors of social anxiety among students (R = .22, p> .05). Cyber bullying entered in step 2 of the equation positively significantly predicted social anxiety among students (β = .08, p< .01). It accounted for significant 26% variance in predicting social anxiety among students (ΔR2 = .26, p< .01). This finding means that any form of bully students get makes them experience more social anxiety. Therefore, cyber bullying is indicated as a potential factor that explains social anxiety among students.

9. Summary of Findings

Gender, age, department and level were not significantly related to social anxiety among students.

Cyber bullying was positively significantly related to social anxiety among students.

10. Implication of the Study

The findings of the study have many implications. In the findings, cyberbullying was positively significantly related to social anxiety among students. Cyberbullying is a common ugly phenomenon that has negative repercussions on students. Social anxiety happens to be one of the negative mental health consequences. Social anxiety is a common negative psychological trait presented by people in real-world or virtual-space interaction situations, specifically referring to irrational fears that individuals have during social interaction due to fear of attention, observation, scrutiny, or evaluation by others. Therefore, cyberbullying experiences exacerbate undergraduate students' negative focus on self and produce negative self-evaluations, further contributing to the worsening of social anxiety (Xia et al. 2023).

Cyberbullying can have serious consequence on the victim like social anxiety. To prevent cyberbullying, it is important to raise awareness about the issue and educate people about its impact. Lecturers in faculty of social science and parents of the students can work together to create safe and supportive environment for the undergraduate students, both online and offline. This can include teaching digital citizenship skills, encouraging open communication, promoting empathy and kindness. Encouraging the students to report to the appropriate authorities if they are being cyberbullied (Altinay and Altinay 2024).

11. Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study centers on the number of the participants. The small sample size may not be good enough to make generalization. Secondly, some students were in a rush in filling the questionnaire without properly going through the items before responding. Due to this reason, some of the respondents were unable to correctly fill the questionnaires. Due to this reason, some questionnaires were invalid and were not part of those used for scoring. Creating rapport with the respondents was difficult, as the students were busy for the forthcoming semester exam.

12. Suggestions for Further Studies

In respect to further studies, the researchers make the following suggestions. Future researchers should consider studying the relationship between age and gender in cyberbullying. Finding out which gender that is believed to be at a higher risk of cyberbullying.

Summary and Conclusion

It is crucial to educate undergraduates on the safety of cyberspace. Today's young people are growing up on a diet of technology with immediate access to worldwide social connections. Because it has become so common in our society for them

to have cell phone, laptop, iphone, ipad, etc. The unfortunate thing is that most times we forget about the window of danger this opens. Many young people have taken their own lives because of abusive acts of cyberbullying. It is of paramount importance for students who experience cyberbullying to seek out support from a school counselor, professional therapist, or an appropriate support group (Kenley 2017). If cyberbullying is reduced, the school environment will have few cases of social anxiety. One the other hand, the students need to work on themselves because overcoming social anxiety equally depend on one's individual personality.

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SEMINARE

"I am Unique, Beautiful, and Exceptional": on Self-Esteem Among Young Women

„Jestem niepowtarzalna, piękna i wyjątkowa", czyli o poczuciu własnej wartości u młodych kobiet

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to present the impact of the sociotherapeutic program "I am unique, beautiful, and special" on the self-esteem of young women in early adulthood. The program was designed to support participants in building a positive self-image, developing self-acceptance, and strengthening their ability to cope with social pressure. The theoretical section discusses the importance of self-esteem and its role in psychosocial development. The research project was conducted using the pedagogical experiment method in a one-group design. This approach allows for the evaluation of changes in the studied variable (self-esteem), thereby enabling verification of the program's effectiveness. The program involved six students of pedagogy and political science from the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, and one cosmetology student from the Olsztyn School of Higher Education. It lasted six weeks, with weekly meetings of varying duration. Empirical data were collected through interviews and observation techniques. The analysis revealed positive changes in self-acceptance, self-confidence, and interpersonal relationships. Participants reported increased emotional openness, better emotion management, and a greater readiness to take on challenges.

Keywords: self-esteem, self-assessment, woman, youth, sociotherapy

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest ukazanie wpływu programu socjoterapeutycznego „Jestem niepowtarzalna, piękna i wyjątkowa" na poczucie własnej wartości młodych kobiet we wczesnej dorosłości. Program miał wspierać uczestniczki w budowaniu pozytywnego obrazu siebie, rozwijaniu samoakceptacji oraz umiejętności radzenia sobie z presją społeczną. W części teoretycznej omówiono znaczenie poczucia własnej wartości i jego rolę w rozwoju psychospołecznym. Projekt badawczy został przeprowadzony z wykorzystaniem metody eksperymentu pedagogicznego w układzie jednej grupy. Taki układ pozwala na ocenę zmian, jakie zaszły w zakresie analizowanej zmiennej (poczucie własnej wartości), a tym samym umożliwia weryfikację skuteczności programu, w którym wzięło udział sześć studentek pedagogiki i politologii Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie oraz jedna studentka kosmetologii Olsztyńskiej Szkoły Wyższej. Program trwał sześć tygodni, spotkania odbywały się raz w tygodniu, a czas ich trwania był bardzo zróżnicowany. Materiał empiryczny pozyskano za pomocą techniki wywiadu i obserwacji. Analiza wykazała pozytywne zmiany w zakresie samoakceptacji, pewności siebie i relacji interpersonalnych. Uczestniczki deklarowały większą otwartość emocjonalną, lepsze zarządzanie emocjami i gotowość do podejmowania wyzwań.

Słowa kluczowe: poczucie własnej wartości, samoocena, kobieta, młodość, socjoterapia

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Introduction

The modern world is full of contradictions, constant change, and an increasing number of threats to both human life and safety. People are facing increasingly complex and difficult situations on everyday basis. Said issues include physical and psychological dangers, disturbances, overloads, as well as emotional deprivation. The loss of the sense of security, lowered self-esteem, lack of supportive individuals in one's life, and the disturbed sense of purpose are just among some of problems faced by today's children, adolescents, and adults (Rozłucka 2022, 26). Individuals characterized by less developed personality traits or character are considered to be more susceptible to negative influences manifesting themselves within the scope of their immediate environment. An increasing number of them require the assistance of specialists, namely – professional sociotherapists. Participation in a sociotherapeutic group allows for the development of proper social relations and bonds, helps restore and improve self-esteem, as well as makes it possible to cope with shyness. Sociotherapy is a specific form of psycho-pedagogical assistance, oriented towards treating psychosocial and emotional disorders and directed at individuals belonging to high-risk groups (Sikorski 2014, 7).

The matter of self-image is discussed within the framework of numerous academic works and psychological studies. Anna Brzezińska (1973, 87-97) defines self-image, or the image of the "self", as the structure responsible for how one perceives oneself. Essentially, it is a way a person "looks" at himself or herself. Said system includes one's knowledge of one's abilities, skills, and traits. Self-image incorporates various components, such as perceptions of one's body and psychological characteristics. The content and its significance change depending on both psychological and social conditions. A person not only constantly discovers and gets to know himself or herself, but also actively shapes his or her self-image (Kon 1987, 37). "Nowadays, the image of oneself is a commonly understood concept of the 'self,' a subject of knowledge just like physical objects, biological world, and other people. Through self-observation and self-reflection, a person gathers knowledge about 'self,' including intelligence, motivation, and social development" (Napora 1999, 13). The presented theory essentially assumes that one needs to thoroughly understand oneself, focus on oneself, and create one's own image basing on the self-assessment of intelligence, motivation, social development, physical appearance, and life achievements (Napora 1999, 13).

One should keep in mind that the formation of a proper self-image begins at birth. In the course of an early childhood, a person evaluates himself or herself basing on pleasant and unpleasant stimuli. These factors overlap, creating a sense of chaos. Through the perception of said stimuli, a child learns about itself. It learns how others, especially parents and close relatives, respond to its body and behavioral patterns (Siek 1993, 296). The next stage when it comes to developing one's self-image is early school age, which is crucial for creating a positive self-image and improving self-esteem. Upon starting a particular school, a child begins to seek answers to important questions, such as: Who am I? What do I mean to others? How do others see me? Who am I important to? Most significant sources of opinions about oneself are family and peer groups. The

child receives feedback from said two groups, compares himself or herself to others, as well as forms judgments and beliefs about himself or herself (Lewandowska-Kidoń 2015, 9). Yet another crucial developmental period is adolescence, a key time for emotional development, during which individuals are especially sensitive to external influencing factors (Biernat and Bąk-Sosnowska 2020, 52). Young people often compare their appearance to that of their peers and to media-created beauty ideals. Girls tend to exhibit greater instability regarding their self-esteem and body image than boys. It is largely caused by the societal evaluation of women, primarily through the lens of physical attractiveness, whereas men are judged basing on physical capabilities (Malinowska 2016, 14-18). The pressure on women to meet appearance-specific standards and constantly compare themselves to various ideals can lead to detrimental changes regarding self-esteem and - consequently - to mood disorders, psychological suffering, depression, as well as eating disorders (Biernat and Bąk-Sosnowska 2020, 52). During the middle school period, there is a significant interest in one's inner experiences and the self as the reflection of the need to understand and evaluate oneself (Kulas 1986, 50-51). Towards the end of adolescence, self-esteem becomes more mature, especially during late adolescence (ages from 16 to 18). Self-esteem is to a significant extent shaped by peer group engagement, integration into social life, adoption of new social roles, and the fulfillment of developmental tasks. Rapid internal changes and increased social demands during early adulthood contribute to the crystallization of personal identity and influence the maturity of self-esteem (Kulas 1986, 65-66). During adulthood, self-esteem gradually improves. Young adults tend to have higher self-esteem than adolescents, which is attributed to growing economic stability (and sometimes – higher professional status), familial stability, maturity, adaptability, as well as emotional stability (Trześniewski et al. 2004, 163-185).

"Self-esteem is one of main regulators of human behavior, influencing individual's attitude toward himself or herself, others, and the surrounding world" (Lewandowska-Kidoń 2015, 13). A key element when it comes to discovering the truth about oneself is undergoing the process of understanding one's "self." The longer we live, the more experience we accumulate. Through observing our behaviors and reactions to various situations in everyday life, we develop self-knowledge, allowing us to self-assess and accept ourselves (Lewandowska-Kidoń 2015, 13-14).

The predominant focus of this article is to showcase changes that have occurred when it comes to the provision of sociotherapeutic support for women in early adulthood who struggle with building a positive self-image and experience low self-esteem. The "I am unique, beautiful, and exceptional" program was developed for women who find it difficult to form close relationships, recognize their strengths, and appreciate themselves. During sociotherapeutic sessions, participants were expected to undergo specific transformations through their social experiences. Those were mainly meant to be changes in perceiving reality, behavioral adjustments, as well as emotional release (Strzemieczny 1988, 18). The participation in the program provided the women in question with the opportunity to improve their self-esteem, self-perception, and interpersonal relationships.

1. Self-esteem building process and group work in sociotherapy

Self-image is considered to be the perception of oneself in words and images. It is a specific image we hold at a specific moment in time. It includes the description of our physical characteristics, as well as our abilities, attitudes, and beliefs (Plummer 2007, 15). Self-esteem is closely linked to our assessment of this self-image. One's specific self-image is formed basing on information from two sources. The first one consists of one's own experiences acquired through activity, which serve as the foundation of self-knowledge. The second one incorporates opinions of other people encountered in daily life (Borecka-Biernat 2006, 79-81).

Self-worth disorders and self-esteem issues that are closely related to said phenomenon are fields of sociotherapeutic work. Experiences that have negatively affected one's self-esteem may be of various nature, but their common features are deep and constantly increase the sense of one's helplessness, lack of ability to impact certain issues, or considering oneself as the cause of all the problems and troubles emerging in life. Societal reality is treated by individuals with low self-esteem as the sole outcome of their undertakings. Such people are convinced that everything happening around them is connected to them and is a direct response to their actions (Szczepanik and Jaros 2016, 33). Interventions in this regard are predominantly oriented towards the notable improvement of participants' overall functioning, mainly by means of supporting personal and social growth by creating more suitable conditions allowing for the fulfillment of their own needs, while at the same time making it possible for them to adjust to and meet societal requirements. Change in participants' functioning is predominantly related to psychosocial sphere of life, which is then visible while interacting with other people. Any changes in terms of personality or mental structures are in the discussed scenario the outcome of reacting to societal conditions. They are indirect in nature, but in favorable conditions, they are the desired outcome of carried out sociotherapy-oriented undertakings (Jankowiak and Soroko 2021, 131).

Improving the overall self-esteem of sociotherapeutic workshop participants is the key element of therapeutic work. It affects their ability to cope with issues and establish new, meaningful relations. The mood that is conductive when it comes to cooperation, self-awareness development, as well as the improvement of strictly social skills is advantageous when it comes to building one's self-worth and boosting one's self-esteem (Jankowiak and Soroko 2021, 140).

2. Sociotherapeutic program and its participants

The way we perceive selves and others is, to a great extent, determined by both cultural and strictly historical factors (Dillon and Benson 2007, 16). Women and girls are frequently being taught to be good at establishing and maintaining relations with others. In some scenarios, the excessive focus on relations, while at the same time failing to develop strong and authentic "I", may be detrimental to women, leading to the feeling of emptiness and being hurt. Yet another aspect deciding who a woman

is and how she is perceived culturally is her appearance. Cultural norms and beauty standards are created in a highly artificial manner, but once they are accepted and adopted, they become affecting women in a very real manner (Dillon and Benson 2007, 17). The "I am unique, beautiful, and exceptional" sociotherapeutic workshop program was designed for women being in their early adulthood, who experience difficulties when it comes to creating a positive self-image and dealing with low self-esteem. Its predominant goal was to make it apparent to young women that self-esteem may impact emotions felt both towards themselves and towards the world they live in on everyday basis. During the aforementioned workshops, women were granted the opportunity of familiarizing themselves with self-esteem elements, ways of affecting their self-esteem, and methods of developing a remarkably high self-esteem, resulting in a higher level of satisfaction pertaining to themselves and their lives. It was also supposed to result in inner peace, greater ability to truly experience the moment, as well as more sturdiness and real passion. Some participants of the program were members of dysfunctional families. Below, the specificity of the participants is presented, together with their key everyday life-related problems.

Paulina

Paulina is a 21-year-old preschool and early school pedagogy student. She was raised in a large, full family. It is also worth mentioning that she was the oldest of five children. She spent her early childhood supporting her mother in taking care of her younger brothers. Said fact directly translated into her remarkable sense of responsibility. However, she had also been struggling with the feeling that the needs of others had been more important than her own. Paulina had often denied herself certain pleasant things and activities, spending money on the family.

The woman in question had a low self-esteem, perceived herself as an unattractive person, and had had significant issues with establishing and maintaining romantic relationships. Even though she had frequently been cheerful and happy, her lowered self-esteem had made it difficult for her to become open to new relations.

Ola

Ola is a 23-year-old pedagogy student, raised as an only child. During her childhood, she had a rather poor contact with her father, who had been spending a lot of time abroad working. The model of a strong, independent woman adopted from her mother became her natural state of being, but had also been the cause of her various problems. Ola had been of the opinion that she could not express any form of weakness. She had refrained from showing emotions and trusting others. What is more, her social life had been almost non-existent. She had been dealing with a highly critical approach towards herself. Each and every mistake had been perceived as a failure, leading to self-esteem lowering. Professional life and achieving remarkable successes had been her priorities, resulting in the imbalance between work and personal life.

Kasia

Kasia is a 23-year-old pedagogy student, raised in a full family, living with her grandparents. Negative experiences related to her two failed romantic relationships

caused her to be disappointed with the opposite sex, leading to replacing the willingness to form stable relations with short-lived ones. Kasia had been dealing with low self-esteem, being the result of school-related experiences, such as mocking and critical remarks of her mother pertaining to her appearance and weight. She had had serious issues with accepting her body. At the time of the workshop organization, her relations with her mother were tense, further decreasing her self-confidence. Kasia would like to fulfill her ambitious goals, but she had not had enough courage to face serious challenges.

Ania

Ania is a 22-year-old pedagogy student, raised in a full family, together with two older siblings. She can be characterized as an outgoing, ambitious person, seemingly happy and carefree. Nevertheless, she has a serious problem when it comes to establishing and maintaining close relations. Fear of closeness caused her to avoid physical contact, which may point to certain difficulties in accepting own emotions. Ania had often been struggling with uncertainty about her abilities, fear of new challenges, as well as with anxiety pertaining to being compared to others. She had also shown difficulties in fully accepting herself. It translated directly into issues with making difficult life-oriented decisions.

Natalia

Natalia is a 24-year-old cosmetology student. She was raised in a full family, together with a younger sister. She can be perceived as an outgoing and energetic person dealing with the issue of accepting her own appearance. Despite having numerous relations throughout her life, most of them had been short-lived, pointing to uneasiness when it comes to establishing more long-lasting bonds. Her lifestyle, filled to the brim with parties and social outings, had been causing issues at work and had led to difficulties in Natalia being truly and fully engaged in her duties. She had been constantly comparing herself to others, which had only strengthened her sense of insufficient worth.

Klaudia

Klaudia is a 22-year-old pedagogy student. She is an only child raised in a full family. She can be described as a calm and ambitious woman. However, she had had difficulties with appreciating herself and her achievements. She had been frequently comparing herself to others, which had typically led to the feeling of being insufficient and to frustration, especially while analyzing successes of her peers.

Klaudia has some friends, but her calm and reserved personality makes it difficult for her to engage in truly meaningful relations. She had been exceptionally critical towards herself and had the tendency to set excessive challenges for herself, leading to exhaustion and the lack of free time.

Agnieszka

Agnieszka is a 25-year-old political science student having three siblings. She was raised in a full family. She seems to be an outgoing person, having a lot of enthusiasm and being surrounded with numerous friends. However, her true self is marked by numerous complexes pertaining to her appearance and life-oriented

achievements. She had been constantly comparing herself to others, which had only strengthened her view of being worse than others around her. It had resulted in a low self-esteem.

Diagnosis in the case of sociotherapy, as pointed out by Jarosław Jagieła (2009, 60-61), is both: "objective (specifying the type of trauma the child/adult has experienced, manifestations of disturbed behavior, and progress in the child's/adult's functioning), and subjective (child/adult exploring relations by interacting with a given therapist and a therapy group) in character." The proper diagnosis makes it possible to plan sociotherapeutic workshops being adjusted to the needs and requirements of the participants.

Table 1. Simplified participant diagnoses

	I-I	I-PEERS	I-ADULTS	I-TASKS
Paulina	Low self-esteem, issues with accepting own appearance, works on thinking positively and accepting herself.	Has limited relations, but keeps some close ones. She is rather open and kind.	She respects elders and finds it easier to establish relations with them than with her peers.	She is afraid of changes, but is also conscientious and task-oriented.
Ola	She is extremely critical towards herself and cannot accept words of kindness. She suppresses her emotions.	She is likely to isolate herself from others, avoiding relations with peers. Critical towards her peers.	Her relations are formal in character. She engages in various support-oriented undertakings, but fails to establish long-lasting bonds.	She is a perfectionist that is overwhelmed with her duties. She likes being appreciated and punishes herself for mistakes made.
Kasia	She has low self-esteem and does not accept her body. However, she tries her best to think positively.	She has numerous friends, but finds it difficult to trust others. She avoids men.	She prefers older individuals. She especially respects her father.	She is a hard-working and engaged person, but is also overwhelmed with duties.
Ania	She seems to have a positive self-perception, but is rather afraid to open up to others.	She is outgoing, but avoids close relations and keeps distance.	She has good relations with older people and has been involved in a number of societal undertakings.	She has been engaged in numerous activities, but is frequently impulsive in nature.
Natalia	She works on accepting herself, but frequently compares herself to others.	She likes to be accompanied by her peers, as she feels that she is being accepted by them.	She respect older people and has a strong bond with her mother.	She tries to perform her duties meticulously, but she is not always capable of doing so.
Klaudia	She expects a lot of herself, but has been learning how to like herself for who she is.	She feels good while being accompanied by others, but she is constantly comparing herself with other peers.	She has good relations with older people and respects them.	She is ambitious, strives for perfection, and is critical towards her own achievements.
Agnieszka	She has certain complexes and fails to accept her appearance.	She is outgoing, supporting, and likes being accompanied by others.	She is empathetic and has good relations with older people.	She is efficient when it comes to dealing with her duties.

Source: own work.

3. Research material and methods

The research project discussed has been carried out using the pedagogical experiment method in a single group design. It has followed the path of pretest – sociotherapeutic program – posttest. Said design allows for assessing changes that have occurred in the analyzed variable (self-esteem). Thanks to that, it allows for the verification of the effectiveness of the program. The research has been aimed at assessing the overall efficiency of the proprietary "I am unique, beautiful, and exceptional" sociotherapeutic workshop with regard to shaping positive self-image and developing self-worth in young women. The predominant advantage of the presented research model is the capability of capturing difference between the starting and end point in the context of undertakings carried out within the scope of the program. The research group has included seven women being pedagogy and political science students, studying at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. One participant has been a cosmetology student studying at the European University of Applied Medical and Social Sciences. The most crucial qualification criteria have been observed or declared low-esteem and emotional issues regarding self-acceptance, societal relations, as well as dealing with life-oriented challenges. The participants have been chosen basing on a prior psychopedagogical diagnosis, pointing to difficulties faced. Workshops were organized in a cyclical manner for the period of 6 weeks at the UWM's Faculty of Social Sciences. They took place once a week and had the form of meetings lasting from 90 to 120 minutes (there were two sessions lasting 180 minutes as well). The program was organized at the end of 2022/2023 summer term. The utilized research techniques involved: in-depth interviews conducted twice, namely – before the start of the program and after its completion (as the form of diagnosis and evaluation), participant observation during sociotherapeutic workshops, narrative analysis of participants' statements, as well as self-diagnosis and self-reflection in the form of short written summaries produced by the participants at the end of the cycle.

The gathered qualitative data have allowed for the comparison of the level of self-worth and methods of creating self-image both before and after the program. What is more, the analysis of change dynamics has also been done. Despite the lack of standardized psychometric tool utilization, program-specific results have been assessed basing on consistent and repeating spheres clearly pointing to improvement in terms of self-acceptance, self-confidence, and interpersonal functioning of the participants. The group was uniform in character when it comes to development and both societal and cultural aspects, which has allowed for the proper analysis of program outcomes. To ensure the proper anonymity of the participants, pieces of information pertaining to them have been anonymized. Each of the women has received a fictional name and their factual data have not been disclosed anywhere. The participants granted their written consent for their participation in the study and for research outcome publication after the completion of their education course.

4. Analysis of sociotherapeutic program results

The predominant goal of the discussed sociotherapeutic program was to increase the level of self-confidence and help developing it in the period of early adulthood. Women participating in the workshops were active and open to new experiences. All the meetings were considered to be valuable and required experiences. Each and every woman took part in all the proposed forms of activeness with remarkable engagement. The initial task of sociotherapeutic program realization was to establish a safe space for the participants to be able to share their thoughts, emotions, and experiences in. The host tried to moderate the work of the group and support the participants in building trust and communicating openly. Yet another step was to define specific fields, in which the participants experienced difficulties pertaining to creating a positive self-image. The goal was to understand underlying causes of such issues and focus on individual needs of all the women. During sociotherapeutic sessions, self-acceptance and positive thinking development techniques were discussed. Practical exercises and role-playing allowed the participants to experiment with new behavioral patterns and reactions. With time, participants started sharing their successes with the host and supported each other in difficult moments. The women realized how important the way of treating themselves every day was. If one takes care of oneself every day and strives to satisfy one's true needs or fulfill certain hidden desires, one has a chance to be happy and feel good about oneself. Both our needs and emotions change, so it is important to be constantly present and attentive to what is happening inside us. During the workshops, the women were taught that self-esteem could be shaped and it was worth striving for that.

Conclusions drawn from the sociotherapeutic program organized for women with lowered self-esteem pointed to crucial tangent points with effects similar to outcomes observed in the case of different programs having similar goals, yet aimed at other age groups. The program organized and developed by Anna Łuszczak (2016), carried out among children aged 11 and 12, focused on developing self-worth basing on six spheres of self-worth proposed by Nataniel Branden. The author highlighted that the participation in workshops allowed children to not only notice and appreciate their strong feats, but also – to understand that one does not have to be ideal to deserve respect and acceptance. A similar process could be observed while working with adult women. They also started noticing value in themselves, which was earlier not manifested or neglected, frequently due to destructive assumptions having their roots in the past. The program developed by Aleksandra Kin (2019), aimed at teens, focused on the role of positive self-image and personal development as elements leading to change in patterns and increasing internal motivation level. Similarly to the proprietary program, in the case of the Kin's one, key role was played by activization-oriented methods, group work, and exercises oriented towards reflection on self-identity and one's future. In both cases, the participants started talking about themselves in a more positive

manner, expressed a greater awareness of own emotions and needs, as well as showed openness to building social relations. Even though target groups of both programs differed in terms of age, societal context and life-oriented experiences, their common denominator was the need to regain contact with one's own worth and rebuild self-trust. Children, teenagers, and adult women required safe spaces, in the case of which they could experience authentic contact, acceptance, and understanding. The key effects of all three programs were the increase of self-awareness, boost of internal motivation to change, and real improvement in both emotional and societal functioning.

A healthy sense of own worth may help achieving a satisfying life. Participation in sociotherapeutic workshops positively affected the participating women, in the case of whom there was the attempt to improve self-worth, create positive self-esteem, create the opportunity release emotional tensions, as well as externalize own emotions and experiences. Below, changes in reality perceptions of the participants that appeared as a result of carrying out the discussed sociotherapeutic program are presented:

Paulina

Before the program: Paulina had been struggling with low self-esteem and the lack of acceptance of own appearance, which had made it difficult for her to maintain and establish relations, especially with men. She had frequently felt anxiety and avoided direct contacts, finding comfort in online-based relations.

During the program: She slowly opened up to the group, willingly sharing her thoughts with others. The key moment was the reflection pertaining to the image of own body and positive feedback received from participants.

After the program completion: Paulina started taking care of her needs, accepted her look, as well as was more eager to engage in both societal and educational activities. She became more self-confident, less concerned about the opinion of others, and more eager to establish new relations.

Ola

Before the program: Ola had been a perfectionist with extremely low self-esteem. She had been critical towards herself, as well as closed to emotions and relations. She had avoided societal contacts, focusing on outcomes achieved and the approval of others.

During the program: She started talking about her own emotions and confessing to difficulties faced. The key moment was naming her needs and abandoning the need to be the best.

After the program completion: She became calmer and more balanced. She started taking care of maintaining a proper balance between work and relax. She established new relations, started dealing with criticism better, and set boundaries.

Kasia

Before the program: Kasia had had a very low self-esteem and suffered from issues connected with body acceptance. She had frequently felt worse than others and avoided confrontation.

During the program: She opened to a group, as well as attempted to talk honestly with her mother. The support of other participants helped her identify improper beliefs about herself.

After the program completion: She was more open and bolder when it comes to relations, as well as was dealing with emotions better. She became aware of the need to relax and take care of a healthy balance between duties and regeneration.

Ania

Before the program: Ania had had a positive self-image, but she had avoided emotional closeness. She had found it hard to talk about emotions, yet she had maintained outgoing and happy demeanor.

During the program: She started confessing to the anxiety related to emotional intimacy. There was a breakthrough when she started talking about her needs and feelings while addressing the group.

After the program completion: She started to be more aware of her emotions and opened to contacts. She started showing initiative more frequently, as well as taking new challenges and developing professionally with increased self-confidence.

Natalia

Before the program: Natalia had had mood swings, difficulties accepting her appearance and tendency to go to parties often, which had negatively impacted her professional functioning.

During the program: She opened to lifestyle-related reflection. The breakthrough was noticing the connection between her mood and self-care.

After the program completion: She stabilized her functioning, changed her eating habits, as well as limited partying. She became more effective at work, started caring about her work, her health, and accepted herself to a greater extent.

Klaudia

Before the program: Klaudia had been very critical towards herself. She had found it difficult to notice her own achievements. She had been comparing herself to others, which had impacted her relations and mood.

During the program: She started learning self-acceptance. The key was to understand that failures were a part of the developmental process.

After the program completion: She became more opened, her attitude changed to a more positive one, as well as she stopped comparing herself to others. She started learning how to relax, appreciate her successes, and become distanced with regard to her failures.

Agnieszka

Before the program: Agnieszka had struggled with the lack of acceptance and numerous complexes. She had been comparing herself to others, as she had felt inferior.

During the program: She opened up to the participants of the group and started talking about her difficulties. There was a breakthrough when she heard from others that she was a valuable and warm person.

After the program completion: She started assessing herself better and functioning more maturely in terms of emotions. She became empathetic, reliable, willing to manage her time better, and more motivated to create relations with the environment.

The major success of the discussed sociotherapeutic program was the increase of the level of knowledge of the participants pertaining to self-worth. The carried out program was met with a remarkable approval from the participants, who were more than willing to engage in workshops, as well as positively assessed the meetings after their conclusion. Basing on observations and the analysis of participant claims, the program resulted in: increase in self-confidence and internal motivation, improved functioning in interpersonal relations, better organization of time, improved efficiency of dealing with various duties, as well as improved readiness to take up new roles and challenges. The course of the program covered several key stages that resulted in increased self-confidence and improved well-being of the participants. During the initial session, it was possible to create the mood of trust and open communication, which was fundamental to further individual work. The identification of specific difficult aspects made it possible to personalize therapeutic approach, adjusting it to individual needs of each and every participant. Mutual success sharing and feedback had a notable impact on building a positive environment, fostering the development of participants. In practical terms, program outcomes have been in line with conclusions drawn from examinations by Leary and MacDonald (2003), who proved that the feeling of self-worth increases as the result of feeling of belonging and societal approval.

Conclusions

The sociotherapeutic program successfully supported women in overcoming challenges connected with low self-worth. The participants experienced important changes in perceiving themselves, which resulted in increased self-confidence and improved societal relations.

The sociotherapeutic program carried out in the group of seven women characterized by lowered self-worth pointed to numerous key mechanisms and dynamics occurring in the course of group work. The mood of acceptance allowed the participants to open up. However, they initially were rather anxious and stressed. Simple, symbolic tools, such as memory cards, turned out to be extremely efficient when it comes to initiating self-reflection and starting internal work on oneself. When it comes to the context of working on self-worth, there were strong emotions. Some women understood for the first time how they had perceived themselves. At the same time, there was a potential for group therapy. Empathy, understanding, and initial forms of emotional support started occurring. The key moment was the exercise pertaining to accepting kind words. It showed how difficult it was for some women to accept the positive image of themselves in the eyes of others. During the sixth session, there was a notable breakthrough. The participants were

more willing and motivated to talk about themselves, their successes, resources, and the need for recognition. Writing letters to self and creating jewelry having a symbolic meaning allowed them to see themselves from a new perspective. They started considering themselves to be valuable individuals, worthy of warmth, attention, and affirmation. Said exercise had a strong strengthening effect. The discussed process showed that the sociotherapeutic group can become a space for transformation – not through rapid breakthroughs, but rather by systematically building relations, authenticity, and the willingness to be seen and heard. The most important effect was not only the improvement of self-esteem of the participants, but also – training the skill of perceiving individual strength, which had been muted by years of experiences, assessments, and internal criticism.

From the scientific perspective, it is worth continuing examinations on the efficiency of sociotherapy in various age groups, with the focus being put on varying societal status. It is also important to compare the efficiency of this form of support with other psychopedagogical approaches. The development of this trend may factually translate into improved quality of life, mental well-being, and the feeling of belonging in groups characterized by a higher exclusion and mental exhaustion risk.

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SEMINARE

Relationship Between Positive Orientation and Experienced Emotions (Internal Acts of Valuation) Among Pedagogy Students

Zależność między orientacją pozytywną a przeżywanymi uczuciami (wewnętrznymi aktami wartościowania) studentów pedagogiki

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Abstract: Since the trend of positive psychology has gained importance in both scientific research and everyday life, increasing attention has been given to identifying the predictors of a happy life and how these can be strengthened. One key concept that has emerged here is that of positive orientation, which assumes that an individual can cope with life's adversities and perceive their life as valuable and meaningful. The aim of the presented research was to search for the relationship between positive orientation and emotional experiences among pedagogy students. It was hypothesised that students with a high level of positive orientation would more often experience emotions associated with self-enhancement, maintaining interpersonal contact and union, focusing on positive experiences and, at the same time, less frequently focus on negative ones. The research employed a correlational research model. Two standardized psychological tools were used: the Hermans' 24-Emotions Scale and the P Scale by Caprara et al., in its Polish adaptation by Łaguna, Oleś, Filipiuk. A total of 114 pedagogy students from various specialisations participated in the study, aged between 19 and 34 (with 8 respondents aged 35 or older). The average age of the respondents was 21.39 years. The survey was conducted online, and participants were selected both purposefully and randomly – the surveys were addressed to pedagogy students at a selected university. Analysis of the collected empirical data revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the level of the surveyed pedagogy students' positive orientation and their experienced emotions. The identified correlations were found to be statistically significant. These research findings may support strengthening skills that lead to effective human functioning – an especially important factor from the perspective of pedagogy students preparing to work with individuals in different stages of development.

Keywords: positive orientation, self-esteem, life satisfaction, emotions, valuation, students, pedagogy

Abstrakt: Od kiedy nurt psychologii pozytywnej przybrał na znaczeniu w świecie refleksji naukowych, a także w codziennych doświadczeniach życiowych, zaczęto się zastanawiać, jakie są predyktory szczęśliwego życia oraz jak ten proces można wzmacniać. Nie bez znaczenia okazała się tu koncepcja orientacji pozytywnej zakładająca, że człowiek jest w stanie radzić sobie z przeciwnościami losu i postrzegać swoje życie jako wartościowe i pełne sensu. Celem przedstawionych w tekście badań było poszukiwanie zależności pomiędzy orientacją pozytywną a przeżywanymi uczuciami studentów pedagogiki. Założono, że studenci o wysokim poziomie orientacji pozytywnej częściej przeżywają uczucia odnoszące

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się do umacniania siebie, kontaktu i jedności z innymi, pozytywnych doświadczeń, natomiast rzadziej odnoszą się do negatywnych doświadczeń. W badaniach zastosowano model korelacyjny. Wykorzystano dwa standaryzowane narzędzia psychologiczne: Skalę 24 uczuć Hermansa oraz Skalę P autorstwa Caprary i in., polska adaptacja: Łaguna, Oleś, Filipiuk. Łącznie przebadano 114 studentów pedagogiki różnych specjalności w wieku od 19 do 34 lat (8 osób zadeklarowało wiek w przedziale 35 i więcej lat). Średnia wieku respondentów wyniosła 21,39 lat. Badanie przeprowadzono z wykorzystaniem narzędzi online. Dobór badanych miał charakter celowo-losowy – ankiety skierowano do respondentów wybranej uczelni wyższej studiujących kierunek pedagogiczny. Z analizy zebranego materiału empirycznego wynika, że istnieje statystycznie istotny dodatni związek pomiędzy orientacją pozytywną badanych studentów pedagogiki a przeżywanymi przez nich uczuciami. Przeprowadzone korelacje okazały się istotne statystycznie. Wyniki badań mogą przyczynić się do wzmacniania umiejętności prowadzących do dobrego funkcjonowania człowieka, co wydaje się ważne z perspektywy studentów pedagogiki przygotowujących się do pracy z ludźmi w różnym okresie rozwojowym.

Słowa kluczowe: orientacja pozytywna, samoocena, satysfakcja z życia, uczucia, wartościowanie, studenci, pedagogika

Introduction

Positive orientation refers to a basic tendency to notice, focus on, and give weight to the positive aspects of human life (Caprara 2009). It plays a key role in adaptive functioning and contributes to perceiving one's life as satisfying. Moreover, it also enhances the likelihood of achieving life goals, thus improving the individual's subjective, assessment of their quality of life (Caprara 2009). According to Caprara (2010, 318), personality is a "complex system of psychological cognitive, emotional, and behavioural structures whose functioning depends on synergistic interactions between many subsystems." While personality is a relatively stable structure, it also changes throughout life. It seems, therefore, that the emotions we experience and the meaning we assign to them can influence our perception of life quality.

The theory of positive orientation developed by Caprara et al. (2009) is based on the basic assumption that individuals possess an innate predisposition to view themselves, their lives and their futures in a positive light. Such a perspective supports people's ability to cope with challenging or new situations, despite sometimes tragic adversities, failures, personal loss, and finally the vision of aging and death. The concept of positive orientation has been confirmed in empirical studies, and it is recognized as a predictor of optimal human functioning, and a protective factor against mental health conditions, especially depression (Caprara, Alessandri and Barbaranelli 2010).

Beck's cognitive models include the belief that dysfunctional and negative thinking affects the mood, emotions and behaviour of individuals struggling with mental health disorders (Beck 2012). Therefore, nurturing a more positive outlook and focusing on the constructive aspects of life, may increase the probability of experiencing pleasant emotions.

1. The Concept of Positive Orientation

Classical theories of personality often focused on an individual's developmental potential, health, life satisfaction, and a sense of happiness. Fromm (1996), for example, wrote about the syndrome of a person flourishing through love for life, a positive attitude towards others, and a sense of freedom and independence. It turns out that in recent years, psychology has increasingly returned to themes already signalled by the classics, largely due to the emergence of positive psychology by Seligman (Seligman et al. 2005), who has been promoting a new approach since the early 2000s. This concept shifted attention towards a person's internal resources and strengths. Positive psychology seeks to understand how to evoke positive emotions in a person, how to use their advantages and virtues in order to increase their sense of overall happiness and make this state of happiness as lasting as possible.

Positive psychology has given rise to the concept of positive orientation (POS), developed by Gian Vittorio Caprara – an Italian psychologist from the Sapienza University of Rome (Caprara 2009; 2010). According to Caprara, positive orientation is a stable personality trait, reflecting a general tendency to perceive all life experiences with a positive attitude (Caprara et al. 2010; Caprara et al. 2012). Moreover, positive orientation plays a major role in adaptive functioning, as it encourages favourable self-evaluation, high life satisfaction and confidence in one's ability to achieve goals. This, in turn, translates directly into greater commitment to life aspirations and a high assessment of the quality of one's life (Caprara 2009; Caprara et al. 2012).

Research has demonstrated that positive orientation may be understood as a "syndrome of good functioning". It has also been found that there is a relationship between positive orientation and perception of health, belief in self-efficacy, and both cognitive and emotional aspects of subjective well-being (Łaguna, Oleś and Filipiuk 2011, 48). Therefore, the basis of the assumptions of positive orientation is the belief that a positive perception of oneself as well as of present and future life circumstances is a key predisposition that plays an important biological function. The aim here is to cultivate a state in which individuals remain motivated to cope with life's challenges despite failures, adversities and the awareness of mortality (Sobol-Kwapińska 2015).

2. Theoretical Foundations of the Affective Component of Valuation

Over the past four decades, researchers have become increasingly interested in the concept of the valuation process. This term refers to the act of making a free choice among various alternatives, after considering their potential consequences. Such a choice is typically viewed positively by the individual and is also accepted by others. Acting consistently with this choice, along with the reinforcement of a behavioural pattern, is also regarded as important (Raths, Harmin and Simon 1978, 27-28).

As Oleś points out, the notion of valuation may be understood more broadly – as a process of assigning meaning. For example, by analysing how general values are interpreted, we can compare the personal significance attached to them by different people and explore how various social groups understand specific values (Oleś 2002, 65).

Valuation is a specific category of meaning corresponding to the interpretation of some part of personal experience. (Chmielnicka-Kuter, Oleś, and Puchalska-Wasyl 2009, 8). Such a reflective and conscious interpretation of experience has been termed as *valuation* by a Dutch psychologist, Hubert Hermans. The researcher drew attention to a thoughtful and careful approach to "that aspect of the situation that the individual feels is currently important in his or her life" (Hermans as cited in: Oleś 1992, 8). Hermans emphasizes that each person possesses a system of personal meanings, consisting of individual experiences that hold significance within a particular temporal and spatial context.

To sum up – valuation represents a unit of meaning – a narrative that contributes to the construction of a person's life story (Hermans and Oleś 1996; Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 2000). Importantly, the content of each unit of meaning (narrative) is subjectively meaningful, shaped by the individual's personal significance grounded in specific time and place (Błaszczak and Oleś 2002, 56). The significance of valuation lies in the fact that each act of valuation has an affective connotation. This means that each unit of meaning is emotionally charged. In general, two categories of emotions can be distinguished: positive emotions (P) and negative emotions (N). Analysis of these emotions (experiences) allows to understand their interrelations. The emotional component of valuation helps to identify the most characteristic affects associated with a particular experience, which in turn give that valuation its distinctive emotional tone. This emotional configuration should be interpreted and understood (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 2000, 27), and the balance of positive and negative emotions within it should be characterised (Oleś 1992, 10). Through this process, we can construct a emotional profile that reveals underlying personal motives. These may be implicit, constantly active, or even unconscious aspects of human experience. Two such motives are especially relevant: the motive of self-enhancement (S), which involves self-expression and personal autonomy and the motive of contact and union with others (O), reflecting the need for closeness with people and with the surrounding world (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 2000, 31-33, 57-58). Hermans argues that each valuation implies a specific emotional pattern "that is characteristic of that specific valuation. When we know what kind of emotions follow a specific valuation, we know something about that valuation itself" (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 2000, 31). The experienced feelings and emotions demonstrate an individual's capacity for self-awareness and reflection and are also seen as components of a broader system of information processing (Clore, Schwarz and Conway 1994) Therefore, valuation can be understood as a specific process of constructing meaning based on interconnected actions and events, each referencing and influencing the other (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 2000, 34).

3. Relationship Between Positive Orientation and Experienced Emotions (Internal Acts of Valuation) – Research Review

The concept of positive orientation has been gaining importance in recent years. Numerous studies have explored its relationships with various psychological variables. Researchers, apart from analysing the structure of positive orientation, have also sought to examine its correlations with other personality traits and aspects of psychological functioning. In 2010, Caprara – the originator of the concept – and his research team, investigated the shared underlying dimension of self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism (Caprara 2010). In subsequent studies, Caprara et al. (2012) examined the relationship between the results of the Positive Orientation Scale and the Big Five personality traits. Across all study groups, they identified significant positive relationships between positive orientation and the Big Five traits. Further research explored correlations between positive orientation and organisational behaviours (Alessandri, Caprara and Tisak 2012), self-enhancement motivation (Caprara et al. 2013), and sense of self-efficacy (Caprara, Alessandri and Barbaranelli 2010). Findings indicated that individuals who believe that they can control their emotions also tend to feel more capable in managing interpersonal relationships, which means that their positive orientation is more stable and resilient (Caprara, Alessandri and Barbaranelli 2010).

Valuable contributions have also come from Polish psychology. Łaguna, Oleś and Filipiuk (2011) drawing on their research, demonstrated that positive orientation is negatively correlated with emotions of hopelessness and positively correlated with basic hope as defined in Trzebiński's approach.

Other Polish studies found that positive orientation correlates with a sense of efficacy and positive affect, as well as with the sense of meaning in life. Conversely, negative correlations were observed with neuroticism, and positive correlations with extraversion and conscientiousness (Zawadzki et al. 1998).

Bieniek (2013) examined the extent to which youth engagement in religious practices influences the level of positive orientation. The findings indicated that participation in spiritual retreats increased the level of positive orientation among girls, although this relationship was not observed among boys.

In numerous studies to date, however, correlations between positive orientation and emotional experiences – or internal acts of valuation – have not been examined. Therefore, this article aims to address this gap by investigating the potential relationships between these two variables.

4. Methodological Assumptions

The main objective of the present research was to examine the relationship between positive orientation and the experienced emotions (understood as internal acts of valuation) among pedagogy students. In line with this objective, the following research questions were formulated.

Main research question:

Is there a relationship between positive orientation and the experienced emotions (internal acts of valuation) of pedagogy students?

Detailed problems:

1. Is there a relationship between positive orientation and emotions related with the motive of self-enhancement?
2. Is there a relationship between positive orientation and emotions related to the motive of contact and union with others?
3. Is there a relationship between positive orientation and emotions related to positive experiences?
4. Is there a relationship between positive orientation and emotions related to negative experiences?

A review of literature on positive orientation and internal acts of valuation provides the basis to formulate the following hypotheses. They present proposed answers to the aforementioned research questions and concern the existence and strength of the correlation between the variables.

Main hypothesis:

There is a relationship between positive orientation and the experienced emotions (internal acts of valuation) of pedagogy students.

Specific hypotheses:

1. Pedagogy students with a high level of positive orientation are more likely to experience emotions related to the motive of self-enhancement.
2. Pedagogy students with a high level of positive orientation are more likely to experience emotions related to the motive of contact and union with others.
3. Pedagogy students with a high level of positive orientation are more likely to experience emotions related to positive experiences.
4. Pedagogy students with a high level of positive orientation less likely to experience emotions related to negative experiences.

The research used a correlational research model. Two tools were used:

– Hermans' 24-Emotions
– ScaleP-scale

To examine the emotional component of pedagogy students, **Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale** was employed. Each affective term included in the scale may be associated with various acts of valuation expressed by an individual. The list comprises the following 24 affective states: joy (P) care (O) sense of inferiority (N) helplessness (N) love (O) intimacy (O) sense of self-worth (S) internal breakdown (N) sense of security (P) fear (N) tenderness (O) anger

(N) satisfaction (P) guilt (N) pride (S) sense of strength (S) self-confidence (S) energy (P) shame (N) loneliness (N) inner peace (P) pleasure (P) trust (P) and sense of freedom (P).

Participants were asked to rate, on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 5 (very much), the extent to which each of the 24 emotions described the valuations they were reflecting on. This assessment enables the calculation of several indicators for each valuation, the core which are (Hermans 1991; Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 1999; Hermans and Kempen 1993):

S – the sum of scores for emotions reflecting a tendency towards self-enhancement (S for "self").

O – the sum of scores for emotions concerning contact and union with others (O for "other").

P – the sum of scores for generally positive emotions.

N – the sum of scores for generally negative emotions.

Scores for the S and O indicators range from 0 to 20, while scores for P and N range from 0 to 40. Together, the four indicators (S, O, P, N), calculated for a particular valuation, form its affective pattern. Based on this pattern, various types of valuation can be distinguished. The most significant of them are (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 2000):

- +S – *autonomy and success* occur when emotions related to self-enhancement dominate over emotions related to contact and union with others (S-O ≥ 6), and positive emotions prevail over negative ones (P-N ≥ 10).
- -S – *aggression and anger*: – present when emotions related to self- enhancement dominate over emotions related to contact and union with others (S-O ≥ 6), but, at the same time, negative emotions prevail (N-P ≥ 10).
- +O – *union and love*: when emotions related to contact and union with others dominate over emotions related to self- enhancement (O-S ≥ 6), and positive emotions prevail over negative ones (P-N ≥ 10).
- -O – *unfulfilled longing*: when emotions related to contact and union with others dominate over emotions related to self-enhancement (O-S ≥ 6), yet negative emotions prevail (N-P ≥ 10).
- -LL – *helplessness and isolation*: when the both self-enhancing and relational emotions related to contact and union with others are suppressed (S and O ≤ 7), which gives rise to negative emotions (N-P ≥ 10).
- +HH – *strength and union*: when the both self-enhancing and relational emotions related to contact and union with others are fulfilled (S and O ≥ 12), which gives rise to positive emotions (P-N ≥ 10).

The Self-Confrontation Method allows for the calculation of these indicators, which help to characterize the emotional and motivational quality of a person's experience. It is worth noting that if no clear dominance of positive (P) or negative (N) emotions is observed, the valuation is considered *ambivalent* (+/–), regardless of the S and O values.

The study also used the **Positive Orientation Scale (P Scale)** developed by Caprara et al., and adapted into Polish by Łaguna, Oleś, Filipiuk. This tool is used to examine positive orientation as a fundamental disposition to notice and value positive aspects of life, experience and self. The reliability of the scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, ranges from 0.77 to 0.84. The P-scale consists of 8 eight diagnostically significant statements. Respondents indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree; with one item (statement 4) being reverse-scored. The total score, ranging from 8 to 40, reflects the overall level of positive orientation – the higher the score, the stronger the orientation.

Both the Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale and the Positive Orientation Scale were used in this research, alongside sociodemographic variables. Data analysis included basic descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk tests, correlation analyses with Pearson's r coefficient and Spearman's ρ rank correlation. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was also calculated for the data collected during the study.

The selection of study participants was based on a purposive-random sampling criterion. For the purposes of this research, one university in the Podlaskie Voivodeship – the Faculty of Education at the University of Białystok – was purposefully selected. Students specialising in various fields of pedagogy were randomly selected. A diagnostic survey method was used and a survey questionnaire containing the P Scale and Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale was developed. The survey questionnaire was developed on the Google Forms platform and then distributed to students with a request to complete and return it. The questionnaire also included sociodemographic variables.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of study participants (based on the adopted independent variables)

Total	N										%									
	114										100									
Sex	M										F									
	N				%						N				%					
	4				3.5						110				96.5					
Age	19-22				23-26				27-30			31-34				35 or more				
	N		%		N		%		N		%	N		%		N		%		
	58		51		40		35		3		2,6	5		4.3		8		7		
Year of study	I MA				II MA				I 5-years' MA			II high school				III high school				
	N		%		N		%		N		%	N		%		N		%		
	44		38		4		3.5		27		23.6	32		28		7		6.1		
Specialty	Preschool and Early School				Care and Education Pedagogy				Cultural Animation with Art Therapy							Resocialization Pedagogy				
	N		%		N		%		N		%					N		%		
	70		61.4		25		21.9		10		8.7					9		7.9		

Source: Own research

The research was conducted at the turn of 2022 and 2023, with a total of 114 participants ultimately taking part. Half of the respondents were young adults aged between 19 and 22 (50.1%), while nearly one in three (35%) were aged between 23 and 26. The vast majority of respondents (61.4%) were enrolled in Preschool and Early School Pedagogy. All respondents were full-time (daytime) students.

5. Results of Own Research

At the beginning of the statistical analysis, the distribution of the studied variables was examined against normal distribution using the W. Shapiro-Wilk test. The results of the analysis allowed to select appropriate tests for further data analysis.

It is also worth noting here that the measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) were relatively consistent with one another, and the standard deviations were generally low (with the exception of the variable N – emotions considered negative), which indicates that the respondents' answers were quite focused around the average with the extreme values (outliers) having little impact on them.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics – P Scale and Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale

Values	Total of P-scale	Total score N	Total score O	Total score P	Total score S
Mean	27.9649	19.3947	14.9912	27.3947	11.8246
Median	28.00	20.0000	16.00	29.00	12.0000
Dominance	28.00	12.00	17.00	29.00	13.00
Standard deviation	5.64892	7.52061	3.85924	5.95799	3.29989

Source: Own research

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was also calculated for the data collected during the study to confirm the reliability of the given scales, and specifically to what extent the answers given by respondents were consistent within the individual scales.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha P-Scale	Cronbach's alpha Subscale N	Cronbach's alpha Subscale S	Cronbach.s alpha Subscale O	Cronbach's alpha Subscale P
0.853	0.844	0.804	0.821	0.858

Source: Own research

As indicated by the data in Table 3, the study demonstrated high reliability and the results across individual variables are quite similar. The highest level of reliability was noted in the variable relating to emotions regarded as positive (indicator P – positive emotions).

The relationship between positive orientation and emotions experienced among pedagogy students

To examine the relationship between positive orientation and emotions experienced by pedagogy students, the Pearson *r* linear correlation coefficient was calculated. Correlations were also sought between the variables of the P Scale and the subscales of the Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale (S – emotions expressing a tendency towards self-enhancement (*S* from *self*); O – emotions related to contact and union with others (*O* from *other*); P – emotions generally considered positive; and N – emotions generally considered negative).

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. The conventional threshold of statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. In addition, results with probability values within the range of $0.05 < p < 0.1$ were interpreted as indicative of a statistical trend.

The analysis of research results revealed a statistically significant relationship between positive orientation and emotions experienced by pedagogy students (Table 4).

The findings indicated that a higher level of positive orientation was positively correlated with both self-enhancing emotions and positive emotions. The correlation between the P Scale and the S subscale was r=0.752 with a confidence level of p<0.05, while the correlation between the P Scale and the P subscale (positive emotions) was r=0.741 with p<0.05. A further significant relationship was identified between positive orientation and emotions related with contact and union with others (r=0.458 with p<0.05). In contrast, the correlation between the P Scale and emotions generally regarded as negative was negative (r=-0.584 with p<0.05), indicating an inverse relationship.

Table 4. Relationship between the P Scale and Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale (Pearson's linear correlation coefficient)

		Hermans' 24-Emotions Scale			
		Subscale N	Subscale S	Subscale O	Subscale P
Scale P	r	-0.584	0.752	0.458	0.741
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000

Correlation significant at 0.05 level (bilateral).

Source: Own research

The analysis of the collected empirical data indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between the positive orientation of the surveyed pedagogy students and their experienced emotions. This is demonstrated by the correlations found between scores on the Positive Orientation Scale and the subscales S, P and O of the Hermans' 24 Emotions Scale.

Conclusions

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between positive orientation and emotions experienced by pedagogy students. It was hypothesised that students with a high level of positive orientation would more frequently report emotions linked to self-enhancement, contact and union with others, and positive experiences, while being less likely to report negative emotions.

The basic assumption of the theory of positive orientation is that when individuals perceive themselves, their present and future in a positive light, they are more capable of coping with difficulties, managing adversities and pursuing increasing levels of well-being (Alessandri, Caprara and Tisak 2012). Experiencing positively connoted emotions plays a crucial role in this process. Emotions shape our inclination to reflect on ourselves, others and the world around us; they can be uplifting and empowering, or, conversely, disheartening and isolating. Based on this, a hypothesis was proposed that positive orientation would correlate with experienced emotions in the subscales (S – emotions reflecting self-enhancement, O – emotions related to contact and union with others, P – emotions generally considered positive, N – emotions generally considered negative).

The more positive the experienced emotions, the more focused on strengthening oneself and on friendly contact with others, the greater the tendency to positively perceive, evaluate and construct one's own life, one's future and oneself (Caprara, Alessandri and Eisenberg 2012).

Given that analysis of the existing literature does not explicitly confirm (or deny) such relationships, the present study aimed to fill this gap by indicating the relationship between positive orientation and experienced emotions of pedagogy students. A total of 114 pedagogy students participated in the survey, the majority of whom were women (n=110).

The research findings provide the basis for formulating the following conclusions. At the outset, it is worth noting that all hypotheses were confirmed, and the correlations were statistically significant. Detailed conclusions are presented below:

- Hypothesis 1 was confirmed: it turned out that pedagogy students with higher levels of positive orientation more frequently experienced emotions related to the motive of self-enhancement.
- Hypothesis 2 was confirmed: the research proved that pedagogy students with higher levels of positive orientation more often report emotions related to the motive of contact and union with others.

- Hypothesis 3 was confirmed: pedagogy students with higher levels of positive orientation more frequently report emotions related to positive experiences.
- Hypothesis 4 was also confirmed: pedagogy students with high positive orientation less often experience emotions related to negative experiences.

The teaching profession is one in which an individual's attitude to life not only influences their own well-being but also plays a crucial role in shaping the life attitudes of young people – pupils, students, wards. A teacher who lacks the internal resources to view their life positively is unable to promote among young people an attitude to life in which setbacks are viewed as simply obstacles to overcome, rather than causes for depressive episodes or a sense of meaninglessness of life. The findings of conducted research indicated the relationship between positive orientation and the emotions experienced by pedagogy students. They also align with the work of G.V. Caprara et al. (2010), who found that positive orientation is positively correlated with experienced emotions. Positive orientation is largely responsible for adaptive functioning because it is associated with positive self-esteem, high satisfaction with life and high assessment of the quality of life (Łaguna, Oleś and Filipiuk 2011). It is therefore an essential personal resource that helps build a fulfilling life.

This is particularly significant for educators, who work closely with children and young people – individuals at a formative stage of personality development. Teachers have the power either to help children recognize and cultivate their potential, strengthen their self-esteem and satisfaction with life or, conversely, to hinder the development of even innate abilities and predispositions.

The presented own research has its limitations. The sample size was relatively small and dominated by young women, mostly first-year students at a single university, the vast majority of whom were enrolled in Preschool and Early School Pedagogy. Future studies, would therefore benefit from a broader and more diverse sample, including other pedagogical specializations, or different locations of universities. The form of study may also be significant. It is possible that students of part-time studies would present different levels of positive orientation or experienced emotions.

The findings of the presented study confirm that positive orientation is correlated with positive emotional experiences. These in turn support positive life experiences, enhance awareness of internal resources and promote openness towards others. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider how positive emotions can be cultivated and under what conditions they arise. In line with the assumptions of positive orientation, fostering such emotional states may equip individuals to better cope with life's challenges, even those that are especially demanding.

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SEMINARE

Ways to prevent difficulties in choosing a secondary school in the opinion of vocational teachers

Sposoby zapobiegania trudnościom w wyborze szkoły ponadpodstawowej w opinii nauczycieli przedmiotów zawodowych

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Abstract: Students standing on the third educational threshold when deciding to continue their education at a technical secondary school are obliged to choose a profession. This choice should be dictated by their professional predispositions and interests, which should be identified already in primary school. A wrong decision may have consequences for the student in the future in the form of educational failures, e.g. not receiving a certificate confirming qualifications in the profession, which entitles to practice the profession, school drop-out. According to CKE data, in the last three years the pass rate at the exam confirming qualifications in the profession did not exceed 79%, with the practical part being more difficult for the passers than the written part. A rational decision will increase the pass rate at exams and reduce educational failure. This paper presents the results of a self-study conducted in Polish secondary schools, which aimed to find out how to prevent difficulties in choosing a secondary school in the opinion of teachers of vocational subjects. The qualitative research used the interview method. The analysis of the research material was conducted using the MAXQDA 2022 programme. In the opinion of teachers of vocational subjects, effective solutions to prevent difficulties in choosing a post-primary school and a course of study should be sought in both the family and school environment. A number of solutions were presented, the implementation of which in primary and secondary school as well as in the family environment would improve the decision-making process and ease the transition to secondary school.

Keywords: Polish secondary school, technical school, choice of secondary school, transition, third educational threshold, career counselling, decision-making process.

Abstrakt: Uczniowie stojący na III progu edukacyjnym, decydując się na kontynuowanie edukacji w technikum, zobligowani są do wyboru kierunku kształcenia. Wybór ten powinien być podyktowany ich predyspozycjami zawodowymi i zainteresowaniami, które powinny być rozpoznane już w szkole podstawowej. Niewłaściwie podjęta decyzja może mieć dla ucznia konsekwencje w przyszłości w postaci niepowodzeń edukacyjnych, np. nieotrzymania świadectwa potwierdzającego kwalifikacje w zawodzie, które uprawnia do wykonywania zawodu. Zgodnie z danymi CKE w przeciągu trzech ostatnich lat zdawalność na egzaminie potwierdzającym kwalifikacje w zawodzie nie przekroczyła 79%, przy czym trudniejsza dla zdających okazała się część praktyczna w porównaniu do części pisemnej. Racjonalnie podjęta decyzja zwiększy zda-

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walność na egzaminach i zredukuje niepowodzenia edukacyjne. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań własnych przeprowadzonych w polskich szkołach średnich, których celem było poznanie sposobów zapobiegania trudnościom w wyborze szkoły ponadpodstawowej w opinii nauczycieli przedmiotów zawodowych. W badaniach jakościowych wykorzystano metodę wywiadu. Analizę materiału badawczego przeprowadzono z wykorzystaniem programu MAXQDA 2022. W opinii nauczycieli przedmiotów zawodowych skutecznych rozwiązań zapobiegających trudnościom w wyborze szkoły ponadpodstawowej i kierunku kształcenia należy szukać zarówno w środowisku rodzinnym, jak i szkolnym. Przedstawiono szereg rozwiązań, których zaimplementowanie w szkole podstawowej i szkole ponadpodstawowej oraz w środowisku rodzinnym usprawniłoby proces decyzyjny i ułatwiłoby przejście do szkoły średniej.

Słowa kluczowe: polska szkoła średnia, technikum, wybór szkoły ponadpodstawowej, przejście, trzeci próg edukacyjny, doradztwo zawodowe, proces decyzyjny

Introduction

The transition from primary to secondary school is a difficult time for both children and their parents, as well as for primary and secondary school teachers, who are seeking to develop a system to facilitate this process. Schools focus on administrative and organisational procedures, while children's and parents' reflections concentrate on the social and personal experiences characteristic of this period (Jindal-Snape and Miller 2008, 217).

During this time, children are most likely to experience anxiety, a decline in self-esteem, motivation to learn and confidence in their own successes (Bagnall, Skipper and Fox 2020, 206-226; Rice, Frederickson and Seymour 2010, 3; Gutman and Eccles 2007, 522-537; Zeedyk et al. 2003, 67-79). Although students are concerned about increasing homework requirements, changes in the social hierarchy, lack of organisational continuity or making friends, they are positive about continuing their education in post-primary school. However, students are more optimistic about learning in secondary school before starting than after (Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan 2012, 311; see also Pointon 2000, 375-382). Most children quickly adapt to the new situation and new school environment (Evangelou et al. 2008, IV) and anxiety subsides by the first semester of secondary school (Galton, Morrison and Pell 2000, 341-363). Students in the transition period need support in terms of their needs for safety, relatedness (belonging to a group, acceptance), autonomy (independence and responsibility), competence (being competent in the tasks undertaken), enjoyment (the satisfaction of participating in a lesson taught by a teacher with expertise), and identity development (the emergence of new interests following interactions with peers) (Visser et al. 2023, 322).

The intervention to support the student in the transition to secondary school should start in the final year of primary school and continue into secondary school. Not only students need to be catered for, but also families, who are also assigned a significant role in the decision-making process related to the choice of secondary school. It is worth mentioning that parents adopt different (from active to passive) attitudes with regard to participation in the decision-making

process (Wojtasik 2011, 107-108). With the support of parents, they would be able to understand the changes their children are going through and how to help them (Curson, Wilson-Smith and Holliman 2019, 22, see also Bagnall, Skipper and Fox 2020, 214). The experiences of older siblings are also helpful for students in their decision-making. Having an older sibling in secondary school reduces the social risk index (Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan 2012, 311). Difficulties in the transition to secondary school are significantly related to parental education and household income, and there are small systematic differences by social class. Children of low-skilled and less well-off parents feel more pressure and difficulties (Smyth and Privalko 2022, 14; see also Duda and Kukla 2012, 34).

Research assumptions

The aim of our research was to find out how to prevent difficulties in choosing a secondary school in the opinion of vocational subject teachers (see Pardej 2024)1. The subject of the own research was the observations of teachers of vocational subjects concerning the choice of secondary school by young people.

The reflections on difficulties led the author to formulate the following main problem: How can difficulties in choosing a secondary school and a course of study be prevented in the opinion of vocational subject teachers? The main problem was formulated with detailed questions:

1. What methods do primary schools use to prevent difficulties in choosing a secondary school and course of study?
2. What methods do secondary schools use to prevent difficulties in choosing a secondary school and course of study?

This article presents some of the results of the author's own research. The qualitative study used the interview method, where the research technique was an individual, standard, categorised interview and the research instrument was the author's Interview Questionnaire.

The research was carried out in three technical schools in Warsaw, i.e. the Mechatronics Technical School No. 1 in the Secondary and Technical School Complex No. 1, Technical School No. 7 in the Stanisław Wysocki School Complex and the Jan Karski Technical School No. 8 at School Complex No. 42. The director of the fourth selected technical school refused to allow the study to take place.

The research covered 13 vocational subject teachers - theoretical vocational subject teachers and a practical vocational training teacher providing education in the following occupations (in alphabetical order): rail transport electrician technician, electrician technician, IT technician, logistics technician, mechatronics technician, programming technician, tourism organisation technician, rail transport technician and renewable energy devices and systems technician. According to the forecast of demand for employees in vocational education

[1] The author aimed to identify difficulties and accompanying circumstances related to the choice of secondary school in the opinion of parents of first-grade students of a technical school.

professions on the national and voivodeship labour market announced by the Minister of Education and Science (Monitor Polski 2023), these occupations are of particular importance for the development of the country and are expected to be in special demand. The results of the study should not be generalised to the entire group of vocational subject teachers. It is a sectional view, referring to the group under study. The results of the research were used to identify themes in order to deepen the research in the future by including themes of particular relevance to vocational subject teachers that resonated during the interviews, and to conduct the research on a representative research sample in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. The research material was analysed using the MAXQDA 2022 program. The interviews were given consecutive numbers from N1 to N13.

Results of own research

Using the MAXQDA 2022 program, 39 interview fragments were coded. The MAXQDA 2022 program made it possible to analyse the research material in detail, as well as to select the statements that are faithfully quoted in the various sections of the article. We have limited ourselves to citing the most characteristic statements made by respondents.

Vocational subject teachers in technical schools are predominantly male (62%). The largest groups are teachers of theoretical vocational education and teachers of practical vocational education (54%) as well as teachers of theoretical vocational subjects (38%), and the smallest are teachers of practical vocational subjects (8%). The longest experience in the teaching profession is observed among those working for 20-29 years (46%), significantly less among those working for 10-19 years (30%), and the least among those working in schools for 30–39 years (8%), 40-49 years (8%) and less than 9 years (8%). The respondents included teachers with no pedagogical training (8%), beginner teachers (8%), contract teachers (15%), appointed teachers (23%) and certified teachers (46%). In this group, 85% of people worked elsewhere before starting to teach at school. In the last three years, the majority of teachers have improved their professional qualifications (69%).

Methods of preventing difficulties in choosing a secondary school and a course of study used in primary schools.

Pupils in primary school are prepared to choose a school and profession, e.g. they talk to a school counsellor/educator about the profession, school, vocational work (414 responses), they get acquainted with offers of secondary schools (388 responses) and learn where to find information about jobs, professions (332 responses), they participate in interest groups (331 responses), they take part in competitions and tournaments (301 responses), they get acquainted with the ways of working in different professions (298 responses), they are diagnosed in terms of interests and abilities (297 responses), they participate in additional classes in particular subjects (293 responses), they are introduced to the situation on

the labour market (290 responses) (Klementowska 2018, 166). When choosing a school and a profession, students most often use information leaflets (56%), the Internet (55%), television (52%), less often radio (48%) and magazines (44%) (Klementowska 2018, 169).

Primary school teachers observe their students over many years and are important participants in the decision-making process. Students recognise their qualities in this respect and believe that "they know the teachers of their subjects in secondary schools; they know how the available opportunities for teaching a subject are used in these school; they can advise on the choice of school or profile; they know the graduates of schools, they invite them to homeroom to talk to them about the school" (Kamieniecka 2015, 26). However, students do not expect them to be their counsellors and to effectively solve their problems related to further education (Kamieniecka 2015, 27).

Parents often play an important role in the decision-making process. Sources of information about the secondary school for parents include brochures about the school (94%), a visit to the school (13%), spontaneously acquired information (friends – 34%, parents of children in secondary school – 33%, children including siblings – 31%, parents with children in their preferred secondary school – 30%), as well as information obtained from teachers or principals of primary schools (29%) and parents of children attending primary school (26%). Parents tend to focus on getting information about the academic side of the school or the subjects offered (50%), the results of school-leaving examinations (33%), information about the atmosphere of the school (30%), specific subjects (24%), and discipline at school (21%). They learned about school exam results from school brochures (70%), the local press (18%), secondary school staff (10%), other parents (10%), friends (8%), primary school staff (2%) (West et al. 1995, 33-34).

According to one respondent, the environment influencing the choice of secondary school is both school and family. However, the respondent attributes different roles to them: "The school has an influence by organising career guidance classes. It has less influence on what the child is interested in. In addition, the family has an influence through the attitude that parents have towards their child. If a child is interested in something, parents can help them develop that passion" [N4]. In the school environment, the provision of assistance in the choice of a secondary school is primarily the responsibility of the vocational counsellor, whose duty is to implement the curriculum content included in the Regulation of the Ministry of Education of 12 February 2019 on vocational counselling (Official Journal 2019, item 325) during the lessons. The family environment, on the other hand, is credited with unlimited opportunities to develop a child's interests, which are often discovered at school or in extracurricular activities: "In primary school there are subjects where pupils draw, do artwork, do something. This is when the child discovers their abilities. They can also discover their abilities in extra-curricular activities, not necessarily organised at school" [N4]. Another teacher notes that the attitude of the primary school teacher is significant in fostering a student's passion for exploring a topic:

"Sometimes someone has a great biology teacher. They start to learn the subject, start to like it, even though they were not interested in biology before" [N10]. Early skill development and engagement in primary school alleviate the difficulties associated with choosing a secondary school (Galton and McLellan 2018, 255-277).

In addition, other demands resound from the narrative. Among the respondents, there were some who thought that in order for the assistance given to young people by a career counsellor to be effective, they should be properly trained: "Better training of career counsellors, psychologists in terms of their knowledge of the specific profession, field of study" [N7]. Another teacher also notes the need for career counsellors to expand their knowledge of specific secondary schools and gives a ready solution on how to do this: "Career counsellors should attend school open days to acquire knowledge about schools. And they don't have the knowledge of the schools; they don't know what profile of child should go here" [N12]. Technical school teachers are open to establishing cooperation with career counsellors: "We don't have career counsellors who would like to get information, they don't even call" [N12]. The career counsellor, in their opinion, should know the specifics of the professions in question and the contraindications to performing them: "These counsellors need to know the specifics of the profession. Students come to us with an opinion from a psychologist, according to which the student cannot be exposed to stress and noise. And if he's a railwayman and someone steps on his tracks, I think he won't know whether to brake or not. Repairs are often noisy and what is he going to say then: be quiet and don't knock, because I can't concentrate? Counsellors need to be better educated" [N7]. It is noteworthy that, according to Mechthilda Richter, Célina Clément and Eric Flavier (2022, 376), students with a statement of need for special education present a positive self-image and have a more positive attitude towards learning in secondary school than in primary school. This is especially the case when the transition to secondary school is planned and prepared by adults (parents, teachers, professionals).

Career counsellors (67%) acknowledge that young people's need for a counselling service is diagnosed. Typically, the diagnosis is performed by most full-time counsellors (80%) and most lower secondary school students are diagnosed (66%) (Podwójcic 2015, 85). Parents of students on the educational threshold consider that they do not recall or have never heard that careers guidance is organised at school. Some of them said that sometimes their children told them about their impressions of the counselling sessions. However, they do not receive any information about this from tutors or careers counsellors. It is important to emphasise that parents do not make a distinction between a counsellor and a teacher in the context of education (Kamieniecka 2015, 32). What students expect from a vocational counsellor is, above all, professional support and assistance in choosing a course of study, support in their decisions, help in seeing their strengths and weaknesses, objectivity, professional and extensive knowledge, as well as knowledge of the current situation on the labour market (Czerw and Bielas 2020, 82).

According to the respondents, the teaching staff at primary school should cooperate with employers and organise excursions to workplaces for their pupils and their parents: "Primary schools should organise excursions to companies that would bring the profession closer. This is not being done, and it is very important. "We used to organise such trips for primary school children" [N3], "The employer should have funds set aside for a meeting with students and their parents, during which he could introduce them to a real career offer" [N6].

Few students attend meetings with employers (8%) or take advice from counsellors from the Voluntary Labour Corps (7%). Most frequently, meetings with secondary school representatives are organised on the premises of the primary school the students attend (67%) (Klementowska 2018, 168)

Methods of preventing difficulties in choosing a secondary school and course of study used in secondary schools

From the coded fragments of the statements of vocational subject teachers relating to suggestions for preventing difficulties in choosing a secondary school and a profession, we learn that: "If students come to school open days, they will learn more" [N2]; "So-called talks and open days introducing the profession are important" [N3]; "During school open days there should be meetings for students and teachers of primary schools, during which they would have to do some professional task, they would have to test something. They would then understand what the profession is all about. In my opinion, this is the only method" [N5]; "During school open days we get to know the student and the parent. We could show them the equipment the school has, but also tell them what equipment we don't have. So that students understand that the reality of school can be different from what is in the core curriculum" [N9]; "Open days should strive for integration. Outsiders can take a look at the school, observe what the students and teachers are like. It is too early to learn about personality, but a primary school student could look at the things he likes to do; to see if this is really what he likes to do" [N10]. As we can see, according to teachers participation in open days organised by schools is very important. Thanks to these meetings, candidates can broaden their knowledge of the profession in direct conversation with teachers.

Information on websites about schools and the professions they teach could be helpful in the selection: "Posting information on school websites" [N11]. One of the demands made by a teacher was to promote schools: "Schools should promote themselves by showing what they do" [N11]. The information should be enriched with messages on further educational pathways: "Profession is one thing. Destination is important, i.e. where they graduate from higher education. There is no information about what they will learn in a given profession" [N9].

Vocational subject teachers also make a number of other demands. One respondent, following civilizational changes, decided to propose online meetings and gave an overview of them: "There could be online meetings organised by the Education Office. There should be projects: representatives from the school (1 student, 1 teacher and someone from the management) would meet with career

counsellors. They would then tell them what kind of children should or should not be in a technical school" [N12]. Other quoted statements concerned the change of name of both the school and the subjects: "Change of name. Returning to the previously applicable names: electrical technical school, carpentry technical school, and not technical school number... this and this. This name means nothing to students and parents, unlike the name: mechatronics technical school, because it is associated with a specific profession" [N8]. This would help potential candidates and their parents to navigate more smoothly through school offers. Teachers of vocational subjects, given their place of employment, most often spoke about the propositions that technical schools can offer to primary school graduates and their parents, which are helpful in the decision-making process regarding the choice of a secondary school.

In the interviews conducted, there was a warning about what single guidelines should not be followed in choosing a secondary school: "One should not be guided only by typical rankings, such as Perspektywy. It is not the only determinant" [N10], "Parents come to us and say that their son is interested in railways. And he goes to the railway school even though he has various impairments, e.g. sight, hearing" [N7]. The statements quoted show that it is important to proceed carefully in connection with the choice of secondary school and to take into account a number of factors for future success and avoidance of failure. It may be helpful to familiarise yourself with the job description, the physical and health and psychological requirements, and to pay particular attention to the (absolute and relative) contraindications to the job in question.

Conclusions of own research

In the opinion of teachers of vocational subjects, effective solutions to prevent difficulties in choosing a secondary school and a course of study should be sought both in the family and school environment.

In the family environment, children's and young people's interests can be stimulated and developed. Parents can also send their children to extra-curricular activities (although these often involve additional costs).

As far as the school environment is concerned, they expect slightly different measures to be taken in this area in primary and secondary schools.

With regard to primary schools, the interviewed teachers focused on the role of the career counsellor. According to them, such a person should have up-to-date knowledge of the specifics of each profession. Therefore, career counsellors should participate in training sessions and open days in schools. In addition, respondents would expect careers counsellors to be familiar with the learning conditions and atmosphere of the post-primary school. This will enable them to support the student more effectively – taking into account his or her aptitude - in making the right choice. The teachers surveyed also highlighted the importance of excursions to companies organised during primary school education. They complained that

this form of introducing students to the work of particular professions had become a thing of the past.

From the respondents' statements, it can be concluded that open days aimed at students, parents but also career counsellors play a key role in secondary schools, with the aim of familiarising them with the school and the professions taught there. Teachers also note the need to formulate transparent educational offers.

According to the teachers surveyed, parents, together with their children, should make the decision related to the choice of school carefully and take into account a number of factors at the same time, e.g.: the school's place in the ranking, the predisposition to study at a particular school and in a particular profession, the child's state of health.

Conclusion

Teachers who took part in the research postulate the following:

1. extending the programme of open days aimed at students, parents and careers counsellors to include the opportunity to talk to students and teachers of secondary schools and to demonstrate the solving of sample tasks in vocational subjects;
2. online promotion of the secondary school and its advantages as well as the professions taught there – with an indication of their specificities and further education opportunities;
3. organising online meetings with secondary school representatives;
4. a change in the naming of schools, where the defining term of a technical school would be a name referring to the profession taught, e.g. mechatronic technical school;
5. organising trips to companies during primary school education in order to familiarise students with work in specific professions;
6. meetings between employers and pupils and parents to present the profession in question from a practical point of view - terms and conditions of employment, requirements for workers in particular jobs;
7. further training of careers counsellors on the specifics of the professions and secondary schools;
8. promotion of knowledge by career advisors about the principles of operation and use of the electronic recruitment system;
9. making decisions that take multiple factors into account simultaneously.

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SEMINARE

Issues of Sustainable Development in the Education of Elementary School Youth: Facts and Prospects

Problematyka zrównoważonego rozwoju w edukacji młodzieży szkół podstawowych. Stan faktyczny i perspektywy

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Abstract: The United Nations Resolution entitled "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" identifies the contemporary global challenges that need to be addressed this decade. The document includes seventeen specific goals, whose implementation depends on, among other things, the quality and scope of young people's sustainable development education, started as early as at the primary school. This article will present the needs and possibilities of developing that education as part of compulsory and additional school subjects. Furthermore, certain recommendations for teachers will be proposed in the area of shaping primary school students' sensitivity to the problems mentioned in the Resolution.

Keywords: Sustainable development education, sustainable development, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, general education core curriculum for the primary school

Abstrakt: Rezolucja Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych pt. „Agenda na Rzecz Zrównoważonego Rozwoju 2030" określa współczesne wyzwania świata, konieczne do podjęcia w trwającej dekadzie. Dokument zawiera siedemnaście sprecyzowanych celów, których wdrażanie jest uzależnione m.in. od jakości i zakresu edukacji na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju młodzieży, realizowanej począwszy od szkoły podstawowej. W artykule przedstawiona zostanie kwestia potrzeby i możliwości rozwijania tej edukacji w ramach obowiązkowych oraz dodatkowych przedmiotów szkolnych. Ponadto zaproponowane zostaną pewne rekomendacje dla nauczycieli w zakresie kształtowania wrażliwości młodzieży szkolnej na zasygnalizowane w rezolucji problemy.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju, zrównoważony rozwój, Agenda na Rzecz Zrównoważonego Rozwoju 2030, Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły podstawowej

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Introduction

The dynamic nature of the processes occurring in the socio-natural environment leads to certain effects which influence it. They are caused by, among other things, the economic growth, consequences of the industrialisation or promotion of the consumerist lifestyle. Recently, a lot of attention has been devoted in the literature of the subject to the issue of the so-called carbon footprint, resulting, for example, from using fossil fuels for energy production. All these activities encourage us to consider possibilities of ensuring optimum living conditions to the present and future generations. The noticeable environmental crisis, together with its manifestations, becomes a topic discussed during numerous debates conducted in the international arena (Tuszyńska and Witkowska-Tomaszewska 2023, 9-12). What exemplifies one of the results of such activities is the Resolution on adoption of actions aimed at achieving sustainable development, set out in 17 goals, as announced by the United Nations (UN 2015, 14). Protection of the socio-natural environment requires systemic actions. The area of educational activity is an indispensable place for that, as it is where individual's appropriate attitudes, described as pro-environmental ones, are shaped. Children and adolescents who participate in the primary school formal education system learn about the relationships existing in the world, which surrounds them, by means of appropriate content and didactic methods. Raising school students' awareness of the problems indicated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an objectively necessary process. Taking into account the issues mentioned in the Resolution in the core curriculum seems to be one of the first and even necessary steps to be taken. The aim of the article is to draw attention to the need to address problematic issues in the area of the sustainable development education in the educational process of primary school students. It will analyse, in terms of the sustainable development education content, the current general education core curriculum for primary schools. Furthermore, certain recommendations aimed at enriching the educational process with the issues set out in 17 sustainable development goals will be proposed.

UN Sustainable Development Goals as a starting point for sustainable education at the primary school

The Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 entitled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015, 1-35) is a certain answer to the problems of the contemporary world. The document indicates the actions which may contribute to improving people's and planet's existence. Consequently, they are a certain guideline which helps shape a better global environment understood as socio-natural space. The universal nature of the problems the contemporary world faces has been described in 17 sustainable development goals and more detailed 169 tasks. Addressing, in the educational process, the issues indicated by the Resolution contributes to the

practical implementation of the assumptions of the sustainable development concept. It is necessary, among other things, due to the need to shape the public awareness of the most urgent challenges faced by the humanity within the ongoing third decade of the 21st century, being the agreed period for achieving the sustainable development goals.

The sustainable development goals in question have been described, as follows:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development)

The achievement of the above-mentioned goals by 2030 depends on, among other things, including the area in question into the process of formal education as early as at the primary school stage. The educational core curriculum, on the basis of which the syllabus is implemented, offers teachers the space to carry out sustainable development activities. Children who participate in the process of early school education and adolescents in higher grades of the primary school acquaint themselves with the idea of sustainable development in such subjects, as nature

education1, nature2, biology, geography or ethics. Obviously, it is basic information, but it demonstrates the problem contexts of that concept. The requirements of the sustainable development concept addressed as part of the educational process shape in the subject of education, i.e. the human being, the sensitivity to the surrounding world, including the challenges defined in the 17 goals. Consequently, the sustainable development education is a process on the basis of which the awareness of the problems present in the socio-natural environment is shaped (Sztumski 2024, 254). The environment inhabited by human beings, plants and animals, i.e. its constituting components. What constitutes the starting point for the sustainable education is demonstrating the socio-natural environment as a complex system in which certain necessary relationships occur. The above-mentioned systemic nature applies to school student's sensitivity to the holistic understanding of the environment. The point is to indicate the interdisciplinary nature which should be referred to in the process of becoming familiar with and taking actions aimed at protection of the environment. In order to protect the environment, one needs to learn about and understand the processes occurring in it, which is possible by drawing on achievements of various academic disciplines. "For this reason, the systemic thinking is more and more often reflected in research devoted to effective education for the care for quality of the environment, aimed both at children and adolescents, as well as, and first of all, at adults, who no longer participate in the formal education" (Duda 2022, 22). Young peoples' early-stage education in the field of sustainable development, as well as during the entire education process implemented at the primary school, constitutes the foundation for establishing in society a culture which manifests itself in attitudes for protection of the socio-natural environment.

Sustainable development in the general education core curriculum for the primary school

In the face of the human being's global and total impact on the environment, it is possible to notice negative consequences and threats which affect nature, the planet and human beings themselves (Embros 2010, 159). Preventing those threats constitutes a challenge for the humankind, and the sustainable development appears to be an element which restores the balance between human beings and their environment. Implementing it requires wide-ranging actions and a transformation of social attitudes manifesting themselves, for example, in the consumption of natural resources, material goods or services to meet needs. What constitutes another important tool to implement the sustainable development and shape awareness of society focused on preserving the environment in the best

[1] In the Polish education system, at the early school education stage conducted in grades 1 to 3, nature education constitutes an integrated thematic block that allows children to learn about the basic phenomena and relationships occurring in the world around them.

[2] The subject of natural science is taught in the Polish education system in the 4th grade of primary school. It is a separate subject aimed at providing students with information about the socio-natural environment and fostering a researcher's attitude towards the reality surrounding them.

possible condition is appropriate education. Education understood as a process of shaping the subject-human being at various stages of development. For this reason, education may adopt various forms, and be aimed at, for example, children, adolescents and adults. Among children and adolescents, an important role is played by formal education (Batorczak and Klimska 2020, 18-20; Hłobił 2010, 89). It is implemented at various levels, and covers the pre-school, early school, primary, secondary and academic education.

The formal education at the primary school consists of two stages: early school education (in grades I-III) and education in grades IV-VIII, whereas the form and content of that education are defined in the core curriculum. It includes the introduction, general assumptions, as well as goals and detailed content. At the first educational stage, two types of education have been distinguished which are to be conducted as part of integrated classes. Teachers themselves coordinate the sequence of the topics discussed. The second educational stage occurs as part of the individual subjects (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 11).

Teaching at the primary school constitutes the basis for educating children and adolescents, which is why the core curriculum at this stage should feature the most important goals and most significant teaching content. Analysing it in the context of the sustainable development, one can notice direct references to that concept, as well as discussion of the issues related to it.

The first reference to the sustainable development in the core curriculum includes its introduction: "The school (…) shapes the attitude of respect towards the natural environment, as well as disseminates knowledge about sustainable development principles, motivates to actions aimed at protection of the environment, and develops interest in ecology" (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 14). The issues in the introduction concern the entire core curriculum, so considering knowledge about the sustainable development at this place emphasises its importance and presents it as a significant element of the primary school education.

In the context of the issues in question, one of the types of the education which are to be conducted in grades I-III is the nature education. Participating in it, children become familiar with the surrounding nature, basic species and ecosystems, as well as learn why they should be protected. In addition, they learn about examples of nature protection sites in their local or regional environment. At this stage, they are also taught the basics of the waste segregation, as well as its importance for the human being and environment. They obtain knowledge of threats posed by the natural environment and how to deal with them. They become familiar with the nearest vicinity, considering its nature, socio-economic and cultural aspects (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 40-42). It is a very important element of the nature education implemented on the basis of getting to know the nearest vicinity of one's place of residence.

In grades IV-VIII, the sustainable development concept is reflected in the educational goals and content of three subjects. They include nature, geography and biology.

In the case of nature, the educational content covers issues connected with the natural and anthropogenic environment. Teachers should teach children how to notice the value of nature, as well as demonstrate its role in the human being's life and correct development. Attention is paid to, among other things, the importance of the right relationship between the human being and environment, as well as behaviour which results from such values, as respect and shared responsibility for the natural environment. The field classes provided for as part of this subject help make young people more sensitive to the beauty of nature, and shape their attitude to nature in practice. Excursions in the nearest vicinity help primary school students identify themselves with the local or regional environment (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 110-116).

In the case of geography, comprehensive reflection on the world in which the human being lives is undertaken. This subject integrates knowledge of the natural and socio-economic environment and humanities. What is demonstrated is relationships in nature, economy and societies, as well as among them. The need to respect nature, cultural achievements and other cultures, as well as the need to sensibly manage the environment's resources is emphasised. At the same time, the student's identity with the surroundings is shaped by references to the national and local natural and cultural heritage (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 116-130). It can be agreed that the reflection to be undertaken as part of this subject should reflect the mutual relationship and connection of nature and culture (Sadowski 2018, 8).

Biology is the subject where students learn about the variety of organisms, ecosystems as well as dependencies and relationships among them. What is dealt with in that subject is issues of the biodiversity, its essence and significance, as well as pollution. The human being's influence on nature is discussed. Examples of economical use of ecosystems, as well as the need to protect them are indicated. Types of nature's resources are presented and the need to manage them responsibly in accordance with the sustainable development principle. What deserves attention in obliging teachers to organise field classes which would enable students to experience in practice the topics they learn about, by means of noticing and observation of various plant and animal species, as well as biological phenomena and processes (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 130-143).

The syllabus covered in nature, biology and geography classes refers, to a significant extent, to the environment understood as socio-natural space. The teaching content is related to the biodiversity, aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora, as well as and human health. These topics correspond to sustainable development goals 3, 14 and 15 set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, geography classes sometimes feature topics connected with the economy, industry, urbanisation, energy or access to water. They are related to goals 7, 8, 9 and 11. The topic of renewable and non-renewable energy, as well as selection of its sources depending on environmental conditions is discussed. However, discussing urbanisation issues differs from goal 11 from the 2030 Agenda

(Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development), as cities and communities are discussed without them being referred to the sustainable development. Geography is also a place for discussion about the problem of poverty or hunger, which have grown to significant proportions in certain regions of the world and constitute a big problem for societies living there. These issues concern goals 1, 2 and 3. What has also been considered is the reflection on the need of changes in the human being-nature relationship. It can be exemplified by discussion on a change of the model of consumption or approach to protection of the environment (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 116-130).

Sustainable development goals 1 and 5 concern equality (including gender equality), as well as reduction of various types of discrimination or inequality. A lot of attention has been paid to this idea in the core curriculum. It has been discussed in the introduction, as well as repeated in the requirements for the individual subjects. First of all, teachers should take into consideration students' individual educational needs. It applies to all students, both those with disabilities and learning difficulties, and the remaining ones. In this case, equality manifests itself in supporting the development of each of them, depending on their abilities, potential and needs (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 13). The achievement of these goals should be visible in teachers', educationalists' attitudes, and concern the adolescents' upbringing area, in order to show the value of a person irrespective of their appearance, nationality, gender or developmental asynchronies they may have.

The topic of cultural diversity appears in various subjects. Getting to know the culture or language in the subject of Polish, foreign and Kashubian language, as well as geography, students develop an attitude of respect and openness towards various cultures. In addition, the topic of person's dignity, tolerance and mutual respect is discussed in ethics and civic studies. Furthermore, teaching respect and tolerance takes place in art and music (towards other tastes, music or artistic skills) as well as physical education classes (towards others' physical fitness) (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 11-221).

As for the quality education defined in goal 4, the core curriculum features certain general and detailed recommendations. Teachers are encouraged to select teaching methods and techniques which would give better results. At the same time, examples of those which are worth using in certain classes are presented. Some methods are indicated as obligatory ones, and they have to be used in the process of teaching a given subject. It can be exemplified by organising field classes as part of biology, nature or geography. In this case, they are methods of conducting classes outside the school desk, and area aimed at demonstrating certain relationships which can be achieved during observation. What is also important is developing in students their motivation to learn and skills of individual learning, which is visible in numerous places of the core curriculum (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 11-221).

The issue of peace and justice, expressed in goal 16, is discussed mainly in history, civic studies, education for security and ethics. During civic studies classes, human rights, importance of democracy, various governmental and non-

governmental organisations, as well as citizens' involvement and activity in social life are discussed (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 11-221).

An element which deserves to be noticed in the subject of ethics is the fact that at least three aspects of the sustainable development concept have been considered. Students discuss the attitude towards themselves and other people (social aspect), towards human creations (economic aspect) and towards nature (environmental aspect). The topics discussed include, for example, corporate social responsibility and responsibility for future generations. The value of life, health, work, nature and environment in which the human being lives are demonstrated. In addition, the attitude of respect towards these values is developed, and moral obligations of the human being towards them are presented. Teachers emphasise the significance of justice and respect, tolerance and openness towards people from various cultures and those who have different beliefs. Another topic which is discussed in these classes is protection of the environment and appropriate treatment of animals (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 52-53, 202-209).

The core curriculum concerning various subjects in grades IV-VIII and types of education in grades I-III features' elements of selected sustainable development issues and nature-related matters interwoven with the content of the individual subjects. As part of technical education and technical classes, students are taught how to economically use materials and the responsibility for creations of individual and group work. The issue of waste, its responsible segregation and management is discussed as part of nature education, technical classes and chemistry. Pollution is the topic discussed in various aspects in biology, geography, chemistry and technical classes or nature education. Arts classes shape in students sensitivity to the beauty of nature, for example be means of creating works on the basis of elements of nature, landscapes or still lives. Teachers also have an opportunity of organising outdoor excursions. On the other hand, during musical education classes, children from grades I-III are taught, among other things, to imitate animal sounds. In chemistry classes, students learn about the acid rain and ozone hole phenomena, whereas in geography classes the problem of deforestation, pollution of the Baltic Sea or food waste is presented. What also needs to be pointed out is the occurrence of socio-economic as well as nature-related topic areas in the vocabulary required to be learnt in modern foreign language classes. It includes such categories, as work, shopping and services, human being, culture, natural world and place of residence. The examples of topics are as follows: weather, plants and animals, threats to and protection of the natural environment. Moreover, in Kashubian language classes, students become familiar with the local environment in terms of social, cultural and nature aspects (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 11-221).

Introducing sustainable development content at the primary school - recommendations for teachers

The primary school is a place where students obtain knowledge, skills, certain competence, as well as where their attitudes, habits and behaviour are shaped. For this reason, it is important that the content related to the sustainable development permeates the core curriculum at the stage of primary education. Sustainable development education develops the skill of holistic analysis of problems concerning socio-natural space in students, and, at the same time, indicates its interdisciplinary contexts and various forms of education (Tuszyńska 2018, 16).

The analysis of the core curriculum conducted shows that the idea has been, to a certain extent, introduced in the content and assumptions of the education. It is directly referred to in a number of places, and most space has been devoted to it in the requirements for geography and biology. The attitude towards the environment as well as perceiving it in the natural and cultural context can also be found, apart from the above-mentioned subjects, in nature. One has to admit that the value of the natural environment and its importance for the human being is emphasised, and students are encouraged to take responsibility for it (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 110-143). The core curriculum also addresses individual issues connected with the sustainable development. They include health issues, the problem of poverty, energy and its sources, access to water, biodiversity on land and in waters, discrimination, openness towards other cultures, respect towards others, regardless of gender, place of residence, culture and other factors, innovation. In some subjects we can find nature-related elements interwoven with the syllabus content (for example in physical education, arts, music education or modern languages) (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 11-221).

Nevertheless, certain places can be indicated where issues related to the sustainable development can be developed further still. First of all, the issue of intergenerational solidarity and responsibility is present only in ethics classes (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 206). It is such an important element of the sustainable development that it could be discussed also in other subjects, for instance geography or biology.

In ethics classes, the products of human activity are mainly discussed in the context of someone else's property (Journal of Laws 2017 item 356, 205). At this place, they could be extended with the issue of economical and rational use of materials and environments' resources used for creating those products, as well as the production's impact on the environment. What also can be emphasised is the influence of everyday consumer choices on the environment and consumption of its resources. Similarly, in technical classes teachers could discuss the context of the influence of the human technical and industrial activity on the environment.

On the other hand, the limited number of resources could be emphasised in nature-related subjects. The topics which are worth mentioning include sustainable cities, transport and its influence on the environment and pollution of soil, in addition

to what has already been considered (i.e. of water and air). Another phenomenon which could be discussed is the climate change, as well as the possibilities of its prevention and adaptation to it (Nusche, Marc and Lauterbach 2024).

In "history" classes, teachers could mention the topic of technological development and its influence on the natural environment, as well as include information on societies' various approaches to the environment and the resulting consequences. Specific examples could make students aware of the fact that the attitude towards the environment was important both in the past, and is important nowadays. It will help them understand that due to the current scale of impact the consequences for the environment and human being also become global, which is why it is so important to shape sustainable relations with the natural environment.

What may be discusses in "civic studies" classes is the issue of transition from the technocratic to ecological civilization. This subject could consider the topic of the influence of consumers and their choices on the market and demonstrate positive consumption models. The above issues can also be addressed in the "religion" class and the so-called "class tutor." In the context of religious education, one can refer to the problems highlighted, for example, in Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si'.

Despite the fact that the sustainable development and some of its assumptions have already been introduced to the core curriculum of the primary school education, certain supplements to the syllabus content could be proposed. The proposals presented above may further improve the core curriculum and inspire teachers to make classes more varied, at the same time providing students with knowledge of the sustainable development and shaping the attitude of respect towards the socio-natural environment in them. At this point, it is worth pointing out that the sustainable development is part of actions aimed at protection of the above-mentioned environment. Consequently, a systemic approach is necessary for providing information and knowledge to school students. The sustainable development goals set out in the Resolution are a clear example of the complexity of the problems the contemporary globalised world has to face.

Summary

Developing the sustainable development content in the educational process of young people attending the primary school is justified by numerous reasons. Shaping proper attitudes and habits aimed at taking care for the socio-natural environment becomes useful in the adult life. At this stage, education based on appropriate values and attitudes, such as, for example, social solidarity, helps maintain the right relationship between the human being and the surrounding world. Furthermore, the sustainable development education draws attention to the global challenges faced by the contemporary world (Babicki 2021, 182). They are described in detail in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and indicate the direction for the actions to be taken. The education conducted at the primary school also becomes useful when it comes to developing critical thinking,

which manifests itself in the analysis and interpretation of symptoms from socio-natural space that may indicate crisis situations. Consequently, young people who participate in a reliable educational process are able to predict certain consequences of the actions taken. It is, to a certain extent, shaping ecological awareness, which allows ecological culture to develop in society. What is important in the sustainable development education process is the need to make school students sensitive to the environment in their nearest vicinity. The young generation equipped with awareness of local problems may take appropriate actions and propose initiatives for their little homeland. Although the challenges proposed in the 17 sustainable development goals which the contemporary world has to face are global, it is important to remember that we should, in the first place, begin with ourselves. Taking sustainable development content into account in the general education core curriculum for the primary school is a good way to take actions aimed at achieving the sustainable development goals. Thanks to their creativity, young people become helpful in implementation of certain projects, and, in addition, are really willing to take actions. The sustainable development educational process should not disregard the persons who implement it. What is meant here is the teaching staff, who should have the opportunity to participate in courses and training session on protection of the socio-natural environment. Thanks to its dynamics, this subject matter, which manifests itself with new processes which take place and new technologies which are implemented, requires to be updated on an ongoing basis. It will allow, among other things, implementing current problems into the subjects covered by the primary school core curriculum in question.

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SEMINARE

Visual Arts Activities as an Important Element in the Development of Young People with Intellectual Disabilities

Zajęcia plastyczne jako istotny element w procesie rozwoju młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną

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Abstract: This text is a review of the methodology of visual arts and the importance of visual arts activities for the overall development of young people with intellectual disabilities. Visual arts education is of great importance not only because of the exercise of disturbed functions, but it also allows for a bolder entry into the world of the able-bodied by showing the ability and possibility to be a perpetrator of socially accepted actions. Cultural and aesthetic development definitely raises the possibility to participate more fully in the life of the community and therefore has a positive impact on self-esteem and self-awareness. Specialists in special education, but also connoisseurs and patrons of the arts are increasingly paying attention to the creative possibilities of people with intellectual disabilities. Thus, the need to promote knowledge on this subject among both special educators and people who are not professionally involved with students with intellectual disabilities is still valid.

Abstrakt: Niniejszy tekst ma charakter przeglądowy, w którym podjęte zostało zagadnienie dotyczące metodyki plastyki i znaczenia działań plastycznych dla ogólnego rozwoju młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Edukacja plastyczna ma ogromne znaczenie nie tylko ze względu na ćwiczenie zaburzonych funkcji, ale także pozwala odważniej wejść w świat osób sprawnych poprzez ukazanie zdolności i możliwości bycia sprawcą działania akceptowanego społecznie. Rozwój kulturalny i estetyczny zdecydowanie podnosi możliwości pełniejszego uczestnictwa w życiu społeczności i, co za tym idzie, wpływa pozytywnie na samoocenę i samoświadomość. Specjaliści z zakresu pedagogiki specjalnej, ale także koneserzy i mecenasi sztuki coraz częściej zwracają uwagę na możliwości twórcze osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Tak więc ciągle aktualna jest potrzeba propagowania wiedzy na ten temat zarówno wśród pedagogów specjalnych, jak i osób niezwiązanych zawodowo z uczniami z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną.

Słowa kluczowe: niepełnosprawność intelektualna, nauczanie plastyki, młodzież, twórczość plastyczna

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Introduction

Working with young people with intellectual disabilities is not only based on imparting educational content. Special pedagogy in its scopes points to the all-round development of the individual, including aesthetic and cultural development. Apart from the obvious benefits concerning improvement and correction, art classes aim precisely at the development of the young person at higher levels. The visual arts, through non-verbal means, make it possible to express one's opinions, tastes and show in individual vision of the world.

Drawing attention to the artistic talents of young people with disabilities is of great importance from the perspective of building self-esteem, self-determination and the possibility of self-expression, but also social inclusion through participation in cultural events. This text aims to emphasise the importance of educational and revalidating artistic activities centred around the visual arts together with a methodological basis for developing visual talents and a love of art.

1. Young People with Intellectual Disabilities – Outline of General Methodological Guidelines

When starting didactic-educational-revalidation work with a student with intellectual disabilities, one should be guided by certain principles that determine the path of a special educator. A number of prominent theoreticians have written about these principles of teaching in special education, Kupisiewicz (1978, 131) writes as follows: 'those norms of didactic conduct, the observance of which enables the teacher to familiarise pupils with the attitudes of systematised knowledge, to develop their interests and cognitive abilities, to instil in them a scientific view of the world and to inculcate them into self-education.' The principles in question are primarily:

1. a thorough knowledge of children and coming to their sensible, specialised assistance,
2. adaptation of the pedagogical measures to the possibilities and needs of the children and the environmental conditions,
3. active and conscious participation of the child in the pedagogical work,
4. comprehensive view and example,
5. integrated pedagogical influence,
6. the sustainability of achievements, the ability to use and further improve them.

These principles should form the basis and starting point for developing a programme of educational and revalidation activities designed for people with intellectual disabilities. When analysing and implementing the above, special attention should be paid to important didactic facts. First of all, get to know the student and his/her environment comprehensively, i.e. know the degree of deficit (type and degree of disability) and the emotional and social experiences of the student. Observe behaviour and reactions and establish the best possible contact

with the pupil (if verbal contact is not possible – looking for ways to communicate non-verbally). It is important to apply the principle of individualisation with the individual pupil, due to his/her different psycho-physical state, work pace, degree of fatigue and manual dexterity. It is also important to ensure that information and instructions are accessible, using short, clear and unambiguous messages. Describing verbally in a clear way the activities performed – verbal activation of the learner (if possible). Verbal methods should also be reduced in favour of visuality, which means that the more sensory receptors are involved in the perception of phenomena and objects, the more accurate the image formed in the child's mind. Linking the content discussed in lessons to the pupil's experience and experiences and to practical action. Graduating difficulty by moving from simple to more difficult things, which involves experiencing 'small' successes but, above all, creating the opportunity to better understand the topic under discussion, is important. Removing stimuli that can disrupt the flow of the lesson and distract (for example, the radio playing in the background). Classes with a specific teacher should include elements of ritual and small routines for the type of lesson (e.g. greeting, looking at work from the previous lesson together, preparing workstations by choosing art materials independently). Creating situations that allow for repetition and systematisation of mastered skills and encouraging the student to undertake a variety of activities, e.g. using a mastered skill in a new task situation and using various types of positive reinforcement (e.g. verbal praise, displaying the child's work in a school exhibition). Organising as many opportunities as possible for contact with peers, both with and without disabilities, e.g. by organising and taking part in joint picnics, exhibitions, competitions.

2. Young People with Intellectual Disabilities in the World of Fine Arts – Aims and Meaning

In addition to the principles outlined above, the teaching of subjects containing elements of creativity, which stimulate creativity, uses specific goals, which Golka (2008, 89) defines as chief artistic, workshop, professional and psycho-social dispositions. These dispositions form the basis of the student's independent activity and are acquired during learning, and are realised in the course of art teaching:

- 'the provision of knowledge, skills, assistance in development, improvement of talent, etc.
- preparing for a profession, teaching artistic craftsmanship,
- providing traditions and ..,
- breaking tradition,
- limiting individuality and ..,
- developing that individuality,
- imparting artistic mythology and teaching social roles,
- providing personal role models for young art students'.

From the objectives outlined, there are many similarities with the teaching principles used in special education and with the principles of inclusion for people with disabilities. Art, therefore, is an element in teaching which is an important path of education regardless of the type or degree of disability. Art can be enjoyed by all, there are no better or worse for it, participation in its creation should not be an elitist activity. Everyone can use it and choose for themselves what gives them pleasure or makes them feel better. The creation of artworks is accompanied by very different emotions: from euphoria and joy to rage and discouragement, according to Pilecka (2006, 417-418): 'the essence of the creative presence of people with disabilities is to dynamise the personal development of the other person, i.e. to awaken and strengthen their motivation to be creative themselves in relation to the world, themselves and their lives.'

The creative process, and thus the creative activity of pupils with intellectual disabilities, can be a guided activity, i.e. the creation of situations by the teacher in which the pupil should solve an artistic task on his/her own, choosing means and techniques while using familiar ways of implementation. Task situations are the starting point of the pupil's activity, they are meant to inspire and stimulate. The teacher's vision should not be imposed, but the pupil should be allowed to create his or her own image of the world – the world as he or she feels and sees it. So art should be a self-generated and imaginative phenomenon, often it is the person with an intellectual disability or the child who sees a detail of a painting that has escaped or was irrelevant to the adult art connoisseur. The child sees a mark, a dot of colour, a gesture, a tiny detail of an outfit or landscape, and gives that very element great significance.

According to Piszczek (2009, 54), therapy through art can provide a means to explore, order, express and understand one's own emotions, to relieve excessive tension in a socially acceptable way. The cultivation of creativity provides an opportunity to experience a more complex world, provokes independent effort and stabilises attention on its effects. The author points out that: Before this is possible, the child should:

1. 'Reach an appropriate level of neuromuscular maturity and master the movements and gestures that make drawing and painting possible;
2. detect the relationship that exists between the movements of the painting and drawing tools and the marks left on the paper;
3. adapt their movements to the techniques used and the working tools;
4. subordinate one's movements to the goal and to the perceptual impressions that arise during its realisation (adapt one's actions to the visible effects).'

According to Zinker (1991, 227-232), creative action begins with movement, which breaks down resistance to expression and then leads into the realm of increasing integration – both of what we call psychic life and of what we call the work of art. The author concludes that three stages can be distinguished in the development of non-professional artistic activity:

- In the first, resistance to drawing or painting is overcome. The resulting works are quite primitive, the middle of the page is often painted over, the individual marks are random and far apart.
- In the second, the drawings are more daring, covering the entire space of the sheet of paper. Shapes begin to emerge from the initially homogeneous background, the individual fields become increasingly clear.
- In the third – the themes of the drawings are more developed, the space is filled with many details integrated into the whole. The work begins to have a rich, contrapuntal structure.

Undoubtedly, when conducting art classes with young people with intellectual disabilities, one should strive to reach the third stage, as this activity, next to physical and musical activity, is the most natural need in human life. On the other hand, Borowicz and Nalaskowski (1991, 154) believe that: 'while creative predispositions and aptitudes are internal and located inside the human being, activity is founded on going beyond the individual and taking action to change what is already there. Thus, activity is a certain innovative (for the individual, the community, the nation or the world) intervention.' Visual arts tasks play a significant role in developing and activating students. This role is crucial as it exercises and improves the following functions:

1. sensitises the hands,
2. improves visual perception (by creating symmetrical and asymmetrical compositions, creating illustrations, adding elements to the composition),
3. relaxes muscular tension (e.g. painting circular forms),
4. improves fingertips (working with plastic masses, finger painting),
5. gives them graphic training (filling in contours with colour – drawn, glued with string or marked with paint, painting over stencils).

It is essential to remember that the most important thing in the classes is the experience itself, even if it is the use of different tools and materials, and not the final result of the classes – the product of the child's artistic activity. Each pupil can participate in the activities, using them in his or her own individual way. What is important is participation in the act of creation and the creative process itself. The resulting products are not assessed in terms of aesthetics, and in the context of the importance of the creative act and the aesthetic evaluation of the product, the concept of everyday creativity of Limont (2003, 18) can be recalled: 'The concept of everyday creativity makes it possible to consider as creative every solution to a task, every manifestation of activity that, even to a minimum extent, changes the existing internal and external situation. This concept also shifts the focus from the characteristic of the product to the internal activity of the subject.' Motivational and emotional factors play an important role in artistic activity. Every manifestation of creativity should therefore be praised, even if it is simply the seemingly independent choice of a crayon for drawing. Approval encourages further attempts, engages and stimulates curiosity, which is the basis for the development of the child's imagination. A child's imagination and creativity should be developed, they are not gifts bestowed only on artists, they are the natural needs

of every human being – the ability to be captivated, to be curious, to observe. Pupils with intellectual disabilities are generally keen to participate in art activities, but for this to happen: 'it is important to create conditions in which, in addition to functional pleasure, it is possible to experience satisfaction; to experience the joy of the achieved effect and participation and the pleasure of communing with form and colour' (Żabińska and Papaj 2011, 7).

3. Preferred art Methods and Techniques Used in Working with Young People with Intellectual Disabilities

Imparting a variety of content to young people with intellectual disabilities requires a variety of teaching methods that are primarily effective and helpful for mastering the teaching material. The methods chosen are also intended to ensure that the goals set by the teacher are achieved. In addition, the use of the chosen method requires the use of didactic aids appropriate to the disability in question, art techniques and adherence to teaching principles. The choice of teaching method depends largely on the age of the pupil and the type of disability, but also on the curricular content to be imparted and to be mastered by the pupils. Furthermore, the methods should activate, engage and stimulate the senses. Trochimiak (2009, 109) believes that 'training in the use of newly learnt plastic means connects the virtual world of the student's mental cognition with physical reality and leads to the creation of a plastic product. The pupil should start his/her activity in class with the simplest tasks as a foundation for learning more complex means, which he/she will use as far as possible independently.' The appropriate selection of teaching aids and resources is very important in learning the language of visual arts. As Burno-Nowakowa and Polkowska (1988, 96) state: 'The dexterity of the hands, the habits and habits acquired in art classes, the learning of good organisation of work, the development of aesthetic taste and sensitivity to the beauty of the surroundings contribute to a high degree to the achievement of the revalidation goals.' All models, sculptures and bas-reliefs are useful. The teacher's verbal message can be supplemented by computer technology, in the form of presentations and multimedia programmes on art history and art methodology.

The task of didactic aids is to provide and facilitate direct and indirect cognition of the surrounding reality. Various types of objects providing sensory stimuli (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) are necessary for the correct transmission of messages. In the teaching process, didactic aids have the following three functions: they serve the direct learning by pupils of certain fragments of reality (cognitive function), they are a tool for the development of cognitive abilities and are an important source for the acquisition of knowledge and skills by pupils, performing a formative function, and they facilitate the consolidation of the material covered and the checking of the degree of mastery of knowledge (didactic function). For pupils with limited linguistic abilities, with difficulties in expressing their emotions verbally, art provides a bridge to understanding, to establish a dialogue with the audience. For pupils with intellectual disabilities, all artistic techniques that expose

and use the texture of the material, sensitise them to its variability, similarities and contrasts, teach them to compare and distinguish, are useful in the classroom.

These include techniques such as:

- semi-flat – elements of relief, i.e. pasting different types of material (not necessarily plastic) onto paper, fabric, sandpaper, etc;
- relief – also based on bas-relief, but in a more classical way referring to this technique, i.e. gouging in soft clay, plasticine, or pressing natural materials into plastic masses: leaves, seeds, grains or other available objects and materials: ribbons, beads, etc.; and
- macramé elements: ornaments tied with materials of different thicknesses and textures, such as threads, strings, ribbons, paper rolls. Wooden beads of different sizes, fragments of wood, roots, shells, stones, leaves cut out of paper can be used as supplementary elements;
- weaving: making a fabric from yarn by hand, using a weaving frame, loom.

The following techniques are most often used in didactic and art therapy work with young people with intellectual disabilities:

- pastel and chalk techniques, where the intensity of the colours and the palpable trace that oil pastels leave on the page are of great importance,
- enriched drawing techniques, including candle drawing, pouring contour pictures using sand, grit and grains, drawing with thread and yarn, scratchwork,
- decorative painting techniques (tools and aids used – combining paint with scent, sand, grit, etc.; combining painted compositions with paper, fabric, foil and decorative adhesives – collage),
- painting techniques using stencils, filling in contours,
- linear techniques (scratching, gouging),
- spatial solid forming techniques (salt mass, clay, plaster, plasticine, modelling clay),
- papermaking techniques – making decorative and utilitarian objects from paper and paper pulp, using handmade paper techniques,
- papercraft techniques – making decorative and utilitarian objects from paper and paper pulp, using the handmade paper technique, cut-outs and paper stained glass elements,
- printmaking techniques (e.g. fabric, leaf, thread and string prints – frottage),
- techniques using the textures of different materials – creating pictures from scraps of fabric.

A technique appropriately selected to the student's psychophysical capabilities, with the cooperation and involvement of the teacher, will create unique opportunities for artistic expression. When planning art activities with young people with intellectual disabilities, one should not limit oneself only to the above mentioned techniques. It is a good idea to refer to handbooks, textbooks and websites containing new artistic ideas. It is also important to know the specifics of working with other types of disabilities and to combine and use proposals from

other sub-disciplines of special education in practice. For example, in teaching practice with visually impaired students, Piłat (2001, 278-280) suggests:

- making works from recyclable materials: plasticine, clay, modelling clay, salt pulp, paper pulp for filling in contours, creating full and half-full forms;
- filling in contours prepared by the pupil or the teacher. Depending on the degree of disability, contours are prepared from string, plasticine, crayons, yarn and loose materials, among others;
- collage – a technique involving the juxtaposition of different materials with different textures;
- glass painting;
- knitting and weaving;
- macramé, i.e. string knotting;
- origami, the art of paper folding;
- wickerwork, or work with natural materials;
- woodworking: making simple functional forms;
- metalwork.

Taking into account the specific nature of the group with which one conducts classes, perhaps some of the above suggestions can be applied in classes with young people with intellectual disabilities. It should also be remembered that the basic form of spontaneous human visual expression is drawing (Uszyńska-Jarmoc 2003). It is a branch of visual arts in which the line constructed with the help of various tools is the most distinct means of expression. In drawing, the author presents the result of an intellectual elaboration of fragments of reality that are relevant at a given moment. In drawing, therefore, he or she contains his or her emotional attitude to reality (Lowenfeld and Brittain 1977). The second plastic form is painting, in which colour is the primary means of expression organising the plane (Hohense-Ciszewska 1991, 50). The use of colour develops colour sensitivity and also develops sensitivity to the use of colour in relation to an emotional state. Sculptural techniques are the least frequently used: modelling in plastic masses. Creating in sculpture develops spatial imagination and technical ingenuity in relation to the subject matter. It is precisely sculpting techniques, i.e. modelling and sculpting in plasticine, modelling clay, salt and paper paste, clay, that pupils with disabilities like to create in. As Lowenfeld and Brittain (1977, 11) state: 'Touching, seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting involves the active participation of the individual.' It should be borne in mind that the more instructions and commitments the implementer receives, the less original and innovative the task will be. Andrukowicz (1999, 144) points out the above aspect: 'The flexibility and operability of thinking, acting is then lowered, and the sense of anxiety from a possible failure to fulfil the obligations undertaken is increased. The very awareness of being observed, controlled or evaluated lowers the level of activity, especially creative activity.' Thus, it is extremely important that the teacher – the guide to the world of creativity and art – does not impose time frames or even his/her views and visions, that he/she gives creative freedom to the pupils – only then will he/she obtain artworks full of true emotions and a sense of agency.

4. The Importance of Creative Activities for the Self-Realisation and Social Perception of People with Intellectual Disabilities

In the literature on the subject the terms art therapy most often mean all therapeutic activities directed at the person, using aspects of creative – visual – activities as therapy tools. Creativity, on the other hand, is a self-directed activity, not relying on the support of a therapist, but giving people the opportunity to realise their own individual visions. In Poland, the idea of education through art was promoted by Wojnar (1997, 17), who argued that educational activities are intertwined with life, with a person's personal experiences, while art and artistic creations are an inseparable element of a person's functioning in culture. According to the author: 'art is as much a product, a work as it is activity, creativity, action.'

In addition to their therapeutic function, the activities in the classes make use of the cultural and artistic heritage of well-known artists or produce works of art on the basis of the student's abilities and predispositions. Such activities can contribute to the expansion and disclosure of hitherto unnoticed abilities, and can be an element in the formation of qualitatively new relations with the environment. Artistic activity is a transformation of the reality seen, it is a reflection of what the pupil knows about the surrounding world, but also of his or her own self. It is a non-verbal statement about individual experiences and thoughts, about how the world viewed is experienced. Art fosters cognition of reality – it opens the pupil's psyche to auditory, visual, gustatory and tactile sensations. Creativity is a record of human feelings, it allows one to learn, to express oneself in a socially acceptable way. According to Braun (2009, 49), the works of art created in class are a potential for success, the experiencing of which supports recognition and appreciation by adults: 'Feelings that are directly related to the visible product lead to identification with the work. Creative achievement manifests itself in this product, in which the child recognises himself and discovers his identity. It is a unique product of his or her own self.'

Quite often the creativity and art of people with disabilities is identified with the type and degree of disability, yet art is a product of imagination, feelings and emotions, as Hulek (1986, 21-22) wrote: 'this is not to say that the type, the degree of disability does not have any influence, but it has a secondary effect and influences rather the working conditions of the creator, the artist, the amateur.' It is important not to distinguish between the art of the disabled and the art of the non-disabled, especially in the reception, because, by definition, a work of art can please or displease the viewer – regardless of the dysfunction of the creator. In addition to their educational tasks, art classes play a therapeutic and compensatory role, i.e. they trigger creative activity and compensate for psycho-physical limitations. They are also an excellent example of subject correlation. Learning about the surrounding reality is more difficult for a student with intellectual disabilities and requires more time, commitment and effort. Educational difficulties are often not the only ones, very often there can also be problems in terms of establishing contacts with peers. It is therefore important to go beyond the walls of the studio or school with the art of people with

disabilities. Showing the results of creative work to a wide audience, because as Zinker (1991, 8) wrote: 'creation is the realisation of one's own perfection, the feeling that one is capable of doing anything. Creating is the apotheosis of life – one's own life! (...) Creativity is not only the production of an idea or belief, but also the very process and act of culminating something that is important, that needs to be expressed. It is not only the expression of the full range of a person's experiences, feelings and sense of uniqueness, but also a social act – the sharing with all other people of this celebration, this emphasis on living life to the full.' In other words, Pichalski (2012, 21) puts it: 'for the crowning achievement of the creative act should be to show the effects of the creator's work to a wider audience. The positive evaluation and recognition of the audience are for him the most important confirmation of his own worth. It also gives meaning to his work and a sense of fulfilment.' Therefore, it is worth showing the parents of the students, their family, teachers and complete strangers how important a person with disabilities is – living their own good and interesting life. The creation of artworks, therefore, is primarily aimed at shaping a sense of the usefulness of artistic expression occurring in contact with everyday life, but also with 'Great Art,' i.e. developing self-acceptance, uniqueness of one's own expression and aesthetics. According to Ploch (2010, 248): 'Arranged creatively inclusive activities should be based on the assumption that artists with disabilities are guided in their activity by the satisfaction of needs such as: belonging, enhancement of self-identity and self-esteem, security, recognition, self-determination, self-realisation.' The author also draws attention to the likelihood of the emergence of certain risks, which he interprets as: 'the widespread under-participation of a group of people with disabilities in cultural institutions and, at the same time, due to the dominance of the current social order with its rejectionist tendencies, ignoring or even considering them as undesirable by artistic circles. These are factors that make it difficult for the group of people in question to define their own identity, which in turn is a source of tensions that limit the possibilities of adaptation, social inclusion devoid of stigmatisation' (Ploch 2014, 85).

Contrary to the stigmatising stereotypes of people with disabilities, creativity is a quality that is also available to these people, despite individual developmental limitations. Disability or dysfunction often hinders daily functioning, but does not preclude the possibility of developing creative potential. Self-concept and self-esteem are formed by people with disabilities largely on the basis of individual experiences in the environment. Sometimes people with disabilities exaggerate the effects of their limitations and often perceive their person as incapable of any activity, identifying themselves as useless beings. Art is a necessary way of achieving a balance between the organism and the environment, but it is also a way of compensating for the deficiencies felt in real life, satisfying unrealised desires and needs. In creative activity, the disabled person creates a platform for self-realisation and penetration into society, integrates, therefore, in a positive way, thus overcoming feelings of alienation, separateness and loneliness. Creative activity provides opportunities for self-realisation and a sense of agency. According to Andrukowicz (1999, 144): 'the striving for proficiency is a natural feature of every human being. The sense of agency affects not only the level of

performance, but also the degree of determination in solving problem situations.' The practice of art and its presentation is therefore an indispensable part of the education and revalidation of young people with intellectual disabilities. It influences the holistic development of the individual and promotes better functioning in society.

Conclusion

Taking into account the importance and possibilities offered by art classes, special educators should attach great importance not only to the better functioning of students with intellectual disabilities in everyday life, but also pay attention to their cultural and aesthetic development. Experimentation and the search for the optimum working technique in art classes can have extremely positive effects in terms of curiosity, engagement and finding a niche for oneself in society. Promoting artistic talent and achievement, in addition to social inclusion, also influences self-esteem and a sense of belonging to a prestigious group of artists. Artistic activities contribute significantly to the learning of people with disabilities about the world around them. According to Burno-Nowakowa and Polkowska (1988, 96): 'Through experience and action, children expand their knowledge, vocabulary, learn to use tools, materials, and acquire respect for human labour and its products. In these activities children learn perseverance, consensual, teamwork, camaraderie.'

An empathetic, supportive special educator is undoubtedly an important link in the life of a young person with intellectual disabilities. Apart from organisational support, he or she can give a sense of creative freedom and a deeper sense of existence, and the artistic creations created can become valuable works of art. The above considerations can be summarised in the words of Kłosińska (2000, 10): 'a lot can be done in the everyday contacts of teachers with students during ordinary didactic classes, without costly expenditures and authorisations of various superior authorities, provided that the teacher himself is and wants to be creative.'

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SEMINARE

Sensory Comfort of Autistic Students

Komfort sensoryczny autystycznych studentów

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Abstract: Providing sensory comfort at a university is a challenge for the academic community, and understanding the experiences of young autistic people seems essential in this process. Individual experiences reveal what needs to be changed at the university so that the growing number of autistic students can study in a more welcoming environment. Using an interpretive approach in a qualitative research strategy, the experiences of 12 young autistic individuals were examined to gain insight into their interpretation and understanding of sensory comfort. Sensory comfort is interpreted as the absence of overwhelming sensory experiences and a condition whose absence significantly impairs social functioning, including academic performance. It depends not only on environmental and social factors but also on personal preferences. A university should be an environment that is welcoming and free of overwhelming sensory experiences, even if this is only the result of each university's strategy.

Keywords: sensory comfort, autism spectrum disorder, autistic students,

Abstrakt: Zapewnienie komfortu sensorycznego na uczelni wyższej jest wyzwaniem dla społeczności akademickiej, a zrozumienie doświadczeń młodych osób autystycznych wydaje się w tym procesie niezbędne. Indywidualne doświadczenia ujawniają, co należy zmienić na uniwersytecie, aby rosnąca liczba studentów i studentek autystycznych mogła studiować w bardziej przyjaznym środowisku. Stosując podejście interpretacyjne w jakościowej strategii badawczej, zbadano doświadczenia 12 młodych osób autystycznych, aby uzyskać wgląd w ich interpretację i zrozumienie komfortu sensorycznego. Komfort sensoryczny jest interpretowany jako brak przytłaczających doświadczeń sensorycznych i stan, którego brak znacząco utrudnia funkcjonowanie społeczne. Zależy on nie tylko od czynników środowiskowych i społecznych, ale także od osobistych preferencji. Uczelnia wyższa powinna być środowiskiem przyjaznym i wolnym od przeciążających doznań sensorycznych, nawet jeśli jest to jedynie wynikiem indywidualnej strategii każdej szkoły wyższej.

Słowa kluczowe: komfort sensoryczny, zaburzenia ze spektrum autyzmu, studenci autystyczni, integracja sensoryczna

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In the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems ICD-11 (WHO 2022), autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are defined as deficits in the ability to initiate and maintain reciprocal social interactions and social communication. These are accompanied by a range of restricted, repetitive and rigid patterns of behavior, interests, and activities that are atypical compared to the cultural norms of the individual's environment and their chronological age. The onset of this disorder occurs in the developmental period, often in early childhood, although symptoms may become apparent later when social demands exceed the abilities of an autistic person. Social functioning difficulties in autistic individuals can be so severe that they lead to difficulties in personal, familial, social, educational, or professional. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder demonstrate a full range of intellectual and linguistic abilities, although ASD may be accompanied by coexisting illnesses, disorders, or disabilities. There are different perspectives on interpreting autism beyond clinical views. Many autistic people see autism as a neurodiversity, part of their personality, a social identity. There are different perspectives on interpreting autism beyond clinical views. Many autistic people see autism as a neurodiversity, part of their personality, a social identity (Amstrong 2010; Bailin 2019). They do not treat autism as a clinical disorder. In Poland, autism is most often treated as a clinical entity and another way of interpreting it is in the minority. This applies both to the provisions in Polish law and the public perception.

The term "sensory integration", as used by Ayres, refers to the ability to generate appropriate motor and behavioral responses to sensory stimuli. "Sensory integration is the ability to register information from the surrounding world through the sensory organs, process this information in the central nervous system and to use it in purposeful actions" (Mass 2007, 32). The process of sensory integration has its roots in the prenatal period. During the first year of life, sensory integration must occur smoothly, as it affects the child's ability to crawl and stand independently (Ayres 2015). The development of children's cognitive abilities is largely shaped by the development of their sensorimotor skills. A critical role in this process is played by the integration of signals from the vestibular and proprioceptive systems. However, "the brain, under normal circumstances, is a self-organizing system. When it is unsuccessful in accomplishing its integrative task, the behavior directed by the brain fails to fall within 'normal' expectations" (Ayres 1968, 41). The result of these abnormalities is inadequate responses to stimuli, i.e. behavior that deviates from the social norm. According to Ayres, ASD symptoms are the result of sensory integration disorders. This hypothesis is also reflected in the DSM-V criteria (American Psychiatric Association 2013; Kryteria diagnostyczne 2018). Ayres (1979) observed both hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity to sensory stimuli in autistic individuals. These persons face difficulty registering (detecting and interpreting) signals, modulating them, interacting with various objects, and/or motivation. Ayres's theories in relation about autism spectrum disorders also find support in contemporary research (Kilroy, Zadeh and Cermak 2019). According to Ayres (2015), sensory processing limitations in autistic children can

be classified and grouped into three types. First, there may be an abnormality in the registration of sensory information in the brain, which results in insufficient attention to these stimuli or, on the contrary, an overreaction. Second, there may be a disruption in the modulation of nerve impulses, especially in the context of vestibular and tactile stimulus processing, which leads to the experience of instability (especially in the context of gravity) and heightened sensitivity to tactile stimuli. Third, the area of the brain responsible for volition, particularly regarding new or unusual activities, may malfunction, manifesting as a lack of interest in performing activities generally considered purposeful or constructive.

The relationship between ASD and sensory processing disorders continues to be a matter of scientific interest (Geschwind 2009). These are two separate disorders that coexist symbiotically. "Basically, the relationship is as follows: most (perhaps all) children with autism spectrum disorders have sensory processing problems" (Miller 2016, 378). Different ways of sensory processing are a feature of autism (Marco et al., 2011). Ayres' theory, also confirmed by other authors (Lane 2019), facilitates the understanding of the sensory comfort of persons with ASD.

1. Sensory Comfort of Young Autistic Adults

Sensory processing disorders (Sensory Processing Disorder – SPD) are related to the presence of sensory integration process disorders (Borkowska and Wagh 2018). Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is the inability to effectively use information received through the senses to enable daily functioning. This term covers a variety of neurological abnormalities. These disorders are also referred to as sensory integration dysfunction (SI Dysfunction) or dysfunction in sensory integration (DSI) (Kranowitz 2012). If sensory processing does not work properly, it can lead to difficulties in motor development, motor coordination, and manual skills; development and improvement of speech and language; attention and memory; acquiring academic skills; social, emotional, and adaptive functioning; and achieving an appropriate level of school readiness. Their consequences include limitations in social life, difficulties in regulating emotions and lower self-esteem (Miller 2016). Sensory processing disorders are categorized into three types: sensory modulation disorders (SMD), sensory discrimination disorder (SDD), and sensory-based motor disorders (SBMD) (Odowska-Szlachcic 2018). "Altered neurological sensory integration results in Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), also known as Sensory Regulation Dysfunction, Sensory Integration Dysfunction or Sensory Dysfunction Disorder. In this condition, the brain doesn't process sensory inputs correctly, leading to inappropriate behavioral and motor responses that affect learning, coordination, behavior, and language. SPD may lead to stress, anxiety or even depression, and represents a risk of psychopathology" (Galiana-Simal et al. 2020, 1). Difficulty in processing sensory stimuli can make normal relationships and communication with the environment challenging. People in the immediate environment may struggle to understand the specific way of interacting with a person with sensory integration

disorders, which generates atypical behaviors in them, allowing them to avoid overwhelming, incomprehensible, and unpleasant sensory experiences.

Comfort is an individual reflection of the human body. A state of comfort can only be achieved when physiological, mental, and physical factors interact in a way to satisfy an individual. The physiological response of the human body is an objective reaction to external conditions, striving to achieve a state of balance. Human sensations cannot be measured and can only be assessed by observing related responses. Sensory comfort is intuitive (cf. Cheng et al. 2021). Individuals with atypical sensory processing often present atypical behaviors, especially characteristic of persons with autism spectrum disorders, for example, avoiding stimuli or self-harm. These behaviors result from difficulties in coping with intense discomfort that is difficult to describe verbally (Biel 2015). Autism spectrum disorders manifest themselves differentially in the form of reactions and traits in the spheres of communication and social interaction, repetitive and inflexible behavioral patterns, and interests. These manifestations are closely related to the perception of sensory comfort and thus to the individual's way of satisfying needs related to this comfort. "It is not just adverse sensory environments that create barriers to autistic inclusion, but also the stigmatisation of autistic people who are overwhelmed by sensory environments (MacLennan et al. 2022)" (Manning, Williams and MacLennan 2023, 1515).

Sensory comfort is a crucial aspect of the daily lives of young adults with autism spectrum disorders. For them, the process of processing sensory stimuli can be significantly more demanding and complex than for individuals without this type of disorder. Dysregulation of sensory experience may lead to problems in everyday interactions and communication with the environment.

2. Methods

The study sought (according to the research questions posed) to learn about the sensory comfort of autistic students and their interpretation of it (including in the context of quality of life), as well as to learn about the stimuli that are related to this individual and subjective state.

1. How do autistic students describe their experiences of sensory comfort experienced in everyday life?
2. What strategies do they prefer to deal with uncomfortable sensory stimuli?
3. What sensory stimuli influence their sensory comfort?
4. What is the relationship between sensory comfort and the quality of life and the ability to fully participate in the social life of autistic students?
5. What factors (environmental, social, and personal) determine the sensory comfort of the subject group?

Project

The interpretive approach is used in research conducted in a qualitative strategy (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). For interpretive researchers, the starting point is an individual and the aim of the study is to know and comprehend their interpretation of the surrounding world. In our research, we decided to focus on autistic individuals studying at higher education institutions because changes are necessary in the academic environment. This environment should ensure sensory comfort for autistic individuals, which can only be achieved by understanding the needs and expectations of autistic persons.

Participants

The research sample (twelve people) was selected in a purposeful manner (purposive sampling), which consists in "sampling elements from the population that meet the criterion included in the research question" (Rubacha, 2008, 124). The criteria used to select the research sample were as follows: the subject was a young adult (from 18 to 27 years old1: subject 11 and subject 12 – 18 years old; subject 8 – 19 years old, subject 2 – 20 years old; subject 5 – 21 years old; subject 1 subject 10 – 22 years old; subject 4 – 23 years old; subject 3 – 24 years old; subject 6 – 25 years old; subject 9 – 26 years old; subject 7 – 27 years old)) who studied at a university had autism spectrum and sensory disorders. Gender differences in relation to sensory experience did not occur in this study. The group was ethnically homogeneous and had similar levels of sensory sensitivity. It was differentiated in terms of ability and level of social functioning, including academic functioning.

Autistic persons were recruited from Polish universities by sharing posts on the Facebook social networking site in groups related to ASD. Individuals interested in participating responded to the post.

Materials

The research employed the method of a semi-structured individual interview. The first version of the interview was assessed by autistic students who did not participate in the research. Their feedback formed the basis for developing the final version of the interview questionnaire with twelve open questions. Each respondent was informed about the voluntary nature of participation in the study, the right to withdraw from the study at each stage, the need to provide informed consent to participate in the study, and the fact that the researcher would anonymize the participant's identity.

Procedure

Each study participant gave informed consent via a private e-mail to the researcher, expressing their willingness to participate in the research. In the private message, they received an interview questionnaire which then they completed independently and returned as a filled-out file (cf. Ryen and Silverman 2000). Eleven interviews

[1] In Poland, this is overwhelmingly the age of those studying at universities.

were conducted through this procedure, and one interview was conducted face-to-face, as requested by one of the study participants. Participants did not receive compensation for participating in the study.

3. Analysis

The stages of data analysis include data reduction, representation, and verification (Rubacha 2017). "Data reduction involves coding the data. Coding is finding and labeling indicators of variables (analytical categories) in the text and giving them meaning" (Rubacha 2017, 263). Analysis of the interviews can be done through various techniques. In this research, content analysis was chosen, which involves systematically searching the text to identify categories. In the research described here, categories were determined by letting the themes come out on their own (inductive analysis).

Data coding can be divided into: factual coding and theoretical coding. The data collected was coded factually line by line. The factual coding began with an open approach, in which the text was analyzed from multiple perspectives, allowing as many analytical categories to emerge as possible. The next step was selective coding, that is, selecting only those categories that best reflect the research problem, for further theoretical analysis. Once the open coding process was completed, there was a selection of codes that were directly related to the research topic. Table 2 presents an example of a question from the interview questionnaire and the analytical categories assigned to it, to illustrate below the sample statements of the respondents with the categories assigned to them. The selected codes formed the foundation of the representation of the collected data (Rubacha 2017; cf. Babbie 2003). Table 1 presents a summary of the research questions and their assigned questions from the interview questionnaire, as well as the selected codes that formed the foundation of the representation of the collected data.

4. Results

Sensory comfort is the absence of unpleasant sensory experiences.

The answer to the first research question required an analysis of the data obtained from the responses to two questions from the interview questionnaire. Sensory comfort is the result of a balance between individual preferences and needs and the environmental conditions that promote a sense of calm, security, and satisfaction.

The obtained data demonstrate a correlation between the theoretical definition of sensory comfort and the way it is experienced by the respondents.

"For me, it's a state where I am not overwhelmed by excessive stimuli. It's the feeling when I feel free and calm, without an intense need for stimulation." (The Person 1)

"As a sense of absence of unpleasant sensory experiences, or possibly also the absence of the risk of them occurring (which in itself can be stressful)." (The Person 2)

"I feel sensory comfort when nothing bothers me when I don't feel discomfort, meaning nothing disturbs me, hurts, or causes overly intense sensory experiences – there are no stimuli that distract us." (The Person 5)

"An experience of satisfaction, calm, and well-being about sensory stimuli, such as touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste." (The Person 6)

"Sensory comfort, in my understanding, means how sensory perceptions affect an individual on a comfort scale. A high level of comfort would mean that none of the sensory perceptions cause discomfort or hinder a person's functioning. A low level of comfort means that sensory perceptions cause enough discomfort to make functioning difficult." (The Person 10)

The respondents interpret the feeling of comfort as a state free from excessive stimuli, avoidance of unpleasant sensory experiences, absence of discomfort and overwhelming stimuli, and experiencing satisfaction, calm, and well-being.

"I don't like noise and unfortunately my department is a very old building with wooden floors that creak terribly when walked on, and dragging metal chair legs on them makes a terrible bang. I also can't stand it when someone drops something or puts it down with a bang on the wooden benches in the classrooms. I also feel very uncomfortable when ambulances and cars with intentionally damaged mufflers drive by outside my window (the department is located by the road). Not only do they make noise but they also do it suddenly and this shock only intensifies my discomfort." (The Person 2)

"The worst thing is when there's a light and it just keeps flickering constantly. I can hear it, I can see it. It's not that it's directly above me, but I just have this feeling that there's something in the room and it distracts me. The same goes, for example, when someone starts sniffing during class. It's unbearable for me too. I can't concentrate on what's going on in the room, because the only thing I can focus on is these sounds." (The Person 7)

"Sometimes, mostly in situations when there are many people in the building at once and it gets noisy. I also have trouble understanding the people I'm talking to." (The Person 8)

"Every time I'm at the university there are situations that cause me sensory discomfort. Some of them are beyond anyone's control, like bright/flickering lights, sounds made by students in an uncontrolled manner, and noises from the street. Other highly uncomfortable experiences for me include audio materials played during classes, which are always too loud for me, the large number of people in the corridors, but at the same time large empty spaces, and the inability to use certain ways to relieve stress due to the fear of drawing attention to myself." (The Person 10)

The responses from autistic individuals indicate a profound sensitivity to environmental stimuli that may go unnoticed by most people but for them, they are factors that generate sensory discomfort: noise, bright and flickering lights, accidental touch, various smells, or empty spaces. Feelings of anxiety may also be linked to social situations. Crowded rooms and crowds of people in corridors can make autistic individuals feel overwhelmed and helpless. For them, sensory comfort

is not only limited to avoiding discomforting situations but also to seeking those that provide relief. Appropriate lighting or a quiet corner can serve as a haven of tranquility and self-stimulation can help release accumulated emotional tension.

We have various strategies for coping with sensory-motor discomfort.

The responses to the second research question were provided by the data obtained from asking two additional questions in the interview questionnaire. For autistic individuals, stimming (self-stimulation) can be a way to manage difficulties in processing sensory stimuli and regulating emotions as well as finding a sense of comfort and control over their environment. Despite the stigma associated with this practice, many autistic individuals perceive stimming as a natural and positive part of their life experience (Kapp et al. 2019). It is worth noting that one way to cope with stress and excessive arousal is by using sensory toys. These can take various forms, from popular gadgets (such as fidget spinners and "pop it") to simple items available at home (Slater 2012).

"When I'm not feeling very overwhelmed, stronger stimming helps a bit. I often put on headphones or look for a quiet place without people. I wait for everyone to leave the room so I can be the last one out without having to push through." (The Person 1)

"I have these magnetic balls that you can squeeze and turn. Generally, something that I need to have in my hands. I also draw in my notebook." (The Person 4)

"I bought noise-canceling headphones (ANC) which help a lot. I also a small case with earplugs. I usually have stim toys with me. I try to wear clothes that are comfortable for me." (The Person 8)

"I use headphones, earplugs, and noise-canceling devices. I have specific tactile needs, so I wear pressure clothing, fabrics that feel nice to the touch, and heavier weight. I also carry items that are purely sensory-pleasing for me like plush toys made of soft material. Whenever possible, I try to avoid situations and things that cause me sensory discomfort." (The Person 10)

"My tactile needs require stumulation with a gel toy." (The person 11)

Young autistic adults prefer different methods for managing sensory discomfort: wearing noise-canceling headphones, using sunglasses in crowded places or wearing clothing with special sensory properties (pressure garments or those made from pleasant materials). Avoiding crowded places, where the risk of sensory overload is high, is a proven strategy for coping with uncomfortable sensory stimuli (Rowe, Candler and Neville 2011).

"I try to avoid crowded places and situations where the risk of sensory overload is high, as much as possible. I regularly use noise-canceling headphones and sunglasses." (The Person 3)

"I wear noise-canceling headphones, dress in clothes that suit me, and take my blanket with me to different places. When I don't feel well, I simply leave the situation that is harmful to me." (The Person 7)

Autistic students use individual methods to cope with uncomfortable sensory stimuli, including the very popular practice of stimming. Many respondents use sensory-reducing equipment and choose clothing with specific sensory properties.

An important strategy is seeking out calm places, which helps minimize the risk of sensory overload, and using sensory toys which aid in regulating sensory experiences and replace undesirable behaviors like scratching or clenching teeth.

Each sense can provide uncomfortable sensory experiences.

The data obtained from responses to one of the questions in the interview questionnaire were used to address the third research question. The data show that various sensory stimuli affect sensory comfort in adults with autism spectrum disorders. Analysis of the responses from the interview questionnaire highlights key areas that are sources of sensory discomfort: bright lighting, intense and bright colors, loud sounds, noise, and crowds in corridors, simultaneous voices of many people, the need to filter sounds, unexpected touch, cold objects, temperature changes, vomiting reactions to most types of food, restricting diet to a small number of acceptable foods or intense smells.

"Probably the most challenging for me is visual and auditory stimuli, like a lot of people in the corridor and the lighting in the rooms and corridors. It's not super overwhelming; I think I've learned to manage it a bit." (The Person 4)

"Sense of sight, taste, and touch. For visual stimuli, it's very bothersome, for example, when you enter a store and it's very bright with everything in white. These stimuli make it hard for me to process what's happening. When it comes to tactile stimuli, I don't like it when strangers or people I'm too close to touch me. It just makes me shudder. When I'm stressed and overwhelmed with emotions, I need to bite the inside of my cheeks. As for taste, I have been diagnosed with AFRID, which means I don't eat most types of food. I have a few types that I eat, but I can't eat most because I have a very strong gag reflex." (The Person 5)

"Definitely in the area of hearing, probably touch, including temperature. I also have a pretty strong need for stimming." (The Person 8)

"The sense of smell is the most sensitive, hypersensitive in me." (The Person 12)

Each sense provides uncomfortable sensory experiences. It can be a source of sensory discomfort and a build-up of emotions that young autistic adults cannot cope with. They seek individual ways to relieve emotional tension, which often falls outside of accepted social norms, such as biting the inside of their cheeks or vomiting.

We are different, not neurotypical.

The answers to the fourth research question were provided by the data obtained from three questions in the interview questionnaire. Many studies indicate a lower quality of life for individuals with autism compared to neurotypical individuals. The perception of young autistic adults results from ignorance, misunderstanding of these disorders, and the effects of social stereotypes.

"I think there is a stereotype that every person on the spectrum is hypersensitive to sound, which is not true. Some people believe that every autistic person has the same sensory difficulties." (The Persons 3)

"Many people perceive us as if we are somehow deficient, underdeveloped, or strange. Stimming is seen as abnormal and gadgets are considered mere inventions.

They do not understand our problems or trivialize and judge them. On the other hand, some people take excessive care, as if we were delicate. Ultimately, we still appear as different because we are held to the standards of 'normal' people." (The Person 1)

The standards of 'normal' set for autistic individuals seem crucial for social selection

"Sort of, the stereotype is that of rocking back and forth and some people imagine that someone is mentally ill." (The Person 4)

"People look at my sensory blanket oddly, but not at my headphones because they think they are wireless for listening to music, not noise-canceling ones." (The Person 1)

"There is generally no reaction from the lecturers. I try to use them in classes with teachers I know are informed about neurodiversity. Reactions from other students are generally positive (e.g., that I have a cool fidget spinner) or they do not react in a way that is noticeable to me." (The Person 8)

"The items I bring to the faculty do not cause problems, but there are some items that I like or that are very helpful to me but I do not bring them because I have encountered negative opinions. Some items make noises that are unpleasant to some people, but I can replace them with others. Unfortunately, I have problems with biting and clenching my teeth due to sensory problems, and orthodontic chew toys help me a lot. Unfortunately, they are considered disgusting in public and I am seen as 'retarded' when using them, and I do not have a substitute for them. Other methods are not only unsatisfactory but also less safe or have the opposite effect on my comfort." (The Person 10)

The participants also described the reactions of others when informed that they are autistic and have sensory integration issues.

"Generally, people say I'm making it up, some just say that's how I am and leave it at that." (The Person 4)

"With ridicule, saying that I'm mentally ill." (The Person 6)

"If they are neurotypical people, they often react with disbelief, sometimes completely dismissing my difficulties. I think this is because they cannot imagine my sensory experiences and/or have never heard of anything like it." (The Person 9)

"I usually meet with understanding; rarely does anyone say that I'm exaggerating." (The Person 3)

"I meet with a lot of understanding and acceptance." (The Person 7)

Individuals with autism spectrum disorders often encounter negative opinions from society, which are also a result of stereotypical and false views in the media. Respondents point out the existing stereotypes and misconceptions, which often lead to misunderstandings and wrong judgments. For example, the perception of autistic persons as "deficient and underdeveloped" or the belief that every autistic persons is sensory hypersensitive results in either the trivialization of their problems or excessive concern. Both reactions entail negative consequences.

Everything determines our sensory comfort.

The data obtained from three questions in the interview questionnaire provided the answers to the fifth research question. The factors determining the sensory comfort of autistic students include personal preferences, environmental conditions, and social perceptions of individuals with autism spectrum disorders. An overload of uncomfortable sensory stimuli can lead to social isolation in this group or a lack of relationships in the peer group.

"During my freshman year, there was a student integration event at a pub and I was overwhelmed by everything and ended up leaving as soon as I entered. I couldn't handle the loud music, the shouting and squeals of people having fun, or the colorful lights and lasers." (The Person 1)

"One uncomfortable event I experienced was during the test I was very stressed about. There was a person who kept sniffing their nose the whole time. I just couldn't write the test. I failed because of it. Not only was I extremely stressed with my hands shaking, but because of that situation I couldn't hear my thoughts." (The Person 5)

"Once, after a long bus ride, I realized I was so upset that I wanted to cry and was actively angry. The discomfort was caused by the noise and experiences related to the crowd (it was too hot, and I couldn't move without brushing against other people)." (The Person 8)

Persons with autism spectrum disorder have increased sensitivity to the behavior of others, which affects their sense of comfort in social interactions.

"When someone shouts near my ear, touches or hugs me without warning – it makes me feel very bad. My comfort improves when I'm left alone." (The Person 1)

"It bothers me when more than one person is talking at the same time or when someone is passionately telling a story. It's difficult for me to be around children because they often interact with each other and their voices are hard for me to bear." (The Person 7)

"Loud conversations, shouting, not muting phones, listening to loud music, playing with lights, touching and getting close to me without asking, looking me in the eyes, describing tastes and smells in detail – all of that is discomfort." (The Person 10)

Food selectivity, also known as ARFID (Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder), is a significant factor in the comfort of individuals with autism spectrum disorder about eating (Kozak et al. 2023). Autistic individuals often experience sensory sensitivities, which can lead to avoiding or limiting the consumption of certain foods due to their taste, texture, or smell. This, in turn, can create an aversion to eating and cause stress related to the need to consume foods that are sensory and unpleasant for them.

"I eat very specifically and selectively. There are things I won't eat because of their texture and form. I eat with small cutlery and can't use larger ones. Fortunately, there's no canteen at our university so I eat what I bring with me." (The Person 1)

"I usually eat very bland things. Stronger flavors, different vinegars, and spices are very unpleasant for me. Carbonated drinks also sting too much. Of the food

offered by the university, I'm only familiar with what's in the vending machines and there's usually something I can choose." (The Person 2)

"I eat the same things repeatedly and my diet is quite limited. At university, there are restaurants/canteens where sometimes I can find dishes that I'm able to eat." (The Person 9)

"Due to sensory issues, I have problems with many types of meat. Sometimes I have problems with food in general, then I need meals that are easy and quick to eat. A year ago, I still had trouble finding food at university that had meat I could eat or vegetarian dishes. Now, there are more options (at least in my faculty), and there's usually something I can eat. Unfortunately, when I struggle to eat I have almost no options." (The Person 10)

Food selectivity is also a personal factor that prevents from establishing and maintaining peer relationships. Relationships are built during shared meals at university or in trendy restaurants frequented by young adults.

Table 3 shows the environmental, social and personal factors determining the sensory comfort of the surveyed adults with autism spectrum disorders. The respondents introduced their types and described them in detail based on these three main factors. Within the group of environmental factors, respondents most frequently highlighted strong stimuli that were unacceptable to them. Among the social factors, acceptance and understanding of the environment were singled out as a condition for social inclusion. Social interactions are important to them, as they can be both a source of comfort and sensory discomfort. In the group of personal factors, respondents emphasized the need for an individualized approach to each young autistic person. This individualization includes nutritional selectivity and routinized behavior.

5. Discussion

Sensory comfort is closely related to a person's physical well-being and to achieve it, there must be harmony between physiological factors, psychological factors, and external conditions. The body's physiological reactions are objective and strive to achieve balance, but an individual's experiences are subjective and not directly correlated with physiology. Human feelings are difficult to measure, but they can be assessed by observing reactions such as the body's sensory comfort or responses to sensory discomfort (cf. Cheng et al. 2021). Sensory comfort is a state of subjective well-being, achieved when external stimuli affect a person's senses pleasantly and harmoniously.

Autistic tudents often encounter uncomfortable situations at universities (Jackson et al. 2018; Gelbar, Shefyk and Reichow 2015). These difficulties include challenges in information processing, time management, group work and responding to questions posed by lecturers. They also face issues with processing all the sensory stimuli present in the university environment (MacLeod and Green 2009; Van Hees, Moyson and Roeyers 2015), which directly impacts the academic functioning of autistic students (Jansen et al. 2017; White et al. 2016).

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder experience a variety of sensory stimuli. Sensory hyperreactivity is one of the characteristic symptoms of ASD and can manifest as sensitivity to external stimuli that others might perceive as normal or mild. For example, sounds that are tolerable to most people may be painful for those with sensory hyperreactivity. Feelings of being overwhelmed can also be triggered by blinding lights, intense smells or even a light touch (Chamak et al. 2008; Jones, Quigney and Huws 2003). On the other hand, sensory hyporeactivity, though less noticed in research and often overlooked, is also present in autistic individuals. Persons with hyporeactivity may not respond adequately to stimuli such as pain, hunger or temperature changes. They may also be less sensitive to certain sounds or smells (Chamak et al. 2008). Additionally, some autistic individuals may exhibit sensory-seeking behavior, actively searching for pleasurable sensory experiences. These can include favorite music, specific textures or other stimuli that evoke positive feelings (Jones, Quigney and Huws 2003). Sensory stimuli have a significant impact on the comfort, or discomfort of young autistic adults. For some, strong sensory stimuli (such as repetitive sounds, cold light or mixed smells) can be overwhelming and lead to discomfort. Conversely, other stimuli (such as a barely perceptible touch, subdued light, or soft sounds) can have a calming effect, and enhance sensory comfort.

The sensory comfort of adults with autism can be affected several factors such as noise levels or intense light exposure. These stimuli can be either stimulating or overwhelming (Tomchek, Huebner and Dunn 2014). Additionally, personal characteristics such as the degree of sensory sensitivity or preferences for certain stimuli also play a significant role in determining the level of sensory comfort (Dellapiazza et al. 2021). Sensory overloads affect the relationship between sensory comfort and quality of life, as well as the ability to fully and satisfactorily participate in the social life of this group of individuals (Øverland et al. 2022). The opinions of others in their environment exert a significant impact on the social functioning of autistic individuals. These opinions are often shaped by mass media, which portray autistic people in a false manner. Such representations can be harmful as the public tends to prefer stereotypical and fictional examples that do not reflect the true experiences of autistic individuals. These cases are often intriguing and serve to increase viewership and click rates (Belcher and Maich 2014). Information provided by people from one's environment (such as peers) is often regarded as authentic and has a strong influence on the decisions of autistic individuals. Relationships with others are crucial to the quality of life for individuals with high-functioning autism. However, the correlates of the quality of life for autistic individuals are not well understood due to a lack of standardized tools to study this conceptual category (McKenzie et al. 2024).

A lack of understanding of specific sensory difficulties by neurotypical individuals leads to the devaluation of the experiences of those with ASD. Reactions to the use of sensory gadgets by autistic individuals vary. There are instances where these gadgets are met with misunderstanding or negative

responses, which discourages their use in public places. Similar reactions are presented by the academic environment towards stimming, which refers to motor or sensory actions performed by individuals with autism spectrum disorder to self-regulate or modulate their sensory experiences. Stimming can include repetitive body movements, complex gestures, leg shaking, blinking, or specific sensory behaviors such as rocking or looking at lights. Stimming may occur in stress response, excessive sensory stimulation, uncertainty, or as a way to express emotions. Scientific research confirms that stimming can provide a stable and familiar experience that helps cope with unpredictable, overwhelming, and new situations. It can also provide relief from sensory and emotional overstimulation such as anxiety (Leekam, Prior and Uljarevic 2011). Autistic adults report that stimming provides them with a soothing rhythm that supports them in coping with distorted or overstimulating perceptions and the resulting stress (Davidson 2010). Stimming can assist in managing uncertainty and anxiety (Joyce et al. 2017).

Fortunately, some individuals experience neutral or positive reactions, particularly in environments that are aware of neurodiversity. Discussions about the sensory issues faced by young autistic adults provoke a range of reactions: negative (mockery, disbelief, or devaluation of sensory difficulties) and positive (understanding, acceptance). Negative reactions lead to a sense of isolation and lack of understanding, while positive responses improve well-being and enhance the ability to function socially. Introducing accommodations for autistic individuals in universities is a priority for improving their sensory comfort and, in turn, their quality of life. Research shows that autistic students face many challenges in building relationships and adapting to the university environment, often leading to decisions to discontinue their studies. Support from universities should include mentoring, special exam conditions, and quiet study rooms. Raising awareness and educating the academic community about autism can also improve understanding and support for autistic students (Gurbuz, Hanley and Riby 2019). In Table 4, we show the changes that could be made at the university suggested by the young autistic adults surveyed. In Table 4, the respondents suggested solutions that can create an environment at the university that is welcoming and free from overwhelming unwanted stimuli. Some solutions any university can implement immediately, while others require more time but are not costly. The university must want to create a sensory-friendly environment.

Sensory comfort plays a key role in the social life of young adults with autism spectrum disorders, especially at university. Improving communication and understanding of autistic students as well as creating environments adapted to their sensory needs are crucial for their comfort and social inclusion (Benevides et al. 2020). The data obtained in our research indicate that appropriate sensory conditions promote better focus and effective learning, which are essential for academic success. Sensory comfort is closely linked to building social relationships, both within and outside the university (Bagatell et al. 2022).

6. Limitations and Strengths

The sample for this qualitative study was small and described experiences within the specific context of Polish higher education institutions. Therefore, the ability to generalize the findings is limited. In this study, the experiences of autistic students were used to understand their sensory comfort. These experiences may differ from those of other young adults with autism spectrum disorders. Further research is needed to explore how the current findings may apply to other environments, such as the workplace. The findings from this research could be extended to a broader population (Maxwell and Chmiel 2014; Maxwell 2019) and may offer a new perspective for those shaping academic environments.

Conclusion

Autistic students interpret sensory comfort as the absence of overwhelming sensory stimuli. They employ various strategies to cope with these experiences including stimming, noise-canceling headphones, and sensory toys. Each sense can produce uncomfortable sensory experiences, and each sense is exposed to overwhelming stimuli at university. Autistic students encounter both positive and negative reactions from their academic environment. Negative reactions stem from people's lack of knowledge, stereotypes and social prejudices. There is a whole range of personal, environmental, and social factors that determine sensory comfort, including individual preferences, many diverse stimuli in the surroundings, and personal responses that help relieve emotional tension.

Table 1. Summary of the research questions and the assigned questions from the interview questionnaire and the codes underpinning the collected data

What strategies do they prefer to deal with uncomfortable sensory stimuli?	What strategies do you use to maintain your sensory comfort	• Stimming • Noise-cancelling headphones • Leaving the room • Sensory toys • Earplugs
	Do you use sensory gadgets to increase your sense of sensory comfort? If so, how do they increase it?	• I use it/them • I don't use it/them • Noise-cancelling headphones • Anti-stress toys • Sunglasses

What types of sensory stimuli influence their sensory comfort?	In the sphere of which sense (visual, auditory, tactile, taste, smell) do you most often experience uncomfortable sensory experiences?	• Sense of sight • Sense of hearing • Sense of touch • Sense of taste • Sense of smell
What is the relationship between sensory comfort and the quality of life and the ability to fully participate in social life of autistic students	What kind of reaction did you experience at university regarding the use of sensory gadgets?	• Strange looks • No reaction • Neutral reactions • Curious looks • I hide when using sensory gadgets.
	What kind of reaction do you get when you talk about your sensory problems?	• I don't talk about sensory issues. • Understanding • Negative reaction • Ridicule • Compassion
	In your opinion, are there stereotypes or misconceptions about sensory comfort in persons with autism spectrum disorders? What are these misconceptions?	• Disabled person • Mentally ill person • Lack of understanding of the diversity of sensory experiences
What factors (environmental, social and personal)determine the sensory comfort of the subject group?	Is there a specific situation that particularly influenced your sensory experience? What is the situation and in which sense does discomfort occurred?	• Auditory discomfort • Crowd • Tactile discomfort • Noise • Visual discomfort • Excessive lighting • No specific situation
	What behaviors of other persons around you influence your sensory comfort or discomfort?	• Screaming and loud talking • Unexpected touch • Playing with light • Strong smell
	Does your diet deviate from the generally accepted norm for sensory reasons? Does the university offer solutions that would meet your dietary expectations?	• Specific and selective food • Avoiding intense flavors • No dietary preferences • Repetitive food

Source: own study.

Table 2. Example of data coding2

Question from the interview questionnaire	**Codes underpinning the representation of collected data**
How do you understand the concept of sensory comfort?	No stimulus overload Sense of freedom Feeling calm No need for stimulation Lack of stress Absence of unpleasant experiences Overall well-being
Example of respondents' statements	**Choice of an analytical category**
"For me, it is a state in which I am not overloaded by excessive stimuli. The feeling of being at ease and calm when I don't have an intense need for stimulation."	No stimulus overload Sense of freedom No need for stimulation
Theoretical code 1	Sensory comfort is equated by young autistic people with the absence of overloading stimuli and the lack of need for stimulation, as well as a sense of freedom.
Example of respondents' statements	**Choice of an analytical category**
"As a sense of the absence of unpleasant sensory experiences, or the lack of risk of their occurrence (which in itself may be stressful)."	No unpleasant sensory experience Risk of unpleasant sensory experience
Theoretical code 2	Sensory comfort is equated by young autistic people with the absence of unpleasant sensory experiences.
Example of respondents' statements	**Choice of an analytical category**
"I understand sensory comfort as a state where I am not overwhelmed by the stimuli around me and my brain processes them without overload."	No stimuli overload
Theoretical code 3	Sensory comfort is equated by young autistic people with the absence of being overwhelmed by stimuli.

[2] Due to the limited volume of the article, the entire coding is not presented.

Example of respondents' statements	**Choice of an analytical category**
"An experience of contentment, peace and well-being in a relationship with sensory inputs such as touch, sight, sound, smell and taste."	A sense of calm A sense of well-being related to sensory stimuli.
Theoretical code 4	Sensory comfort is equated by young autistic people with a sense of calm and well-being associated with sensory stimuli.
Example of respondents' statements	**Choice of an analytical category**
"For me, sensory comfort is the lack of feeling stimuli that cause pain, anger, discomfort and internal opposition."	No stimuli overload
Theoretical code 5	Sensory comfort is equated by young autistic people with the absence of sensory stimulus overload.

Source: own study.

Table 3. Factors determining the sensory comfort of autistic young adults as perceived by them

Factor type	**Factor subtype**	**Factor characteristics**
Environmental	Strong stimuli	Loud noises and strong light levels are overwhelming and tiring for autistic people.
	Crowded places	Being in places such as pubs, shopping centres, large lecture theatres, and cramped corridors at university are difficult for autistic people to accept.
Social	Acceptance and understanding of the environment	Lack of acceptance from peers and lack of understanding from those around them lead to social exclusion of autistic people and feelings of discomfort.
	Human interaction	Sudden touches, unexpected hugs, and interactions with multiple people at the same time are unbearable for young autistic adults and negatively affect their sensory comfort.

Personal	Degree of sensory sensitivity	Individual differences in the degree of sensory sensitivity mean that what is pleasant for one person may be unpleasant for another. It is important to take these differences into account and adapt the environment to meet the individual needs of autistic people.
	Routine and predictability	Changes in routine and unpredictable situations can be particularly challenging for autistic people, leading to increased stress and discomfort.
	Dietary selectivity	Autistic people often have specific food preferences related to sensory hypersensitivity, which can lead to difficulties associated with eating foods that they find sensory unpleasant.

Source: own study.

Table 4. Changes at university positively influencing sensory wellbeing in autistic people

Sensory-Friendly Spaces at University	**Examples of Sensory-Friendly Spaces**
Infrastructure and space	Enlargement of corridors and entrance doors Installation of adjustable lighting Use of soundproof floor coverings More seating areas in corridors Creation of soundproof rooms
Sensory suport	Availability of sensory toys and soundproofing headphones Quiet learning rooms Maintaining a temperature between 20-21°C
Organisational changes	Reducing the size of class groups Allowing people to choose the form of credit (p. written response instead of oral) Listening to the voice of autistic people about their sensory comfort needs Appointing self-advocates for autistic people
Educating the academic community about ASD	Educate the academic community about the needs of autistic people Promote tolerance of different sensory behaviors (e.g. stimulation toys)
Academic catering offer	Expansion of catering services to include meals for autistic people

Source: own study.

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SEMINARE

Contemporary Conditions of Regional Education of Children and Youth in Poland: a Sociological Perspective

Współczesne uwarunkowania edukacji regionalnej dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce – perspektywa socjologiczna

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Abstract: The inspiration for this study comes from a long-standing discussion among teachers, educators, cultural workers and regionalists about the presence of regional issues in the education system, as well as its goals and functions in the context of educating and raising children and youth. The aim of the study was to show the most important areas of contemporary conditions of regional education, and thus its role in the education of children and youth. A desk research analysis was conducted, covering the most important sources from the academic literature as well as existing data. The basic assumptions of regional education were presented, as well as its importance for the individual and the local community in the context of shaping knowledge about the region and the sense of belonging to a "small homeland" among children and young people. The rest of the text attempts to characterize three key areas covering the determinants of contemporary regional education: 1) globalization processes and their role in shaping identity; 2) legal regulations and the role of the teacher in providing children and young people with knowledge about the region, and 3) available opportunities to implement regional content in primary schools.

Keywords: regional education, children and youth, regionalism, "small homeland," local community, sociology of education, sociology of culture

Abstrakt: Inspiracją dla niniejszego opracowania jest tocząca się od lat dyskusja wśród nauczycieli, pedagogów, pracowników kultury i regionalistów na temat obecności problematyki regionalnej w systemie oświaty, jej celów i funkcji, jakie spełnia w kontekście edukacji i wychowania dzieci i młodzieży. Celem opracowania było ukazanie najważniejszych obszarów współczesnych uwarunkowań edukacji regionalnej, a tym samym jej roli w systemie edukacji dzieci i młodzieży. Przeprowadzono analizę desk research, obejmującą najważniejsze źródła z zakresu literatury przedmiotu oraz dane zastane. Przedstawiono podstawowe założenia edukacji regionalnej, jej znaczenie dla jednostki i wspólnoty lokalnej w kontekście kształtowania wiedzy o regionie, poczucia przynależności do „małej ojczyzny" u dzieci i młodzieży. W dalszej części tekstu podjęto próbę scharakteryzowania trzech kluczowych obszarów obejmujących determinanty współczesnej edukacji regionalnej: 1) procesy globalizacji i ich rola w procesie kształtowania tożsamości; 2) uregulowania prawne i rola nauczyciela w przekazywaniu dzieciom i młodzieży wiedzy o regionie oraz 3) dostępne możliwości realizacji treści regionalnych w szkole.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja regionalna, dzieci i młodzież, regionalizm, „mała ojczyzna", wspólnota lokalna, socjologia edukacji, socjologia kultury

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Introduction – on the need for regional education

The issue of regional education has been discussed by academic teachers, primary school teachers, educators, cultural workers, and regional scholars. Most members of these professions would agree that there is insufficient presence of regional content in the education system. Currently, teaching regional education presents big challenges. The youngest generation, while searching for their own identity, experiences profound social changes, globalization, and the influence of mass culture. An additional problem is that there is no appropriate legal framework specifying the role of regional education in the education system. However, one can identify numerous attractive and diverse educational methods and tools that can be used to teach about regional topics. This situation encourages reflection on the condition of regional education and its development prospects in contemporary schools.

Scholarly literature identifies numerous approaches and theories of regional education; yet, as already noticed by P. Petrykowski, the theoretical approaches do not analyze regional education comprehensively. In this regard, one can identify many perspectives, such as:

- Treating regional education as a component of general education;
- Gaining regional competence;
- Regional education focused on the region's cultural heritage;
- Regional education as a task of the local school;
- Regional education understood as learning, strengthening, and raising awareness (Petrykowski 2003).

From the sociological perspective, regional education can be defined, following J. Nikitorowicz, as acquisition of knowledge about the region. Regional education allows one to understand oneself and the local culture, but at the same time shapes a young person's sense of self-identity and lays the foundation for openness and tolerance. This way it encourages, without rejecting one's foundational values, adoption of a new culture, environment, language, ways of communicating, and adjusting to otherness (Nikitorowicz 2011, 23-27).

The main goals of regional education, according to H. Skorowski, include raising awareness about the value of the region's heritage and strengthening the connection between the people and their immediate surroundings (Skorowski 1998/1999, 256). The detailed goals of regional education include:

- Equipping the student with detailed knowledge about the region;
- Identifying the region's multiple values (material and intangible) during the education process;
- Preparing the student to identify with the aforementioned values;
- Developing the so-called "pluralistic identity;"
- Developing a sense of identity based both on the involvement in the local community and openness to other communities and cultures (Skorowski 1998/1999, 257).

B. Synak defines the goals of regional education in a similar way. He lists its following functions: creating a sense of group identity, teaching tolerance towards other communities, integrating people from different regions, preparing for life in the national homeland, spurring local and national patriotism, strengthening the civil society and the democratic order, developing a sense of responsibility for the national and local homelands, and creating a sense of responsibility for the others' well-being (Synak 2000). Similarly, M. Szczepański emphasized the importance of regional education throughout schooling and upbringing. In the 1990s, he argued that there was a need to launch an interdisciplinary subject under a proposed name "Local Homeland," which, according to the author, should teach about the following:

- Microecology, i.e. study of the local/regional natural environment and ecological development opportunities;
- Microgeography, i.e. study of the local/regional topography;
- Regional history, i.e. study of local/regional events, important
- historical figures, and political institutions;
- Regional sociology, i.e. study of the local/regional community and the necessary civilizational transformations of the region;
- Local dialects;
- Local/regional literature;
- Region's material culture (urban planning, architecture), art (music, painting, sculpture), and crafts (Szczepański 1996).

Scientific research on regional education focuses on at least several areas and provides knowledge about various dimensions of implementing regional education. These studies are conducted using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In academic literature, one can find texts dedicated to students' perspectives and their perceptions regarding the presence of regional education content in schools, the teaching methods used, and the sources of knowledge about the region (Szwarc 2022). Numerous studies have also been conducted among teachers and pedagogy students, which reveals attitudes toward regional education in schools, opinions on the possibility of implementing regional content at different stages of education, related difficulties, and suggestions for changes in the education system (Dworska 2016; Dworska-Kaczmarczyk and Kraszewski 2020). An important part of the academic output in this field also includes studies that relate the issue of regional education to a broader social context, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Lisowska 2022), or the conditions of a specific regional/local community (Rusek 2017).

The theoretical approaches to regional education discussed above only partially address this aspect of education. At the same time, they show that the topic, given its role in the public education system, requires a multidimensional approach. This is consistent with the increasingly frequent question about the essence of human development and the educational institutions serving the people. The remaining part of the study will cover the three most important areas of implementation and development of regional education, listing the factors affecting the latter.

1. Globalization and regional education

As Andrzej Majer emphasizes, "an inherent feature of globalization is participation in the local systems; therefore both dimensions (local and global) require mutual analysis, description and interpretation" (Majer 2011, 27). Without a doubt, globalization has its economic, political, social and cultural aspects. They manifest themselves through worldwide intensification of social relations and increasing integration of the world economy (Misiak 2007, 10). The end result is the creation of a global market in which the essential role is played not by the state with its political and fiscal borders, but by free flow of money, goods and labor (Misiak 2007, 11). Globalization also manifests itself through mutual exchange and influence of various cultures, which transpire through migration, trade, and the exchange of information (Błachnio 2007, 151). As M. S. Szczepański and K. Krzysztofek note, globalization "changes the understanding of the nation and the nature of nation-building factors. The latter include the culture (affected by the pressure of the global culture), the domestic market (subjected to the internationalization of the economy), the territory (affected by the decreasing saliency of international borders), and the state (undermined due to the declining role of sovereignty)" (Krzysztofek and Szczepański 2005, 247).

Many researchers emphasize that although globalization is often perceived from a large-system perspective (on a macro scale), it does not proceed in some other dimension, but instead affects the daily life of every individual and community (Szpunar 2006, 172). Hence, globalization remains closely associated with the micro (local) and meso levels. The local, often contrasted with the global, encompasses such notions as the community (in the understanding of Ferdinand Tönnies), a place, the region, the local community, and the local system (Majer 2011, 29). Localness can be perceived as a set of norms and values emphasizing the subjectivity of local communities and advocating for decentralization and development of self-government (Majer 2011, 29). As A. Majer points out, localness "features directness and spontaneity of mutual contacts, which come out from a sense of familiarity. (...) Localness is a form of fulfillment of communities occupying a permanent territorial base, a way of settling them down in space" (Majer 2011, 29). A specific territory, and even more so a "domesticated" or "tamed" place, are therefore constitutive elements of localness. As M. Kranz-Szurek points out, "localness is understood primarily in terms of a location in space or assignment to a particular place. Such a place constitutes a distinct enclave of cultural and social particularism, defines the scope of life experiences, and is crucial during the process of identity creation" (Kranz-Szurek 2012, 13).

Taking into account relations between various aspects of social reality, it is necessary to identify the consequences of globalization, which can be observed at all levels and perspectives: regional, local, group, and individual. At the global level, several fundamental manifestations of globalization can be observed, including the technology-enabled changes leading to the development of information society.

Development of communication technologies and shrinking of space and time have led to the emergence of a single global market (Wielecki 2004, 10-11). As K. Wielecki emphasizes, "cyberspace delimits the boundaries of a new global and unrestricted market in which small and medium-sized countries are too weak to be considered players of any importance." Therefore, functions of the nation state are also subject to change. Its borders, as well as the associated social, political, and economic arrangements have all been seriously undermined (Wielecki 2004, 11).

From the regional and local points of view, globalization weakens the importance of territoriality as it increases the political and cultural importance of regions. In the economic sphere, it brings about the necessity to meet the requirements of competitiveness and innovation (through cooperation with transnational corporations). In the social sphere, it makes the consumer lifestyle more popular (Sala 2008).

Undoubtedly, there are many effects of globalization that may be considered negative, such as the collapse of all civilizations into a single world civilization, erosion of civil society, and weakening of the nation state. Simultaneously, one can observe uncontrolled expansion of transnational corporations, destruction of social solidarity at the domestic and international levels, and finally, growth of transnational social pathologies (e.g. crime). Globalization brings about other consequences that may be deemed negative, such as growing instability caused by deepening social inequalities and increasing migrations. Some communities face social exclusion, which brings about dangers of rising fundamentalism, nationalism, and separatism (Krzysztofek and Szczepański 2005, 289). Moreover, globalization affects moral codes and identities through selective promotion of values by the global culture, increasing secularization and exclusion of religious discourses, fostering consumption-focused attitudes, promotion of the "citizen of the world" identity, and ongoing cultural unification that weakens a sense of ethnic belonging (Błachnio 2007, 155-156; Tureczek 2020).

On the other hand, there are many positive effects of globalization. Such observable or measurable effects include economic growth, increasing market efficiency, elimination of trade barriers and promotion of competitiveness, diffusion of development factors, growing tolerance, increasingly non-ideological character of the global economy, universalization of human rights, and adoption of supranational legal regulations (Krzysztofek and Szczepański 2005, 283-284; Tureczek 2020).

All these manifestations and consequences of globalization directly affect the process of education. Given this, an important question regarding the role of educational institutions was raised by J. Nikitorowicz, who wondered "how to educate children, youth, and adults in order to persist as a nation and a state belonging to the European structures that have for centuries been shaped by Judaism, Christianity, Greek philosophy and the Roman law, in a way that enables preservation of our own patterns, principles, traditions, and values? Yet, how to educate so that to simultaneously participate in an active dialogue with other

nations, but without culturally disappearing in the global world?" (Nikitorowicz 2019, 21-22). Therefore, given a variety of options offered by mass culture and persistent Internet use, may young people find regional content interesting? As J. Nikitorowicz points out, "surrounded by mass culture and actively participating in the global life over the Internet, most students are often unwilling to become involved in the activities of the local community. Sometimes, they perceive regional education as uninteresting or simply do not have time for it. But when students are shown that regionalism is supposed to help them develop local patriotism, and thus a feeling of being at home, of being settled and rooted, then it will turn out that, surrounded by attractions of the global world, a student will still develop a positive attitude towards fundamental homeland values such as the native language, rootedness in a territory, historical genealogy, as well as traditions, customs, rules and norms of behavior of the private homeland" (Nikitorowicz 2006, 102).

Additionally, a subjective sense of belonging and familiarity with the region and its uniqueness may bring numerous benefits during interaction with people from other cultures. M. Kranz-Szurek rightly notes that "the global context means that some people only now can become familiar with other cultures, and then, using global tools, they can learn more about them, thus developing attitudes of tolerance and openness" (Kranz-Szurek 2012, 18). Regional education makes it possible to understand the surrounding world. Learning about the immediate surroundings is one of the ways to learn about the national and universal human cultures (Kempiński 2016). Hence, school-led regional education can be considered both an opportunity and a challenge. Its implementation is impossible without appropriate educational regulations and an attractive teaching offer. The subsequent part of the article is devoted to these topics.

2. Placing regional education within the legal framework of the Polish national education system

The issue of regional education is closely related to the development of the core curriculum and guidelines of the Ministry of Science and Education of Poland. Undoubtedly, the question of legal framework for regional education was already considered in the early 1990s, but it has since evolved along with subsequent education reforms and changes in core curricula. Following a reflection on the need to include regional content as an element of education system and children upbringing, the Ministry of Education adopted in 1995 a report "Cultural Heritage in the Region. Program Assumptions" (Skorowski 1998/1999). The document "applied a pedagogical approach that emphasized the instructional and educational importance of local cultural heritage for integral human development. Its student-oriented goals included increasing knowledge and affection for the local homeland and thus helping students become active and creative future citizens" (Arkabus 2018, 100).

The 1999 core curriculum implemented regional education at all stages of schooling, but at each stage it was to be taught differently depending on the age

group (e.g. inter-curricular path was used in grades IV-VI and junior high school). At the first stage, children learned about and engaged in the activities such as:

- Home; a child as a family member;
- The relationship between school and the child as a student, classmate, friend;
- The town and life of its inhabitants;
- Natural world in the immediate surroundings;
- Listening to fairy tales, short stories and legends, including those from the region, to inspire students' creativity and content creation;
- Creation of art inspired by regional traditions using a variety of materials, techniques, and forms;
- Diversity of cultural heritage and exploration (Arkabus 2018, 102; Józefowicz 2013).

The next stage of learning (grades IV-VI) included the following topics:

- My orientation towards others (camaraderie, friendship, love);
- Me and the others – role models – selected historical and contemporary figures;
- My home, family and neighborhood;
- Society; civil rights and obligations;
- Work and its importance in the individual and social life;
- Poland's regional diversity;
- Living conditions in the region and the way they are shaped by natural and anthropogenic factors; surrounding landscape (Arkabus 2018, 102-103; Józefowicz 2013).

At junior high school, regional education was included under a topical framework "Regional Education – Cultural Heritage in the Region" (Arkabus 2018, 103; Józefowicz 2013).

In the next core curriculum, adopted in 2008, regional content was incorporated into various school subjects, which analyzed it from the regional, national, and international perspectives. As A. Józefowicz emphasized, "fundamental changes could be noticed at the first stage of education as children attending the initial grades of primary school were in fact familiarized with the knowledge about their immediate surroundings. However, little changed at the second stage, and in fact, regional topics were almost negligible. More regional content was taught at the third and fourth stages, and that despite the fact that from the early years a young person should learn about their closest surroundings and develop their identity…" (Józefowicz 2013, 116). D. Konieczka-Śliwińska, who made a detailed analysis of both core curricula, expressed a similar opinion. She concluded that "what clearly distinguishes the new concept of regional education from the one implemented in 1999–2009 is a stronger emphasis on the practically-oriented preparation for activity in local and regional settings" (Konieczka-Śliwińska 2015, 319). Moreover, "the focus switched from development of regional identity to the formation of a bond with local communities, which was perhaps a less ambitious, but also

a more achievable goal. There was a greater emphasis on broadly understood cultural participation and on establishment of a clear connection between the regionalist idea and patriotic and civic education" (Konieczka-Śliwińska 2015, 319). Already then, D. Konieczka-Śliwińska added a valuable observation about the possible consequences of this state of affairs. She was concerned about gradual marginalization of teaching of regional topics at schools and that this task was taken over by cultural institutions, associations, and local government bodies (Konieczka-Śliwińska 2015, 319).

In the currently applicable core curriculum for primary school general education, outlined in the directive of the Ministry of Education of Poland from 14 February 2017, regional content was incorporated into general education subjects (Arkabus 2018). Marginalization of regional education has therefore remained a problem and is even deepening, given the increasing presence of regional topics in various extracurricular forms of education. Additionally, it should be emphasized that the teacher and the choice of pedagogical tools, used both in schools and during extracurricular activities, play the most important part in the promotion of regional education. Arousing interest in regional matters among children and youths and shaping pro-regional attitudes depend first of all on the teacher's passion and commitment (Kempiński 2016).

3. Tools and methods of implementing regional content at school

Despite consecutive systemic changes in the education sector that led to the decreasing presence of regional content in schools, one can still point out numerous diverse educational methods and tools that can be successfully used to implement regional education. Undoubtedly, a crucial role is played by the teacher. As Ł. Kempiński emphasizes, "effectiveness of education in the spirit of regionalism largely depends on the teacher's knowledge, personal attitude to the subject, and the passion enabling him to 'infect' students with the interest in regionalism" and "committed regionalists are the driving force of regional education" (Kempiński 2016, 81-82). Nevertheless, appropriate preparation, skills, and commitment make effective teaching of regional education possible, regardless of whether a teacher is someone rooted in and fascinated by the region or somebody who moved in relatively recently and is not embedded in the regional culture.

One of the available forms of education are extracurricular and out-of-school activities, during which students can make good use of free time and develop interests. As J. Sacharczuk and A. Szwarc emphasize, extracurricular activities "are an excellent opportunity to familiarize oneself with and promote the local homeland, but also to introduce students to the culture of other regions of Poland and other countries" (Sacharczuk and Szwarc 2019, 255). Such activities may be organized by different kinds of clubs (regional, travel, sightseeing, geographical, historical, European, or foreign language) or applied during extracurricular artistic activities (music, art, or theater). Promotion of regional content may also

be facilitated by the student government or scouting troops (Sacharczuk and Szwarc 2019, 255). Regular school classes may be complemented with workshops and competitions with a regional focus.

It is also worth analyzing the role of school-organized after-school programs, which are used both to provide childcare and education. Their main goal is to support the latter, but they also help the school in children's upbringing (meeting basic needs) and perform therapeutic and preventive roles (i.e. shaping the appropriate patterns of behavior). Certainly, after-school programs could be successfully used to implement initiatives in the field of regional education. However, this would require that the school and staff of after-school programs undertake certain systemic actions regarding the recognition of students' educational needs and interests, which could form the basis for organization of classes at such programs (Sacharczuk and Szwarc, 2019).

An important way to implement regional education is also a school trip. According to L. Pawelec, educational school trips might cover a variety of sights, such as indoor or open-air museums, churches, parks, nature preserves, monuments, memorial centers, cultural centers, libraries, folk exhibitions, or theaters. Such trips may also be organized around places associated with the life and activity of outstanding regional figures from the worlds of literature, art, music, history, politics, etc. Alternatively, during school trips students may be asked to meet and interview people involved in the protection and creation of cultural heritage, artists (including folk artists), and craftsmen. They may also be asked to collect various cultural items of material and spiritual significance related to the region: everyday objects, proverbs, legends, etc. To have a higher educational value, a school trip may be organized by a regional club (Pawelec 2008).

A school trip is an educational tool that allows for faster learning and more effective memorization of facts, which can be compared with textbook knowledge. It also enables direct experience and learning about the local environment; "it is a lesson in observing, listening, thinking, speaking, experiencing, and discovering; therefore, when participating in it, students learn about other people's lives, admire beauty of the local landscape, discover secrets of nature, satisfy natural cognitive curiosity, and develop interests" (Pawelec 2008, 74).

The project method is an innovative tool that can be used to creatively develop regional education curriculum. Its advantage compared to other teaching tools is that it requires students to be active, leaving a lot of space for independent activity. According to M. Szymański, the project method is characterized by interdisciplinarity (completing a task requires independent mastery of knowledge of numerous subjects), progressivist role of the teacher (the teacher acts as a moderator and advisor, helps students, gives advice and clarifies), comprehensiveness (using a broader approach than during traditional classes to analyze the topic), and non-traditional assessments (assessing student performance during group activities) (Szymański 2010). The project is a valuable tool because it requires students to participate at every stage of its implementation: when choosing a topic, finding content, making group decisions,

defining group goals, choosing the form and method of project development, result presentation, and evaluation (Sacharczuk and Szwarc 2019).

Conclusion

This reflection on regional education in contemporary schools leads to the conclusion that the issue is complex and multidimensional. Implementation of regional education depends on a number of factors that play out at the micro (individual), meso (group, community) and macro (global) levels. These are likely the most important factors influencing the condition of regional education:

- Globalization, which includes numerous phenomena such as identity formation, search for roots, and developing reference points towards other social groups;
- Legal framework, which determines the place of regional education in the education system and possibilities of implementing regional content at school;
- Modern educational tools that can make regional topics more attractive.

This introductory analysis allows us to conclude that regional education is present in the core curricula at each stage of education, but its implementation suffers from a lack of systemic approach and disassociation between legal provisions and the educational practice. Curricula should be designed so that a teacher can teach regional content in an attractive way. There are a variety of effective methods enabling accomplishment of teaching goals of regional education, including developing a sense of connection with the region, a sense of belonging to the local homeland, and increased involvement in local issues. Certainly, regional education could benefit from a comprehensive vision that would take into account contemporary social changes, technological progress, and innovative teaching methods.

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SEMINARE

Formation of Pedagogical Skills of Future Teachers in Educational Institutions of Ukraine

Kształcenie umiejętności pedagogicznych przyszłych nauczycieli w placówkach oświatowych Ukrainy

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the problem of the formation of pedagogical skills of future teachers in the process of professional and practical training in the educational institutions of Ukraine. Pedagogical skills are considered a complex of personality properties that ensure self-organization of a high level of professional activity on a reflexive basis. Pedagogical skills combine the personal and business qualities and professional competence of the teacher and are a complex of personality properties that ensure a high level of self-organization of professional and pedagogical activity. Pedagogical skills are based on the high professional level of the teacher, his general culture, and his pedagogical experience. A significant role in the formation of pedagogical skills of future teachers of professional training is played by the organization of the educational process, the use of effective teaching methods, and the environment in which the educational process takes place. Modeling of the system of formation of the foundations of pedagogical skills of a future teacher in the educational process of higher education is carried out in compliance with various factors. The essence of the pedagogical skills of a teacher is determined. The teacher's skill is manifested in the ability to organize the educational process, activate students, develop their abilities, independence, and curiosity, effectively conduct educational work, form high morality, a sense of patriotism, and diligence in students, and evoke positive emotional feelings in the learning process itself.

Keywords: pedagogical skill, future teacher, education, professional training, institutions of higher education

Abstrakt: Artykuł poświęcony jest problematyce kształtowania umiejętności pedagogicznych przyszłych nauczycieli w procesie doskonalenia zawodowego i praktycznego w placówkach oświatowych Ukrainy. Umiejętności pedagogiczne są uważane za zespół cech osobowości, który zapewnia samoorganizację wysokiego poziomu aktywności zawodowej na zasadzie refleksyjnej. Mistrzostwo pedagogiczne łączy w sobie cechy osobiste i biznesowe oraz kompetencje zawodowe nauczyciela i jest zespołem cech osobowości zapewniających wysoki poziom samoorganizacji działań zawodowych i pedagogicznych. Kompetencje pedagogiczne opierają się na wysokim poziomie zawodowym nauczyciela, jego ogólnej kulturze i doświadczeniu pedagogicznym. Organizacja procesu edukacyjnego i stosowanie skutecznych metod nauczania oraz środowisko, w którym odbywa się proces edukacyjny, odgrywają znaczącą rolę w kształtowaniu umiejętności pedagogicznych przyszłych nauczycieli kształcenia zawodowego. Modelowanie systemu kształtowania podstaw umiejętności pedagogicznych przyszłego nauczycie-

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la w procesie edukacyjnym szkoły wyższej odbywa się z uwzględnieniem różnych czynników. Określa się istotę umiejętności pedagogicznych nauczyciela. Mistrzostwo nauczyciela przejawia się w umiejętności organizowania procesu edukacyjnego, aktywizacji uczniów, rozwijania ich zdolności, samodzielności, ciekawości, skutecznego prowadzenia pracy edukacyjnej, kształtowania w uczniach wysokiej moralności, poczucia patriotyzmu, pracowitości, wywołują pozytywne uczucia emocjonalne w samym procesie uczenia się.

Słowa kluczowe: umiejętność pedagogiczna, przyszły nauczyciel, edukacja, kształcenie zawodowe, instytucje szkolnictwa wyższego

Introduction

The changes taking place in the higher education system of Ukraine are an important element of the integration of our country into the European space. It is in the education system that the younger generation and youth acquire the knowledge and competencies necessary for their future social and professional life, it is in the process of learning that their human consciousness and value orientations are formed. Ukraine's orientation towards integration into the European educational space emphasizes modern trends in education and makes the professional development of future specialists a top priority (Shevchenko and Melnik 2024, 514).

Evolutionarily, teaching grows out of mastery and returns to mastery in the form of "pedagogical mastery" as the quintessence of the pedagogical function of a person, society, and, accordingly, a teacher. Mastery is the pinnacle of a person's professional creativity, it is a form of self-realization of an individual in professional activity, it is a movement towards "acme" and manifestations of "acme" itself. At the same time, mastery appears as the highest level of quality work in human activity. Therefore, the formulation of the problem of pedagogical mastery and its further ontological explanation is unthinkable without turning to reflection from the point of view of new sciences that actively began to develop at the end of the 20th century – creatology, acmeology, qualityology (Telychko 2014, 35).

The study of the practice of teacher training revealed several problems in their training, caused by contradictions between:

- the objective needs of society, the desire of the future teacher to achieve the appropriate level of pedagogical skills, and the insufficiently effective organization of professional training of teachers;
- modern requirements of the educational industry for the level of competence of teachers and the low level of application of the latest pedagogical technologies
- at the stage of their professional training in educational institutions;
- the need to form pedagogical skills by the modern paradigm of education and concepts of pedagogical education and imperfect educational and methodological support for the process of studying pedagogical disciplines in educational institutions.

Taking into account the level of development of the problem, its relevance, and social significance, the topic of our article is determined.

1. Analysis of recent research and publications

The condition for creating an optimal system for the formation of the foundations of teachers' pedagogical skills is the determination of the theoretical basis of the study, which consists of the theory of professional development of the individual (E. Klymov, B. Lomov, T. Tytarenko, etc.); basic provisions of the philosophy of education (V. Andrushchenko, I. Ziaziun, V. Kremen, etc.). The theoretical foundations of the formation of pedagogical skills of a higher school teacher were developed in the works of Ya. A. Komenskyi, I. Disterweg, K.D. Ushynskyi, A.S. Makarenko, O.A. Zakharenko, A.I. Arkhanhelskyi, I.A. Ziaziun. The authors have developed theoretical and methodological principles for the development of pedagogical skills or their individual components in different categories of teachers and presented effective tools for their acquisition and measurement.

The purpose of the article. We set out to consider the theoretical foundations of the formation of pedagogical skills of future teachers in the educational institutions of Ukraine.

Methodology

The methodological level reflects the interaction and interconnection of fundamental scientific approaches to studying the problem used during the research, in particular:

- systemic, which makes it possible to analyze the process of professional training of teachers from the standpoint of integrity, to reveal the components of the system of professional training and the formation of pedagogical skills, to identify the mechanisms of their interrelations and mutual influences;
- functional, which contributes to the specification of the main functions of the teacher and ensures the orientation of the professional training of students to perform these functions at a high level of pedagogical skills and practical support for their implementation in specific conditions of activity;
- axiological, which makes it possible to program the process of professional training of future primary school teachers based on the formation of value orientations necessary for successful, highly qualified pedagogical activity;
- personal and activity, which allows students to take a subjective position in the process of forming their own pedagogical skills, acts as a kind of methodological imperative, taking into account which, in educational institutions, the content, technological, and diagnostic components of professional training of teachers are determined.

At different stages of the work, a set of research methods adequate to the set goal was used: theoretical – study and analysis of modern psychological, pedagogical, and methodological provisions on the content of professional education and the educational process, which made it possible to systematize, compare, clarify the research problem; analysis of the results of the educational process; empirical – observation of students' activities, conversations to determine the level of formation of pedagogical skills and identify the need to develop the components of pedagogical skills in students.

2. Presentation of the main material

Mastery is primarily related to the creative activity of a person. Therefore, a doctor, a design engineer, a writer, a cook, an agronomist, a pilot, a sculptor, and many other specialists who are specifically engaged in practical activities can be called a master. However, the need to demonstrate mastery at every step of the activity concerns primarily the teacher-educator. Because he deals with the individuality of his pupils, and to each of them in the process of communication, creativity, the art of action, and pedagogical skill should be revealed. Pedagogical skill is not manifested in theoretical knowledge but primarily in the ability to apply it in specific activities. Outwardly, mastery is manifested in the successful solution of various pedagogical tasks and a high level of organized educational process, but its essence lies in those qualities and characteristics of the teacher's personality that give rise to this activity and ensure its success. These qualities should be sought not only in skills but also in that alloy of personality properties its position, which enable the teacher to act productively and creatively (Vitvytska 2017, 30).

The focus of scientific research on the study of the ontology and phenomenology of pedagogical mastery indicates the relevance of philosophical and pedagogical reflection, which dominates philosophical and pedagogical literature (Stratan-Artyshkova et al. 2022, 100). The category of "mastery" turns out to be closely related to the category of creativity and the category of "acme" – the pinnacle of creativity and professional maturity. Therefore, the philosophy of pedagogical mastery is in dialogue with the conceptual and theoretical structures of cryptology – the science of creativity and acmeology – a science that addresses the disclosure of laws and patterns of reaching the peaks of creativity and professional maturity (Verstappen, Rorije, and Van Ginkel 2022).

The practical and active professionalization of a student on the way to the formation of professional skills is a manifestation of his civic position. After all, one of the manifestations of citizenship of the future teacher is his focus on humanizing the pedagogical process at school (Polishchuk et al. 2022, 717).

Modeling of the system of formation of the foundations of pedagogical mastery of the future teacher in the educational process of the higher school is carried out in compliance with the following factors: an activity approach to the creation of the expected model; polytechnic orientation of the integration of students' knowledge

and skills; interdependence of system components in designing an integrative process of professional training of future teachers; forecasting reference requirements for students to display samples of pedagogical skill (Telychko 2014, 68).

The essence of a teacher's pedagogical mastery is a kind of fusion of the teacher's personal culture, knowledge, and worldview, his thorough, comprehensive training with perfect mastery of teaching and upbringing techniques, pedagogical techniques, and advanced experience (Bedevelska 2014, 125).

The traditional ways of forming pedagogical skills include purposeful assimilation of psychological and pedagogical knowledge, abilities, and skills; planned education and self-development of general and pedagogical culture; active involvement in social and pedagogical activities; dynamic pedagogical practice; motivated study and acquisition of better pedagogical experience (König, Blömeke and Kaiser 2015).

The use of interactive games and training technologies during the formation of the pedagogical skills of future teachers contributes to the creation of an educational environment where students not only acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities but also "experience" situations that model examples of the teacher's professional activity (Plakhotnik et al. 2022, 45). Students should be able to find out for themselves the specifics of relationships with participants in interactive interaction, understand how their behavior affects others, and how they react to certain simulated situations of future professional activity. The most effective means of forming pedagogical skills include a system of interconnected educational and practical tasks that require a gradually increasing level of independence and creativity and contribute to the professional development of future teachers, put students in the position of active participants in solving pedagogical tasks and contribute to the formation of objective evaluation judgments (Kuzminskyi, Kuchai, and Bida 2018, 210).

In the formation of pedagogical mastery of a student of higher education, it is important to obtain one's own pedagogical experience, which ensures professional adaptation processes in the training of future teachers. An organic component of a teacher's professional activity, which expresses the formation of his professional competence, is the ability to solve professional situations. At the same time, the content, nature, and organizational features of the work of a physical culture specialist are associated with the occurrence of sudden situations to a greater extent than in the work of other teachers (Pachaiyappan 2022).

One of the important indicators of the successful formation of pedagogical skills is the presence of positive dynamics in the development of pedagogical thinking and increasing the level of students' readiness for self-education and critical self-evaluation. Theoretical and practical classes in psychological and pedagogical disciplines should be held continuously, starting from the first year, and consistently develop students' pedagogical thinking. Such an organization of the educational process is necessary for mastering pedagogical skills (Kravchenko et al. 2022, 54).

Every teacher should strive to master the pedagogical technique and all its elements. Here are some methods of forming pedagogical techniques: a system of training exercises for the formation of abilities and skills; a system of rules and requirements for future professional activity; pedagogical training and improvement of professional qualities that ensure a high level of pedagogical technique.

Summarizing, let us note the peculiarities of the method of formation of pedagogical skills of future teachers:

1. The content of the lecture material was supplemented with information about the phenomena of pedagogical activity in the context of personal and developmental learning.
2. The content, methodology, and organization of practical classes differed in the use of elements of developmental training aimed at the formation of pedagogical abilities and other components of pedagogical skill.
3. Depending on the target settings of educational tasks and practical classes, three complementary groups of courses with different orientations were distinguished, which determined the stages of development of the components of pedagogical skill (Kuchai and Kuchai 2019, 17).

Only a teacher who is a master of his craft can form pedagogical skills in students. The teacher is responsible for the fate of the future teacher, this determines his role in the teacher's professional training. He must feel the personal condition and problems of the future teacher, possess gnostic abilities to predict the success of the influence and build the desired model of education (Matviichuk and Solovyov 2018, 327).

The essence of mastery lies in the personality of the teacher, in his position, in the ability to show creative initiative based on the realization of his own value system. Mastery is a manifestation of the highest form of activity of the teacher's personality in professional activity, an activity based on humanism and revealed in the appropriate use of methods and means of pedagogical interaction in each specific situation of education and upbringing. To conduct reflexive management of students' development, the teacher must be able to manage himself and through himself – all components of pedagogical activity (goal, subject, object, means, result) based on feedback: awareness of the purpose of the activity and results in its achievements; the vision of the inner picture of children's world and how they perceive the teacher's actions; selection of optimal means of influence and adjustment of the pedagogical position based on the analysis of the results by the assigned tasks. Focusing on the child, as a desire to participate in its development, allows you to choose a goal and encourages you to find ways to implement it – pedagogical technologies and equipment. Awareness of the purpose and result of the organized development process determines the need for knowledge, and then the fusion of humanistic orientation and professional competence becomes a solid foundation for the teacher's self-development, allowing understanding of the contradictions between the chosen educational program and the real process of

its implementation. This is the internal stimulus of the teacher's self-education, the desire to acquire the necessary skills to deepen knowledge. The teacher's loss of the ability to regulate the pedagogical process leads to inhibition of the harmonious development of his interaction with students, and then there is an orientation only to external control and not to self-control, which paralyzes the organicity of the teacher's behavior. Therefore, the mastery of a teacher can be considered as the highest level of pedagogical activity (if we characterize the quality of the result), as a manifestation of the creative activity of the teacher's personality (we characterize the psychological mechanism of successful activity).

According to the definition of Academician I.A. Ziaziun et al. (2008), pedagogical skill is a complex of personality properties that ensures self-organization of a high level of professional activity on a reflective basis.

Such important properties include the humanistic orientation of the teacher's activities, professional competence, pedagogical abilities, and pedagogical technique. In this definition, the following features should be emphasized: 1) pedagogical mastery in the structure of the individual is a system that is capable of self-organization, the system-creating factor of which is humanistic orientation; 2) the basis of professional skill is professional competence (orientation and professional knowledge constitute the backbone of high professionalism in activity, which ensures the integrity of the self-organizing system); 3) pedagogical abilities ensure the speed of self-improvement; 4) the technique, which is based on knowledge and abilities, makes it possible to reveal the creative potential of the teacher, harmonizing the structure of pedagogical activity. All components of pedagogical skill are interrelated; they are characterized by self-development and not only growth under the influence of external factors (Vitvytska 2017, 28).

A necessary condition for the successful functioning of the system for the formation of pedagogical skills of future teachers is the coordinated interaction of system-forming and structural components that ensure the achievement of certain goals and results of professional and personal growth of specialists of this profile in the process of professional training in higher education institutions (Ocampo and Sandoya 2024).

The system for the formation of pedagogical skills of future teachers assumes unity, interdependence, continuity of target, content, technological, and diagnostic functions of all structural components that form it. The components of professional training of students must ensure coordinated interaction and performance of functions by each participant in this process to form a high level of pedagogical skills of the future specialist, which is a necessary condition for the expansion and deepening of professional training, ensuring the possibility of the specialist's transition to a new, higher level of professional competence, variability and the possibility of creative intensification of these transitions (Kihwele, Mwamakula, and Mtandi 2024).

Conclusions

Pedagogical skill is a set of certain qualities of a teacher's personality, which are determined by a high level of his psychological and pedagogical preparation, the ability to optimally solve pedagogical tasks during the educational process.

The mastery of a teacher begins to be formed at the stage of training in higher education institutions and goes through all stages of professional development. The development of interest in the future profession and the formation of professional values are noted in various types of activities: in the educational – in the process of studying general humanitarian and professionally oriented disciplines, passing pedagogical practice, scientific and research activities of students, independent work and directly in pedagogical activities.

A teacher who possesses a high level of pedagogical skill can be identified by the following criteria: a harmoniously developed, internally rich personality who strives for spiritual, professional, general cultural, and physical perfection; knows how to select the most effective methods, techniques, means and technologies of teaching and education for the implementation of pedagogical tasks; possesses a high degree of professional competence; knows how to organize reflective activities aimed at self-improvement.

Thus, the competencies of the teacher, his professional and personal potential, and motivation play an important role in the formation of a modern specialist in the field of education.

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SEMINARE

Attitudes of Primary School Teachers Towards Multicultural Education: Between Acceptance and Challenges

Postawy nauczycieli szkół podstawowych wobec edukacji wielokulturowej: między akceptacją a wyzwaniami

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine the attitudes of primary school teachers towards multicultural education, focusing on the contrast between acceptance and challenges. The study presents results of a qualitative research project, which is part of a broader mixed-methods study on teachers' approaches to multiculturalism. As part of a diagnostic survey conducted among primary school teachers, 15 individuals agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. The findings reveal divergent attitudes among teachers towards students from different cultural backgrounds. Based on their perspectives and experiences, the participants were classified into two groups. The first group expressed a positive attitude towards multicultural education, perceiving cultural diversity as an enriching and integral part of their teaching practice. In contrast, the second group viewed multicultural education as problematic, arguing that excessive focus on culturally diverse students might come at the expense of Polish students. The study highlights the need for teacher support and professional development to address the challenges of multicultural education effectively. Strengthening teachers' intercultural competencies is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education principles in culturally diverse classrooms.

Keywords: multicultural education, teachers' attitudes, cultural diversity, primary education, inclusive teaching.

Abstrakt: Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza postaw nauczycieli szkół podstawowych wobec edukacji wielokulturowej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem kontrastu między akceptacją a wyzwaniami. Badanie przedstawia wyniki jakościowego projektu badawczego, będącego częścią szerszego badania mieszanego dotyczącego podejść nauczycieli do wielokulturowości. W ramach sondażu diagnostycznego przeprowadzonego wśród nauczycieli szkół podstawowych 15 osób wyraziło zgodę na udział w pogłębionych wywiadach. Wyniki badań ujawniają zróżnicowane postawy nauczycieli wobec uczniów pochodzących z różnych kręgów kulturowych. Na podstawie ich opinii i doświadczeń uczestnicy zostali podzieleni na dwie grupy. Pierwsza grupa wykazywała pozytywne nastawienie wobec edukacji wielokulturowej, postrzegając różnorodność kulturową jako wzbogacający i integralny element swojej pracy. Druga grupa natomiast traktowała edukację wielokulturową jako wyzwanie, argumentując, że nadmierne skupienie na uczniach z odmiennych środowisk kulturowych może odbywać się kosztem polskich uczniów. Badanie podkreśla potrzebę wsparcia nauczycieli oraz rozwijania ich kompetencji zawodowych, aby mogli skutecznie radzić sobie z wyzwaniami edukacji wielokulturowej. Wzmacnianie kompetencji interkulturowych nauczycieli jest kluczowe dla efektywnej realizacji zasad edukacji włączającej w klasach o zróżnicowanej kulturowości.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja wielokulturowa, postawy nauczycieli, różnorodność kulturowa, szkoła podstawowa.

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Introduction

With the implementation of the idea of open borders, almost all European countries became open and, therefore, multicultural. Jerzy Nikitorowicz (2017, 13) claims that 'multiculturalism is a natural state of diversity (…) the multiplicity and natural diversity of cultures on the globe will "meet" sooner or later because of themselves or Others'. Cultural diversity is a debatable term that usually refers to the co-existence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, skills, as well as disabilities, genders, ethnic groups, races, nationalities and sexual orientations of people. It may also refer to how people respond to this reality and choose to live in it (Lin 2020).

The basis of a democratic state is multicultural education, which provides equal opportunities to all students and gives every pupil the possibility of learning (Banks et al. 2001). James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks (2010) describe multicultural education as a concept and movement of educational reforms in which all students have equal learning opportunities irrespective of sex, social class, as well as ethnic, racial and cultural characteristics. It is a comprehensive educational reform that opposes all forms of discrimination and promotes democratic principles of social justice (Nieto & Bode 2013). Geneva Gay (1994) indicates that the goals of multicultural education in school include:

1. Development of ethnic and cultural skills: students learn their own language and those of other nations, become familiar with famous figures, historical events and ethnic minorities, which helps them develop ethnic and cultural skills, respect the needs of other people and shape their own identity.
2. Personal development: students learn more about themselves, build their self-esteem and sense of identity, and are motivated and encouraged to strive for learning achievements.
3. Development of attitudes and values: students are encouraged to accept ethnic pluralism and various cultural environments and to respect attitudes and values of other people.
4. Shaping of multicultural social competences: students are stimulated to develop their interpersonal communication skills.

Independent studies conducted so far (Bocharova & Melnik 2023; Popławska & Bocharova 2023) and reports by other researchers of this subject area (Marzec 2024; Stankiewicz & Żurek 2022; Tędziagolska et al. 2023; Głowacka et al. 2022; Parmigiani et al. 2023; Ciupińska 2022; Bocharova & Popławska 2024) indicate that the main problems faced by students and teachers were organisational, psychological, communication, educational and multicultural issues.

Many teachers are aware of the importance of multicultural education and actively support its implementation, seeing it as a way of preparing students for life in a global society. However, some teachers may feel inadequately prepared or supported with regard to the implementation of multicultural education due to the lack of appropriate materials, training or administrative support. They may also

encounter resistance from parents, students, and even other teachers who do not understand or appreciate the importance of multicultural education.

The aim of this paper is to learn about the opinions of primary school teachers on multicultural education and their approach to working in culturally diverse classes.

1. Methodology of own research

The paper presents the results of a qualitative study being a part of a mixed study aimed at developing the author's scale of teachers' attitudes towards multiculturalism. Combining quantitative and qualitative data in the context of understanding teachers' attitudes towards multiculturalism and their approach to working in a multicultural class is crucial for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. According to John Creswell (2013), this type of data integration makes it possible to identify broad numerical trends and detailed qualitative information, which together leads to a more complete understanding of teachers' attitudes and opinions. Quantitative data allow for an overview of the situation and the identification of trends on an aggregate level. Qualitative data, such as the results of interviews with teachers, provide a deeper understanding of teachers' individual experience, beliefs and approaches to working with students from different cultures. An analysis of the content of the interviews made it possible to identify teachers' motivations to work with multicultural students, their challenges, experiences of successes and failures, and adaptation strategies. Combining these two types of data allows the researcher to adopt a holistic approach to examining the problem, taking both general trends and individual contexts into account.

As part of the diagnostic survey conducted among primary school teachers who work with students from different cultures, 15 people agreed to participate in in-depth interviews regarding their perception of multicultural education and work in multicultural classes. The study was based on the interpretative paradigm, which assumes that it is possible to understand the studied phenomena thanks to participants' interpretations (Verschuren 2003). The context of the study was consistent with the constructivist worldview. According to constructivism, individuals try to understand the world by giving subjective meanings connected with specific objects and phenomena to their experiences (Creswell 2013). Constructivism assumes that participants not only discover knowledge but also create and find it in order to understand various experiences they encounter (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The study not only took account of teachers' subjective experiences and interpretations but also emphasised their active role in the construction of knowledge and meanings in the context of multiculturalism.

The research sample consisted of 15 teachers (3 men and 12 women) working in primary schools in various regions of Poland. The sample was selected using the criteria selection method, which is one of the methods of intentional selection of participants. In this method, the studied situation must meet specific requirements (Patton 2014). The criteria of selection included teachers' work in primary

schools and the presence of students from various cultures in their classes. The demographic data of participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research sample (personal data)

Sex	Age	Length of service	Province
M1	55	27	Masovia, small city
M2	43	15	Lower Silesia, small city
M3	65	38	Silesia, big city
K1	28	4	Wielkopolska, big city
K2	57	32	Małopolska, small city
K3	54	27	Małopolska, village
K4	49	24	Subcarpathia, small city
K5	48	23	Lower Silesia, small city
K6	40	15	Masovia, big city
K7	56	30	Łódź, big city
K8	44	17	Świętokrzyskie, village
K9	56	28	Lubuskie, big city
K10	49	20	Pomerania, small city
K11	37	12	Subcarpathia, small city
K12	32	7	Małopolska, big city

Source: Own work.

The research tool selected for the collection of data was the interview, which allows the researcher to capture the feelings, ideas, experiences and views of participants. From among structured, partly structured and non-structured interviews, the partly structured interview was selected as the most favourable one for the study. It takes new questions into account and enables spontaneous interaction, which motivates respondents to express their own ideas. The participants of the study had freedom and flexibility both with regard to the order of questions and the time of their answers. Interviews with twelve respondents were conducted using the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology on Skype and Zoom, with enabled voice communication and multimedia sessions (Lo Iacono et al. 2016). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with three teachers from the Małopolska region. The use of the VoIP technology made it possible to contact participants from various regions of Poland with the efficiency of time and costs and increased the diversity of the research sample.

The interview form consisted of two parts: the first part contained such personal data as sex, age, length of service and place of residence. The second part contained five main questions regarding multicultural education and the teacher's work in a multicultural class:

1. How do you perceive multiculturalism in school? Could you share your views on that subject?
2. Polish schools become less and less homogeneous because of the emergence of refugee children. Are teachers prepared for these inevitable changes?

3. What is your opinion about working in a multicultural class: is it an opportunity or a challenge?
4. What difficulties are encountered by teachers in a multicultural class?
5. Do children from other cultures find it difficult to acclimatise in Polish school?

During interviews, other questions were also asked depending on the progress of the interview, e.g. about favouring Ukrainian students and students' behaviours in school and during lessons. Some interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants, and others were conducted along with taking detailed notes. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and then coded.

The research process, which included 1/ data coding (assignment of categories (codes) to text fragments (subcategories) collected as a result of interviews); 2/ identification of topics (grouping related subcategories into bigger, more general thematic categories that best reflect the essence of collected data); 3/ information ordering (ordering and grouping of collected information during the study in accordance with assigned thematic categories) and 4/interpretation of results (analysing collected data in the theoretical and interpretative context), plays a crucial role in the analysis of qualitative data, particularly in the context of interpretative research (Gormez 2021, 3-4). In order to retain the anonymity of the participants and to protect their identity and personal data, relevant identification codes were used. Codes M1–M3 for male teachers and codes K1–K12 for female teachers were used.

The data from the study were analysed using the content analysis method. It is an interpretative approach, which allows the researcher to delve into meanings and patterns in quantitative data. In the context of research on multiculturalism, this method enables the identification of key topics and the representation of cultural diversity issues in schools.

2. Analysis of the results of the study

A. Perception of Multiculturalism in Schools

The study identified three types of attitudes towards multiculturalism: negative, ambivalent, and positive. These attitudes vary and stem from both teachers' personal experiences and specific local school contexts in which they work.

Negative perceptions (M1, K1, K12, K4) are characterized by viewing multiculturalism mainly as a source of difficulties—both disciplinary and organizational. For some teachers, culturally diverse students create tension and disrupt established school routines. These statements may be interpreted as indicators of fear of change and a lack of tools to effectively manage diversity. They also reveal a lack of reflection on the potential benefits of intercultural contact, suggesting limited intercultural awareness.

As one respondent stated: "Multiculturalism in school is only a source of problems" (M1).

Another added: "The presence of many cultures in school can lead only to problems" (K1).

Ambivalent attitudes (M2) reflect respondents' internal conflict—on the one hand, they acknowledge the value of intercultural cooperation, yet on the other, they express criticism toward specific national groups. Such statements illustrate the mechanism of projection and cultural prejudice, which may be unconscious and result from tensions in everyday professional practice.

One teacher remarked: "Multiculturalism is valuable when everyone respects and co-operates. But with Ukrainians, it's more difficult—they often act selfishly and don't want to help Poles" (M2).

Positive attitudes (M3, K5, K8) are marked by openness and a constructive approach to multiculturalism as a natural phenomenon in a globalized world. These teachers recognize the educational value of diversity and point to the development of their own and their students' competencies as an outcome of intercultural contact. Their views align with inclusive education and the idea of schools as spaces for cultural exchange (Banks, McGee Banks 2010; Gay 1994).

As noted by one respondent: "Multiculturalism brings advantages to both sides—we can inspire each other and learn new things" (K5).

Another emphasized: "Introducing multiculturalism into the classroom is inevitable. From my experience, I see more benefits than problems" (K8).

B. Teachers' Readiness for Change

The study revealed significant variation in teachers' attitudes toward the need to change their pedagogical and educational practices in response to multiculturalism. Some teachers' resistance to adaptation (K2, K6, K3) stems from the belief that the responsibility for integration lies solely with foreign students. These attitudes can be analysed in the context of dominant cultural norms and a fear of losing national identity. Referring to Nathan Glazer's (1997) concept, the lack of openness to intercultural dialogue results in perceiving diversity as a threat. For example, one teacher stated: "Why should we adapt to them? It's them who should follow our rules. We are in Poland" (K6).

Open and reflective attitudes (K8, K11, K7) suggest a greater awareness of the challenges and a willingness to adapt teaching strategies to the changing school reality. These teachers recognize the school not only as an institution that reproduces majority cultural norms, but as a space for building community and inclusion. As one noted: "Working in a multicultural class is a challenge, but also a chance to teach children respect and tolerance" (K11).

Experience as an asset (M3) illustrates that long-term professional practice can facilitate the integration of intercultural approaches into everyday teaching. Such teachers view students from different cultures not as a problem, but as an educational challenge and opportunity – consistent with the notion of transformative education (Nieto & Bode, 2013).

As M3 commented: "Thanks to working with children from Ukraine, Georgia and Russia, I've had a chance to grow professionally – it's a valuable experience".

C. Difficulties in Working with Multicultural Classes

The third thematic area refers to the real difficulties that teachers encounter in their everyday work. Low student motivation and behavioral difficulties (K6, K12, M1) were among the most frequently reported issues. Teachers expressed frustration caused by the lack of engagement of students with a migration background. It is important to recognize, however, that these students often operate under traumatic conditions, which may influence their behaviors (Bocharova & Melnik 2023).

One teacher reflected: "We often hear: 'We don't need to work hard, because we'll go back home'—that attitude demotivates us" (K6).

Another shared: "Students from Ukraine misbehave, use their phones despite rules, and don't take learning seriously. It's discouraging" (K12).

The multidimensional nature of difficulties (K1) highlights the complexity of working with students who have both diverse cultural and educational needs. These statements point to the necessity of institutional support, such as intercultural assistants or additional funding for schools.

K1 reported: "I teach children from two different cultures, with special needs and disabilities. It's extremely challenging without support".

Perceived injustice and unequal treatment (K4, M2, K3, K10) reflect a significant perceptual issue—some teachers believe that support provided to Ukrainian students occurs at the expense of Polish students. What is lacking here is deeper reflection on the idea of educational compensation and equity. This can be interpreted as the result of a lack of communicative and cultural tools that would enable a better understanding of inclusive education's purpose.

For instance, a teacher noted: "Ukrainian students have more access to extracurricular activities than our own students—it feels unfair" (K4).

Another stated: "We focus too much on foreign students and forget our Polish ones" (K3).

D. The Process of Foreign Students' Adaptation

The final area of analysis concerns the challenges associated with integrating students with migration experience. Trauma and language barriers (K9, M3) were identified as the main obstacles to the adaptation process. Respondents noted that children often struggle with difficult emotions, a lack of language proficiency, and cultural mismatch. At the same time, some teachers lack the necessary competencies to teach Polish as a foreign language or to work with traumatized children. This competency gap results in a lack of effective support, which may further complicate adaptation and lead to the social exclusion of the student (Bocharova et al. 2024).

As M3 shared: "Despite our efforts, we couldn't help them enough. They lacked language skills and support—they were simply overwhelmed".

K9 added: "They not only didn't know Polish, but were also emotionally exhausted. I wasn't sure how to reach them".

Conclusions

The qualitative analysis of interviews with primary school teachers revealed a clear dichotomy in their attitudes toward multicultural education. One group of teachers demonstrated a constructive and inclusive stance: they viewed cultural diversity as enriching both for students and their own professional development. These teachers acknowledged challenges – such as language barriers and emotional needs of refugee students – but perceived them as opportunities for mutual learning and skill growth. They actively sought additional training and adopted inclusive strategies (for example, communal activities and peer support) to support all students equally.

In contrast, a second group of teachers expressed reservations about multicultural education. They emphasized that incoming students should adapt to the host culture and voiced concern that focusing on diverse students might disadvantage native Polish students. This perspective was accompanied by a defensive emphasis on preserving national culture and identity. Some in this group appeared to generalize negative traits to immigrant students, indicating a lack of understanding of the refugees' experiences.

Overall, the findings highlight the diversity of teacher attitudes. Importantly, even teachers in the supportive group noted that working in diverse classrooms is demanding and requires additional resources and skills. Both the optimistic and the hesitant perspectives have practical implications: teacher education programs should address these divergent views by providing targeted professional development. Strengthening teachers' intercultural competencies and supplying appropriate pedagogical tools (for example, language instruction methods and psychosocial support strategies) emerged as key needs.

These results can thus inform future training initiatives, aiming to build a school environment where all students – regardless of background – have equitable opportunities to learn. Finally, the study's conclusions can serve as a foundation for future research and educational initiatives. In particular, the evidence suggests the need for further efforts to support teachers in culturally diverse classrooms, ensuring that the challenges identified do not hinder inclusive education.

Discussion

Understanding these findings requires situating them in Poland's unique socio-historical context. Today, Poland remains one of Europe's most ethnically homogeneous nations. After World War II, border shifts and forced population transfers left the country overwhelmingly Polish and Catholic, and the Polish state never modeled itself on Western European-style multicultural societies. This legacy

means that many Polish teachers have had limited exposure to cultural diversity in their own lives (Cienki 2017). Reflecting this, public opinion surveys from 2015-2016 showed that Poles were initially suspicious of refugees: the share of citizens perceiving Middle Eastern and African asylum seekers as a threat jumped from 21% to 61% in that period. Such national attitudes likely reinforce caution among educators when they encounter foreign students (Hargrave 2023).

By contrast, the 2022 war in Ukraine provoked a strong outpouring of solidarity across Poland. Many citizens – and hence teachers – responded to Ukrainian refugees with compassion, motivated in part by fear of regional instability. Notably, the majority of Ukrainian refugees were women with children who intended to return home, framing this migration as a temporary humanitarian crisis. This shift in the public mood – from distrust of distant migrants to empathy for those fleeing a neighboring war – created a nuanced backdrop for teachers.

These broader dynamics translated directly into school settings. The sudden arrival of many non-Polish students (often traumatized by conflict) posed unprecedented practical challenges. Teachers found themselves largely unprepared: they lacked specialized pedagogical training (for example, in teaching Polish as a foreign language or adapting curricula) and had no experience addressing the psychological needs of war-affected children. In their words, the influx "caused some kind of chaos" in schools because standard routines and materials were not designed for such diversity. Reports from the field confirm that educators struggled to build new communication channels with students and families under these stressful circumstances (Gorski 2000).

Interpreting our results against this background helps explain the split in teacher attitudes. Those who expressed support for multicultural education may have been influenced by the prevailing narrative of Polish solidarity with Ukraine; they saw immigrant students as temporary guests deserving aid and inclusion. In contrast, the more skeptical teachers may have drawn on older, homeland-oriented values: Poland's historical emphasis on a single national culture may predispose some individuals to protect the status quo. In effect, the defensive stance of the second group mirrors the broader trend of safeguarding cultural identity (as identified by Cienki 2017), while the open stance of the first group corresponds with the recent wave of empathy toward refugees.

In sum, the diversity of teacher perspectives can be traced to both historical and contemporary factors. The country's post-war ethnic homogeneity and earlier resistance to multiculturalism help explain the protective attitudes observed, whereas the immediate experience of aiding Ukrainian refugees underlies the more inclusive views. Various attitudes of teachers towards students from different cultures may be rooted both in the historical and modern context. Recognizing this context is crucial: it suggests that supporting teachers will require not only skills training, but also addressing underlying beliefs and emotions shaped by Poland's unique social history.

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SEMINARE

Contact with the Child after the Divorce of Parents in the Light of Own Research

Kontakty z dzieckiem po rozwodzie rodziców w świetle badań własnych

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Abstract: The article addresses the issue of the impact of the amendments to the Family and Guardianship Code of November 6, 2008 on contacts between parents and children after divorce, noting the on the benefits and risks to the welfare of the child. The purpose of the study was to sentence the respondents' awareness of the contacts in question in the context of the cited amendment. In order to achieve the indicated goal, an analysis of the literature, legal acts and a survey were conducted. As a result of the analysis, several key findings were confirmed. Respondents demonstrated an awareness that family relationships are the foundation of proper child development. It was also noted that improper implementation of contacts with the child can have negative consequences for the child's well-being. Moreover, indirect forms of contact such as long-distance communication are not a substitute for face-to-face contact. The research also pointed out the difficulties that arise from interference by third parties, and stressed the importance of appropriate conditions in the courts that provide comfort in hearing the child. The conclusions of the research suggest the need for further development of the court system and support for parents to effectively protect the welfare of the child in divorce proceedings, taking into account the child's emotional and psychological needs.

Keywords: child welfare, amendment, court interference, research hypotheses

Abstrakt: Artykuł podejmuje problem wpływu nowelizacji Kodeksu rodzinnego i opiekuńczego z dnia 6 listopada 2008 roku na kontakty rodziców z dziećmi po rozwodzie, zwracając uwagę na korzyści i zagrożenia dla dobra dziecka. Celem opracowania było zbadanie świadomości respondentów na temat przedmiotowych kontaktów w kontekście przywołanej nowelizacji. Aby osiągnąć wskazany cel przeprowadzono analizę literatury, aktów prawnych oraz badanie ankietowe. W wyniku przeprowadzonej analizy potwierdzono kilka kluczowych ustaleń. Respondenci wykazali świadomość, że relacje rodzinne są fundamentem prawidłowego rozwoju dziecka. Zauważono również, że niewłaściwe realizowanie kontaktów z dzieckiem może mieć negatywne konsekwencje dla jego dobra. Ponadto, pośrednie formy kontaktów, takie jak komunikacja na odległość, nie zastępują kontaktów bezpośrednich. Badania wskazały także na trudności wynikające z ingerencji osób trzecich oraz podkreśliły znaczenie odpowiednich warunków w sądach, które zapewniają komfort wysłuchania dziecka. Wnioski z przeprowadzonych badań sugerują potrzebę dalszego rozwoju systemu sądowego oraz wsparcia dla rodziców, by skutecznie chronić dobro dziecka w postępowaniach rozwodowych, w uwzględnieniem jego potrzeb emocjonalnych i psychicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: dobro dziecka, nowelizacja, ingerencja sądu, hipotezy badawcze

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Introduction

The family constitutes the fundamental unit ensuring the effective functioning of state. Family relationships play a pivotal role in shaping a child's subsequent social interactions, as the family is the primary site of early socialization. A young individual needs to follow a reliable role model in order to develop positive personality traits during the formative stages of life. For this reason, rational upbringing practices by parents and a recognition of the child's needs are of utmost importance. Love, a sense of security, acceptance, respect, belonging to a community, and the ability to pursue one's interests are fundamental desires of every human being, who by nature needs the presence of other people. Parents, therefore, bear a significant responsibility to provide the child with a stable and nurturing environment conducive to further development (Łodzińska 2012, 109). Divorce and the determination of contact with the child, as legal procedures, inherently disrupt the stability of the family and carry adverse consequences for the child's mental well-being (Stojanowska 2011, 265).

To examine respondents' views on child-parent contact following divorce and to explore the application of the provisions of the Family and Guardianship Code, an online survey was conducted among respondents from across Poland. The study was performed between May 2021 and October 2021. The research utilized an online questionnaire, and respondents were informed about the voluntary and anonymous nature of their participation. A total of 150 surveys were collected via the internet, all of which met the formal criteria, as the system would not allow the respondent to proceed to the next question without correctly completing the previous one. The main study was preceded by a pilot survey involving a sample of 25 individuals. The aim of the pilot study was to verify (i.e., test the quality of) the research instrument. The return of completed surveys indicated that none of the participants reported any objections.

Responses to individual questions were measured using a five-point Likert scale (ordinal level of measurement ranging from "definitely not" to "definitely yes") (Babbie 2008, 197-198).

1. Research hypotheses

The process preceding the empirical research concerning child-parent contact following divorce involved formulating, on the basis of literature and case law in the field of family and guardianship law, the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis No. 1: Parents are aware that family relationships play a key role in the child's development. This hypothesis was formulated on the basis of the publication by J. Rembowski, in which the author emphasizes that all children, without exception, need love, recognition, and acceptance from both parents. On one hand, the child actively seeks to fulfill these needs to feel safe and happy; on the other, they are subject to parental control, which enables a broad sense of order in their life. The interrelated dynamics of dependence, independence, and

interdependence which are formed between the child and parents, as well as the quality of the contact between them, are crucial for the child's ability to function independently in the future (Rembowski 1986, 128-130).

Hypothesis No. 2: Improper enacting of child-parent contact negatively affects the child's well-being. This hypothesis was based on the publication of A. Rogalska, according to whom such contact should be harmonious, free from negative stimuli from either parent, and should not place the child in uncomfortable situations which would induce the feeling of dissonance of loyalty toward the mother or father. Balanced contact with both parents allows the child to observe interpersonal behaviors, helping them to understand how to communicate and reach agreement in a discourse which involves divergent views being presented in a manner that grants respect for the other interlocutor. When parents deprive their child of this type of observations, they cause harm by instilling patterns that hinder the formation of meaningful relationships, and thus obstruct the development of the sense of self-fulfillment and social fulfillment (Rogalska 2019, 92-93).

Hypothesis No. 3: Indirect contact with the child via means of remote communication is not capable of substituting direct, in-person contact. This hypothesis was formulated on the basis of J. Ignaczewski's publication, where he asserts that indirect contacts do not replace direct interactions but rather serves a supplementary function. An exception might be made in such a situation as the parent residing permanently abroad; even then, however, the child's best interests must remain paramount (Ignaczewski 2011, 23).

Hypothesis No. 4: Parents are aware that third-party interference hinders the upbringing process. This hypothesis emerged from the pilot testing of the research instrument.

Hypothesis No. 5: Creating appropriate, child-friendly courtroom conditions ensures the comfort of hearing the child. This hypothesis is based on the article by K. Korol, in which the author discusses the origin of child-friendly interview rooms and the impact of interview conditions on children's psyche (Korol 2016, 385-387).

Hypothesis No. 6: Socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, sex, place of residence) differentiate respondents' views regarding the institutions of parent-child contact. This hypothesis originated from the pilot testing of the research instrument.

2. Analysis of the results of the author's own research

The questionnaire concerning child-parent contact following divorce consists of 9 single-choice questions, 4 semi-open questions, and 5 multiple-choice questions. The single-choice questions relate to respondents' views on subjects of: the attitudes of individual family members toward the child and their impact on the child's development; replication of role models learned at home by the child; indirect communication with the child; court-appointed guardian supervision; and the assistance of a mediator in cases where parents are not in agreement regarding the way of regulating contact with the child. The questionnaire also includes questions regarding: court-imposed

prohibitions on parental contact; the essence of primary socialization; the assessment of whether maintaining parent-child contact should constitute both a statutory right and a duty; and the interference of third parties in the upbringing process. The semi-open questions concern: the individuals with whom the child spends time and the resulting influence on the child's character formation; respondents' opinions on whether child contact concerns only the parents; the hearing of the child by the court in child-friendly conditions; and the evaluation of the model of family justice system in Poland. The multiple-choice questions address issues such as: hearing the child by the court; the child's contact with close family members; the child's wellbeing and the impact of improper contact arrangements; and family socialization.

2.1. Respondents' Awareness of the Role of Close Family Members in the Upbringing Process

In the semi-open question, respondents were asked to indicate what, in their opinion, is the impact on the child's well-being of the people with whom the child spends time. Among the most frequent responses were provided the following answers:

- The child observes the behavior of people with whom they spend time and adopts these behaviors as models (80 respondents)
- Influence on the child's development, self-confidence, and sense of self-worth (20 respondents)
- The child may have difficulties in finding their own "self" (8 respondents)
- The influence may be either positive or negative (7 respondents)
- The influence is significant (7 respondents)
- The influence is emotional (5 respondents).

2.2. Respondents' Position Concerning Contact with the Child

In the semi-open question, respondents were asked for their opinion on whether contact with the child pertains exclusively to the parents. Among the negative responses, the following statements were noted:

- Contact also pertains to extended family (55 respondents)
- Contact concerns anyone the child cares about (5 respondents)
- Contact also pertains to individuals outside the family who are involved in the upbringing process, e.g., teachers, caregivers (16 respondents)
- Contact also pertains to individuals outside the family with whom the child spends a considerable amount of time, e.g., friends, peers (12 respondents)
- Contact also pertains to individuals who the child regards as authority figures (5 respondents)
- All interpersonal relationships shape the child (7 respondents)
- Among the affirmative responses, the following statements were noted:
- Contact with other family members is important; however, the most important is the child's contact with the parent (10 respondents),
- Only parents are fully responsible for the child (7 respondents).

2.3. Respondents' Views on the Child Being Heard by the Court and the Assistance of the Mediator

During the course of the research, respondents were once again presented with a semi-open question:

In your opinion, does direct hearing of the child by the court, under conditions friendly to the child, fulfill multiple important functions? Respondents were free to express their opinions. Those who answered in the negative indicated the following concerns:

- It induces stress in the child (5 respondents),
- Such a child lacks life experience (2 respondents).

Those who answered in the affirmative referred to the following justifications:

- It allows to obtain honest answers, the court may ascertain the child's true position, uninfluenced by external parties (60 respondents),
- A friendly environment reduces the risk of the experience being traumatic for the child (10 respondents),
- It is easier for the child to open up and speak about their problems to a stranger (15 respondents),
- It gives the child a sense of agency and the opportunity to indicate where they feel safe (15 respondents),
- It allows an assessment of whether the child requires support of a psychologist (9 respondents).

2.4. Respondents' Position on the Child's Well-being and the Model of Family Justice System in Poland

In this section, respondents had the opportunity to express their views on the impact of the improper exercise of contact on the child's well-being, other than those proposed in the research tool. The following proposals were indicated:

- Educational impact (5 respondents),
- Isolating the child (10 respondents),
- Lowering the child's self-esteem (14 respondents),
- Disrupting the child's hierarchy of priorities (9 respondents).

Respondents were again given the opportunity to express additional opinions. They were asked to indicate whether, in their view, the model of family justice system in Poland is appropriate. Respondents who answered "no" indicated that:

- Fathers are portrayed in a negative light from the outset and, in practice, have less chance of receiving decisions favorable to both themselves and the child (7 respondents),
- The child's best interest is neglected in favor of parental conflict (6 respondents),
- The child's will is not respected (8 respondents),
- Excessive length of proceedings (5 respondents),
- Lack of psychological care for children whose parents have divorced (7 respondents),

- Excessive complexity of legal procedures and occasional gaps in family legislation (5 respondents),
- Family court judges fail to approach each case individually, disregarding its character and circumstances, and often lack sufficient life experience (5 respondents).

Respondents who selected the answer "yes" indicated that:

- If the parents are immature, there is little the court can do (5 respondents),
- The court strives to adjudicate fairly (5 respondents),
- The court seeks to make the best decision in the child's best interest, but there are significant shortcomings in this regard (5 respondents).

2.5. Respondents' Views on the Formation of a Child's Identity in the Socialization Process

The overwhelming majority of respondents agree that the effects of processes occurring in infancy and childhood (primary socialization) are felt throughout an individual's entire life.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents believe that primary socialization is intended to prepare the child for functioning in society. Sixty-five point three percent (65.3%) consider primary socialization to be the inculcation of a system of norms and values accepted within the family. The response "imitation of behaviors observed in the immediate environment" received 31% of the indications. Twenty-one point three percent (21.3%) of respondents indicated the response "social control based on the rewarding and punishing of desirable and undesirable behaviors."

2.6. Respondents' Views on Maintaining Parent-Child Contact After Divorce and Third-Party Interference in the Upbringing Process

One-third of respondents strongly agree with the statement that maintaining contact with the child should be both a statutory right and obligation of the parents. 28.7% answered "rather yes," 14.7% indicated "no opinion," 18.7% responded "rather not," 4.7% of respondents selected "definitely not."

The majority of respondents, however, rather agree or strongly agree with the statement that third-party interference may disrupt the upbringing process conducted by the person currently exercising custody of the child.

3. Verification of research hypotheses

Hypothesis No. 1, which stated that: "Parents are aware that family relationships play a key role in the child's development" – was confirmed in the vast majority of cases. According to 99.3% of respondents, the attitudes demonstrated by individual family members toward the child play a significant role in the upbringing process. Affirmative responses, which altogether account for 92%, also predominated in relation to the child's replication of personal models acquired from the family home and through interactions with individual family members. Furthermore,

84.7% of affirmative responses were given when asked whether the individuals with whom the child spends time influence the development of the child's character. According to 92% of respondents, the effects of processes occurring in infancy and early childhood (i.e., primary socialization) are felt throughout an individual's entire life. Additionally, 78% of respondents believe that the notion of family socialization includes preparing the child for functioning in society.

Hypothesis No. 2, which stated that: "Improper enacting of child-parent contact negatively affects the child's well-being" – was likewise confirmed in the majority of cases. The highest percentage of responses to the question regarding the impact of improperly implemented contact with the child on the child's well-being indicated the response "harmful," selected by 94% of participants. It is worth noting that the other negative responses: "destructive" and "manipulative" were also selected by the overwhelming majority of respondents, at 88.7% and 80%, respectively. It should further be emphasized that the most frequently selected definition of the "child's well-being" (80.7%) was: "a system of values determined by a variety of diverse factors."

Hypothesis No. 3, which stated that: "Indirect contact with the child via means of remote communication is not capable of substituting direct, in-person contact" – was confirmed to a significant degree. In response to the question of whether indirect contact via remote communication means could replace direct contact, negative answers predominated, comprising as much as 93.3% of responses. Moreover, according to 80.7% of respondents, if maintaining contact between the parents and the child seriously threatens the child's well-being, the court should prohibit such contact. In the view of 93.3% of respondents, in the situation where the parents cannot reach an agreement on the regulation of contact with the child, a mediator could be of assistance. Supervision by a court-appointed guardian was considered helpful in cases where mutual distrust exists between the parents, according to 52.7% of respondents.

Hypothesis No. 4, which stated: "Parents are aware that third-party interference hinders the upbringing process" – was largely confirmed. In response to the question of whether, in the respondents' opinion, contact with the child pertains exclusively to the parents, negative answers prevailed, constituting a total of 66.7%. Additionally, 69.3% of respondents answered affirmatively that, in their view, third-party interference may disrupt the process of raising a child by the person currently exercising custody.

Hypothesis No. 5, which stated: "Creating appropriate, child-friendly courtroom conditions ensures the comfort of hearing the child" – was confirmed in the majority of cases. According to 72.7% of respondents, direct hearing of the child by the court under conditions tailored to the child's needs serves many important functions. The highest percentage of responses to the question of when, in the respondents' view, hearing the child in court is necessary amounted to 75.3%, and the prevailing answer was: "when the child's mental development, health condition, and level of maturity allow for such a hearing."

Hypothesis No. 6, which stated: "Socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, sex, place of residence) differentiate respondents' views regarding the institutions of parent-

child contact" – was fully confirmed. Among individuals aged 41-46 and those aged 46 and over, there were respondents who did not select the response "harmful" as an effect of improperly exercised contact with the child. In the age groups 20-25, 36-40, 41-46, and 46 and over, there were individuals who did not select "manipulative" as an effect of improperly executed contact. It is worth noting that the 36-40 age group showed a particularly high rate of non-responses to this item. Among respondents who described their financial situation as "very poor," 8.7% selected the answer that the child's well-being is "a system of values determined by a single factor." In the remaining groups distinguished by financial self-assessment, no one chose this answer. Men (81.3%) more frequently than women (61%) indicated instilling in children a system of values accepted within the family as a component of the concept of family socialization. Regarding the question of whether contact with the child pertains exclusively to the parents, a higher percentage of women selected the responses: "rather not," "definitely not," and "definitely yes," whereas a higher percentage of men responded: "I don't know" and "rather yes." To the question of whether a mediator could assist the parents if they are unable to agree on the regulation of contact with the child, men more often than women selected "rather yes" and "definitely not." No male respondent selected "rather not" or "I don't know." In contrast, women more frequently chose "definitely yes," "rather not," and "I don't know." When asked whether the court should prohibit the parental contact with the child if such contact seriously threatens or violates the child's well-being, men more often answered: "definitely not," "rather not," and "I don't know," while women more frequently selected: "rather yes" and "definitely yes."

Conclusion

The family holds immense existential significance for every individual, while simultaneously constituting the most intimate environment of one's life. Its exceptionality lies in the unique nature of interpersonal interactions and in the specific ways it fulfills fundamental functions and satisfies the needs of its members. Unfortunately, this essential environment of human life is increasingly becoming unstable, transient, and vulnerable to contemporary challenges. The modern world is marked by ambiguity, competing processes, and antagonistic interpersonal relationships, generating feelings of threat, disorientation, and uncertainty, which often lead to family dysfunction. Such dysfunction may manifest in marital, parental, caregiving, and educational spheres. Consequently, divorce is increasingly becoming a stage in the developmental cycle of both the individual and their family (Cywińska 2021, 91).

A divorced family, as a form of incomplete family, does not provide the child with continuous contact with both parents, due to the severance or limitation of the marital bond. Divorce is a traumatic experience for the child, resulting in a sense of emotional orphanhood. It induces anxiety, depressive states, feelings of threat, a lack of security, and a sense of loneliness and rejection by a close family member (Cywińska 2021, 101).

Any post-divorce parental behaviors directed toward the child, such as competing for the child's affection, involving the child in conflict with the former partner, attempting to form an alliance with the child, or striving for physical and psychological exclusivity through isolating the child from the other parent and demeaning them should be regarded as forms of emotional abuse. These actions also constitute violations of one of the child's fundamental rights, which is the right to maintain a relationship with both parents (Porembska and Odolczyk 2022, 63).

Parental competences should be continually developed and expanded. This involves the necessity of adopting new social roles, modifying behaviors across various life domains, and adapting one's motivations to emerging challenges. In light of the transformations occurring in industrial civilization, it is needed for parents to be pedagogically prepared to fulfill their emotional, socializing, and educational roles within the family, based on a solid scientific foundation (Kwaśniewska 2022, 243).

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SEMINARE

Childhood and Parenthood from the Socio-Cultural Perspective: Transformations of Family Function from the Polish People's Republic to the Present

Dzieciństwo i rodzicielstwo w perspektywie społeczno-kulturowej. Przemiany funkcji rodziny od PRL-u do współczesności

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Abstract: The academic aim of the article is to examine the concepts of childhood and the family and its functions in two distinct historical periods within the socio-cultural context. This article presents a literature review alongside the author's own conclusions and reflections. It discusses theoretical perspectives, reports, and research findings relevant to the subject. The primary methodology used was desk research, analysing secondary data, and reviewing subject literature. The study characterizes the socio-cultural background of both periods: Poland under the People's Republic (PRL) up to and following the systemic transformation, highlighting the evolving roles of the family and the perceptions of childhood. The analysis includes the functioning of the family across different time frames while engaging in socio-cultural discourse surrounding childhood, family, and parenting from various perspectives. The practical significance of this topic lies in understanding the socio-cultural influences, the role of the state, its governance, and ideologies on the family, as well as the progressive changes in its functions. It also provides insight into informed educational interventions and the creation of an appropriate family model. Lack of awareness and susceptibility to ideologies and liberal trends lead to the deconstruction and dysfunction of the family unit.

Keywords: child, family and parenthood, functions of the family, childhood, Polish People's Republic, modernity

Abstrakt: Celem naukowym prezentowanego artykułu jest ukazanie dziecka i dzieciństwa oraz rodziny i jej funkcji w dwóch różnych epokach w kontekście uwarunkowań społeczno-kulturowych. W artykule dokonano przeglądu literatury przedmiotu z jednoczesną prezentacją własnych konkluzji i refleksji. Przedstawiono stanowiska teoretyczne, raporty i wnioski z badań dotyczących podjętego tematu. Metodę główną stanowiła zatem analiza danych zastanych desk research oraz analiza literatury przedmiotu. Scharakteryzowano tło społeczno-kulturowe obu okresów: Polski powojennej jako PRL-u do czasu transformacji ustrojowej i po niej, z jednoczesnym ukazaniem postępujących zmian w funkcjach rodziny oraz percepcji dziecka i dzieciństwa. Analiza objęła zagadnienia związane z funkcjonowaniem rodziny w różnych przestrzeniach czasowych z jednoczesnym podjęciem dyskursu socjokulturowego obejmującego dziecko i dzieciństwo, rodzinę i rodzicielstwo w różnych perspektywach. Aplikacyjne znaczenie podjętego tematu ma służyć zrozumieniu wpływów społeczno-kulturowych, znaczenia państwa, jego ustroju, ideologii na rodzinę oraz postępujące zmiany w jej funkcjach. Pozwala także na świadome oddziaływania wychowawcze i kreowanie odpowiedniego modelu rodziny. Brak świadomości, uleganie ideologiom, liberalnym trendom prowadzi do jej dekonstrukcji i dysfunkcyjności.

Słowa kluczowe: dziecko, rodzina i rodzicielstwo, funkcje rodziny, dzieciństwo, PRL, współczesność

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Introduction

Childhood and parenting, along with the child and parent figures, are two inseparable categories in pedagogy, frequently explored in research and scholarly reflection. The study attempts to trace the evolution of family roles from the era of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) to the present, simultaneously portraying the child as an active subject of caregiving and educational influences. The aim of this discourse is to present this evolution from a socio-cultural perspective, encompassing essentially two consecutive yet distinct periods marked by social, political, and cultural transformations. Each era is characterized by its own paradigms and discourses surrounding the child and childhood, as well as parenting and its roles. Children and parents, along with their roles in caregiving and socialization, remain a consistent focus of scholarly exploration.

The aim of the article is to show childhood and parenting, including changes in family functions. The background is the socio-cultural conditions in the changing epochs in Poland, from the People's Republic of Poland to the present. The extensive time covered by the analysis and the changes taking place limit the characteristics of the described changes. The research problem is an attempt to answer the question: What socio-cultural tendencies and conditions accompanied the changes in the categories of childhood and parenthood? In what direction has the evolution of the function of the family from the Polish People's Republic to the present day?

The criterion for the selection of literature for the presented analyses became the epochs in question and their characteristics. Due to the pedagogical nature of the presented text, most of the literature is classified as pedagogy. It is complemented by publications in the field of sociology, although the dominant emphasis is the achievements of pedagogy, including social pedagogy.

1. Child and Parents – Functions of the Family and its Role in Development

The child and childhood are inseparably linked to the family, along with parental roles and attitudes. The quality of childhood, and thus a child's developmental capacity, is a function of the family's condition and the fulfilment of its roles. These roles are shaped by socio-cultural contexts, customs, traditions, historical periods, and ongoing cultural transformations. Paradoxically, childhood may also be viewed as an unchanging category, endowed with intrinsic characteristics and attributes. However, the portrayal and experience of childhood are shaped by epochs, fashions, trends, and even ideologies, as well as their corresponding systems and political structures. Childhood defines future stages of human development and life (Nowak 2001, 161), forming a psychological and cultural construct that contributes to identity-building across the successive stages of life (Erikson 2004). As B. Matyjas (2008, 37) notes, "all studies and analyses of childhood must address the child's living environment within the family, school, peer groups, and mass media". The author further asserts

that "the primary environment for living, development, and upbringing, which shapes childhood, is the family" (Matyjas 2008, 37). This undeniable statement finds its rightful place in social research and is particularly relevant today, in an era when childhood and family face crisis. This highlights the family's pivotal role in socialization and educational processes. The essential influence of the family on an individual's future is well-documented in numerous academic publications. However, an antithesis to the family's critical role can be found in studies on family dysfunction and its impact on child development. According to S. Cudak (2013, 41), "awareness of functioning in a dysfunctional environment, threatened by conflicts, aggression, and violence, also negatively impacts intellectual development. Children's educational needs and attitudes towards cognitive, educational, and caregiving content at school are disrupted".

Another conclusion drawn by the cited author is that "children from dysfunctional families achieve lower educational outcomes. They exhibit low motivation or lack of motivation for school learning. They are passive, often apathetic, and reluctant to engage in educational activities" (ibidem). Other authors have also highlighted the characteristics of dysfunctional and pathological families and their developmental consequences for children (Becker-Pestka, Dubis and Różyńska 2018; Prusak and Sala 2011; Łuczyński 2008; Graczyk 2018). It is therefore challenging to separate a child's development from their upbringing environment, within which the family stands as the most crucial element.

2. Family and its Functions – Selected Theoretical Viewpoints in Pedagogy and other disciplines

The family, as the primary social group, undeniably serves as the first educational environment for a child. As A. Kamiński stated, "it is the fundamental community of life, primarily emotional, where mutual alignment of views and judgments occurs throughout life, where people connect with their whole personality, and the home serves as emotional support, a bastion of psychological security" (Kamiński 1972, 82). J. Rembowski (1972, 83) describes the family as "a small yet primary group with a unique organization and specific role distribution among its members, united by mutual moral responsibility, conscious of its distinctiveness, bound by traditions and habits, united in love, and accepting one another". Similarly, Z. Tyszka (1993, 695). notes that "the family constitutes an integral part of every society; it represents its smallest and fundamental unit. It is the most important social group, a basic group with which an individual is closely tied through significant parts of their personality and essential social roles (such as husband, wife, father, mother, family provider). It also serves as a reference group, with which an individual consciously and strongly identifies as a member, co-creating and adopting its cultivated views, attitudes, customs, and behaviour patterns".

As a social structure and a system with defined tasks, the family fulfils certain functions that affirm its social value and legitimize its roles. These functions

serve as indicators of its "correctness" in a functional sense or, conversely, its dysfunction. The alignment of these functions with social expectations and values also dictates societal judgment. "Dysfunctional families are those unable to fulfil their functions adequately. Family dysfunction may encompass various aspects of task performance," (Kawula, Brągiel and Janke 2007, 132). According to S. Kawula, this dysfunction may involve "failures in performing educational tasks", difficulties in meeting a child's needs, or challenges within different areas of family life.

A typical classification of family functions was introduced by M. Ziemska, who identified functions related to procreation, caregiving, mental hygiene, upbringing, and broader social functions (socialization and productive functions aimed at enhancing individual creative and productive forces that constitute social value) (Ziemska 1975, 36). More detailed family functions and typologies are provided by Z. Tyszka (1976, 61-69) and F. Adamski (1984, 46-47). Z. Tyszka's typology is particularly comprehensive, underscoring the unique character of family functions. In addition to those mentioned by M. Ziemska, Tyszka includes material-economic, legal-control, cultural, and recreational-social functions (Tyszka 1976). He defines functions as "specialized and ongoing actions of family members, arising from tasks they may or may not fully recognize, carried out within norms and patterns" (Tyszka 2002, 45). Tyszka further categorizes these functions into biopsychic, economic, socio-normative, and socio-psychological.

F. Adamski (1984) classifies functions into two groups: institutional and personal, reflecting the social structure of the family, as well as parental and marital roles. In recent pedagogical literature, new typologies of family functions emerge, indicating deepened research and exploration of new dimensions of family functioning. S. Kawula (2007) identifies the biological-caregiving, cultural-social, economic, and educational functions. The diversity of typologies covering family functions reflects various research approaches, undoubtedly revealing the complex psychosocial contexts in which families operate and their range of responsibilities. Referring to the theoretical framework and scientific dimensions of family function typologies provides the foundation for further analysis of the topic. As indicated in the title, the focus is on describing the evolution of family functions across two distinct socio-political and cultural periods.

The functions of the family are intricately linked to its role in child development and the establishment of social order. These functions are seen as effective and socially significant to the extent that they promote the child's harmonious development. Within the family, specific attitudes are shaped, including parental attitudes, parent-child relationships, and the roles of mother and father—distinct yet shaped by tradition, customs, and social norms. Levels of identification with these roles, especially parental roles, vary. Additionally, a crisis in authority complicates the identification process, making it challenging for both parents and their children to find role models.

The evolution of the history of the family and its functions from the last thirty years is undertaken by T. Szlendak (2011). The author reveals three types of conflicts

that determine changes in the family structure. These are: uncertainty of paternity, differentiation of parental investments and different reproductive interests of the people constituting the family. Szlendak undertakes an analysis of the crisis of the modern family, its internal processes, which changes its previous functions

A. Kwak (2015) emphasizes that regardless of cultural changes, the family is still an important social issue, regardless of the changes taking place. It is not only privacy. Its social dimension and condition depend on reflection on the concept of family, the threat to building and functioning of the family, its meaning and determining whether it is still a value. Another reflection requires the aging of the society (Kwak 2015, 17-23).

The changing social capital of modern families is also one of the factors modifying their roles and functions. They result from migration and previous changes in the traditional family (Slany and Strzemecka 2016; Slany, Ślusarczyk and Pustułka 2017). Changes in the family include membership in it and membership, which results from the current social principles and rules as well as legal and moral criteria (Żurek 2015, 57-72).

Each era, along with its accompanying socio-cultural processes, mental shifts, and ideological changes, creates different contexts for the formation of parental roles and family functions. Societies, value systems, and sources of authority evolve, a phenomenon especially notable in contemporary pluralistic societies (Mariański 2020).

3. Polish People's Republic (prl) – a New Chapter in Post-War Poland: Childhood, Family, and Family Functions

The communist period in post-World War II Poland is characterized by specific social, political, and cultural contexts that shaped family conditions and education. The post-war years bore the legacy of wartime tragedies and losses, with substantial social implications for the nation's life and the formation of a new state steeped in an entirely different ideology. J. Kostkiewicz's (2020, 51-65) recent works tackle topics that, though seemingly historical, remain poignant and demand ongoing reflection. The fates of Polish children, their forced Germanization during WWII, and their subsequent displacement remain research subjects to this day, often documented in autobiographies disclosed years later in old age. These accounts reflect the issue of post-war orphanhood, highlighting the breakdown of traditional family models and family functions, which the communist state sought to replace after 1945. The ideologies of this period distorted traditional family functions and roles, substituting them with a state-controlled, regulated educational system. W. Theiss (2012, 2007, 2020), author of numerous publications on children, childhood, and families affected by camps and deportations, writes extensively on the wartime and post-war experiences of children and families. These children, impacted by orphanhood, lost the foundations for harmonious existence and the development of a stable identity.

R. Doniec (2017) conducted research on the relationship between quality of life and crises in the post-war period, exploring the child's fate and childhood amid Poland's post-war situation. She hypothesizes a link between family actions and the creation of childhood even under challenging conditions. Doniec poses key questions: "1) To what extent can a child's fate and childhood intertwine with the fate of the nation? and 2) How can family actions help a child build a safe and happy childhood under difficult socio-political and existential conditions?" (Doniec 2017, 222). She highlights the limited research in this area, especially regarding the period between the war and the Stalinist era (ibidem). In her research conclusions, Doniec outlines the wartime impacts that markedly influenced the post-war situation of Polish families. Childhood took two opposing forms regarding family pedagogical culture, interpersonal relationships, family connections to a repressive political system, and post-war economic conditions. On one hand, one could talk about an abandoned, wounded, isolated, and misunderstood childhood on the other, childhood could be shaped by rational and mature parenting (Doniec 2017, 238). Both forms shaped the experience of childhood, influencing its atmosphere, tone, and overall quality of life. According to Doniec, the child's fate in the post-war years was deeply entwined with family life and the nation's destiny, as memoirs have shown. The war shattered the material structure of the Polish home, wounding and weakening the family (and thus childhood), yet it did not destroy the sense of family unity (Doniec 2017, 238-239). The child became a subject of social life, marked by the ideology of the time, which, while not stripping childhood away, rendered it distinct. In a comparative view of childhood against its wartime context, the era of the Polish People's Republic (PRL)—despite its psychosocial consequences—became a landscape of "integration" into the PRL setting and its prevailing educational rituals. Independence and autonomy were at odds with the spirit of collectivism and social unity, while socio-historical knowledge had to conform to Marxist-Leninist doctrines (literature, periodicals).

Childhood itself does not change but rather forms anew—this time amid relative social stability, though not always in conditions of material prosperity. It is, however, always accompanied by a child's indomitable desire for life, joy, dreams, and imagination, often compensating for material shortages and low social status. Hardships frequently spark determination, fostering educational and professional aspirations that ultimately lead to self-development, self-discipline, and self-actualization. Generations of children from rural and working-class backgrounds in the PRL era built their own social status, with educational egalitarianism providing a gateway to social mobility through schooling, skill acquisition, and eventual employment. The transformation of the family at that time was marked by ongoing socio-cultural shifts, visible in attitudes, the shaping of a "new" worldview, and considerable cultural changes, especially among rural families migrating to cities. This migration significantly altered the lifestyles of children from rural backgrounds, catalysing shifts in customs, perspectives on tradition, intergenerational relationships, and the role of education in child development, as well as in long-term aspirations for children's futures. The structure of rural life also evolved, balancing tradition

and attachment to land with a search for new forms of "better lives" for children. Across the social landscape and family structures, regardless of background, new forms of parental care, notably single motherhood, emerged during this period. This new terminology introduced terms into public discourse, such as single mother, unwed mother, or expectant, single, and far from home" (Klich-Kluczewska 2015, 71-81), which stigmatized both mother and child. As Klich-Kluczewska (2015, 73) notes, "This typifies a view of social issues through the prism of the primary actors: young mothers of children from informal relationships. Defining these women as problematic is also the main reason for their presence in public media".

Researchers studying the period suggest that the 1960s communist government in Poland generated three types of conflicts: social conflict, authority conflict, and conscience conflict (Grzybowski 2012, 106-107). The social conflict aimed to recruit the younger generation of Poles into communist ideology, primarily through mechanisms of social advancement. The post-war material hardships and existential difficulties led many young people to submit to the prevailing ideology. As R. Grzybowski (2012, 107) notes, the authorities "utilized methods of 'social advancement, which involved shifting individuals within the social structure. In the conditions of the People's Republic of Poland, this often took the form of rural youth migrating to cities". The result of these changes was a loss of previous identity and separation from family (through study in different locations and residence in boarding schools), all in the name of political indoctrination, communist propaganda, and the ideological moulding of young people. The authority conflict involved changes to traditional personal, institutional, and ideological authorities. The state's monopolization of social space marginalized the Church as an institution and eroded the influence of personal authorities, such as priests, conservative educators, and sometimes even parents. These shifts altered values, worldviews, and axiological systems among children and youth, simultaneously reshaping their social and cultural needs.

The emphasis on collective life (children's and youth organizations) excluded individuality, originality, independence, and creativity, reducing the child to one among many within the collective. The totalitarian communist government stripped parents of their natural educational privileges. "The communist state aimed to deprive the family of its most important functions, including its educational role. The family home was to be relegated to a supporting role, aiding the socialist school in its educational pursuits. The totalitarian state, in turn, was to become the 'ideological parent' of the child" (Grzybowski 2012, 111-112). Consequently, the family was deprived of influence and educational agency. The cultural capital it possessed (Bourdieu and Passeron 2006) was either nullified, restricted, or necessarily concealed due to fears of indoctrination or persecution. This dynamic led to a double identity, limiting the child's socialization by aligning it with the requirements of the communist school. Parents were thus compelled to foster social and historical awareness while simultaneously ensuring their child's safety. Another approach was compliance and alignment with the prevailing doctrine.

4. Family Crisis in the Ppr Era and Their Socio-Cultural Contexts in Literature

Writing about the PRL era, above all, with respect to the life of a child, childhood contexts, and family functions, lacks clear-cut connotations. Yet, there is a certain coherence in these contexts, especially by the late 1980s, marking the onset of profound transformations and democratization. This period saw the emergence of the so-called "Generation 89", i.e. the cohort of children born in the 1960s and 1970s who were entering adulthood in 1989 (studying or beginning their careers). As M. Cobel-Tokarska (2015) points out, examining the literature and journalism of the period, the generation was labelled as the "Children of the Transition," "Generation '89," or even as people of success (ibidem). She emphasizes that "the late 1970s and early 1980s cohorts were labelled as 'Generation 2000', 'Children of the Free Market'; according to Wujec, they lack a shared generational experience because they lived through the most pivotal historical moments in kindergartens and elementary schools" (Cobel-Tokarska 2015, 128).

In the PRL era, family existence, its tasks, and functions were framed by state social policies. This period was also marked by familial pathologies, breakdowns, alcoholism, criminality, dysfunctional parental roles, violence, and single motherhood (Klich-Kluczewska 2015). As the primary site of child socialization, the family shaped the "quality" of childhood, its character, and atmosphere. Studies on the state of the family in the PRL era have a rich tradition in the social sciences, particularly in family sociology and pedagogy. Family research, including the situation of children during this period, was a focal point in family sociology. As B. Klich-Kluczewska (2015, 55) observes, this field became a unique phenomenon, interweaving "an unrealistic glorification of the Polish family as a socialist family, evident in many studies, particularly in the last two decades of the PRL, and, simultaneously, a rapid expansion in research on phenomena considered to deviate from family norms, categorized as 'family pathologies'". She describes this as a kind of schizophrenia, where "increasingly detailed studies on domestic violence and alcoholism were categorized as concerning pathological families, without significantly altering the general perception of the Polish family" (Klich-Kluczewska 2015, 56). Meanwhile, in pre-transformation pedagogy, numerous publications, including empirical studies, highlighted the significance of the family environment in child development (Ziemska 1969; Dyczewski 1981; Kocik 1976; Tyszka 1982) and addressed the situation of children in dysfunctional families, the necessity for rehabilitation measures, and institutionalized responses (Pytka 2008; Wilgocka-Okoń 1972; Skorny 1987; Ziemska 1969, 1975, 1979). The findings and analyses presented in these studies suggest that, in every era, regardless of its socio-cultural framework, each childhood, as a distinct and irreplaceable period of development and world exploration, is marked by unique characteristics, though common features remain. The family, as the primary educational environment, is invariably embedded in the social, political, and cultural realities of the time in which it exists.

5. Family in Modern Times. New Challenges or Crisis?

Typically, the period following 1989 is considered the onset of social changes that have led to the contemporary social phenomena. A. Radziewicz-Winnicki (2008) defines the years 1989-2007 as a time of substantial shifts across numerous domains. These changes encompass new challenges arising from the transformation: threats, shifts in the status of various social groups due to emerging economic structures, new research and analyses in social sciences and humanities, historical reinterpretations, legislative and publishing reforms, including in education. It is difficult to dispute the fact that these transformations had significant impacts on various social groups that had "grown" and "formed" under different ideologies and lifestyles, which, in turn, also imply new roles for the family and transformations in its functions. As S. Kawula (2007, 43) observed, "the costs of Polish transformation are borne primarily by the poorest, the helpless, the poorly educated, people with disabilities, those chronically ill, and their families". Social and educational practices during the period operated within new frameworks, which drove continuous transformations and the adoption of new axiologies, postmodern patterns, and models of social behaviour. The paradigm and scope of research on children and childhood also underwent, and continue to undergo, significant change. As B. Smolińska-Theiss (2010) emphasizes, social change is closely tied to individual development. New paradigms of childhood place scientific discourse within socio-cultural contexts, removing the child from traditional supervision and authoritarian parenting. The perception of the traditional family is evolving. Families are increasingly shifting towards cohabitation and same-sex partnerships. These changes stem from the European Parliament's work on the contemporary family model and the redefinition of marriage and family (Gierycz 2015). Moving away from monogamous, tradition-sanctioning, and parental responsibility-oriented families is becoming a nearly desirable trend. So-called patchwork and nuclear families exhibit a departure from traditional family functions, eliminating multigenerational connections, identity transmission, and previously established parental roles. The patchwork structure of families disrupts the traditional family unit's cohesion and roles, favouring the tolerance of a "mixed" structure, comprising diverse identity and worldview foundations, without the unity conferred by biological and community sanction. Research shows that in such families, "children reveal difficulties in defining the external boundaries of the family, often experiencing loyalty conflicts toward the biological parent, who is often outside the daily system" (Skarbek and Kierzkowska 2023, 55). Nuclear families are characterized by a radical shift in traditional family functions, including the replacement of the caregiving function with a consumer-oriented one. The concept of parentification (Chojnacka 2018) has also emerged, describing the transfer of caregiving roles to older siblings (Schier 2014) as a consequence of parental incapacity and a dysfunctional family system. This phenomenon constitutes a form of emotional abuse and a simultaneous loss of the

essence of childhood. This type of family is marked by weak emotional bonds and a pattern of "living alongside each other" rather than "living together," leading to dysfunctional forms of family relationships.

From the sociological perspective represented by T. Szlendak (2008), the crisis of the contemporary family and its different social perception results from individualization. "The family within the first modernity was shaped by the state and industry. A 'normal family' (i.e. a nuclear family) was formed then, from which the derogations were labelled as deviations or even pathologies" (Szlendak 2008, 37). Currently, according to the author, the family is the result of changes that are: globalization, individualization, risk management and blurring the division between nature and culture Nowadays, different forms of families acquire the same rights. Thus, the perception of these changes in the conditions of the crisis is a confirmation of the ultra-conservative position by researchers (ibidem).

The dynamics of social transformation drive an ongoing shift in both the role and structure of the family. According to CBOS, "socio-cultural changes in marital and family life, related to, amongst other things, rising divorce rates, delaying or foregoing marriage and procreation, a significant increase in informal relationships, and the growing proportion of children born in such unions, inevitably lead to a redefinition of the concept of family" (Komunikat z badań CBOS 2019, 5). The majority of respondents (99%) consider a married couple with children as a family. Analysis also shows that "a vast majority (91%) recognize a single mother or father raising at least one child as a family. It is also widely believed that people in informal relationships raising children together constitute a family (83% of responses). Over three-quarters (78%) regard an informal couple co-raising children from previous relationships as a family, while two-thirds (65%) classify a childless married couple as a family" (Komunikat z Badań CBOS 2019, 5-6). Interestingly, 31% of respondents consider a childless informal couple to be a family, while 65% define a childless marriage as such (compared to 71% in 2013). Only (or perhaps significantly) 23% recognize a same-sex couple (gay or lesbian) jointly raising a child as a family (up from 9% in 2006), while 13% recognize a childless same-sex couple as a family (up from 6% in 2006). Researchers note that "changes over time suggest an increasingly broad understanding of the term 'family.' Opinions recognizing informal relationships with children as families are steadily increasing, as is the recognition of the 'patchwork' model, where individuals in informal relationships raise children from previous unions together" (Komunikat z badań CBOS 2019, 6-7). These findings indicate an ongoing redefinition of the family. With shifts in the conceptual framework surrounding family, it becomes essential to consider: who is the child in today's family, and what functions does the family fulfil at present?

Modern families, while fulfilling their procreative functions, do not always link these to a sense of responsibility for passing on life. Sometimes, even within marriage, procreation is excluded in favour of a child-free model focused on career advancement. The family's educational functions include caregiving, emotional

support, instruction, and creative activation "Every family creates its own cultural environment, providing behaviour patterns, ways of spending leisure time, and evaluations of various social phenomena. It should establish a sense of security, inner balance, calm, and trust" (Nogowski 2015, 161-162). However, today, there are significant issues stemming from the absence of security in families. This void often leads children and adolescents to seek alternative forms of entertainment, which can manifest in pathological behaviours (hikikomori syndrome, sects, criminal subcultures, and internet addiction, known as webaholism). Non-normative and risky behaviours are increasingly common, as highlighted by M. Jędrzejko (2015). These include "drug experimentation, early sexual initiation and underage sex, cyber disorders, consumption of stimulants, gambling, non-medical drug use, e-cigarettes, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, and sexual deviations" (Jędrzejko 2015, 34). Depression, rising rates of attempted suicides, and actual suicides among children and adolescents pose a major concern. According to research cited by the Demagog Foundation in 2022, "suicide attempts among the youngest are 2.5 times more frequent than in 2020. In 2022 alone, 2,093 people under the age of 18 attempted suicide, including 85 children younger than 13" (Samobójstwa 2023). This raises questions about the underlying functions of the contemporary family and the child's sense of security in a world full of opportunities that the PRL system did not offer. The pervasive lack of life purpose in a world dominated by consumption, despite the more attractive leisure options, improved living conditions, and better education and knowledge sources compared to the past, points to negative shifts in the family's roles and functions. These observations confirm A. Maslow's thesis that motivation to act stems from unmet fundamental needs: safety, belonging, love, and respect (Maslow 2009, 62-76).

6. Child and Family – Social and Cultural Context

"Observing the various changes in the modern world, it is impossible to ignore how the family has shifted from a traditional model rooted in religious and moral values, with the father's authority at its core, to a democratic model that abandons traditional-religious values, lacking a stable moral structure to guarantee familial and societal stability and functionality," writes J.M. Nogowski (2015, 170). The hallmark of today's family is an increasing trend toward individualization, which displaces the communal nature, shared responsibility, and mutual concern for children that traditionally defined family life. The family now often functions as a flexible, mobile structure, subject to fluctuations largely influenced by Western cultural patterns. This emancipation of the family carries with it many negative phenomena, leading to a patchwork family character, frequent partner changes, divorces, and their socio-emotional impacts (Brągiel 1999; Izdebska 2004; Matyjas 2017). Cohabitation, as an alternative to traditional family structures, along with other community-based partnerships built on consensual principles, create new family and systemic realities. Sometimes these take on a hybrid form, where the

economic function predominates, often without appropriate educational role models. Examples include families or other partnerships "living apart" (Kawula 2006). Each of these forms has specific consequences for a child's development and socialization. Children may become bargaining chips in the pursuit of social benefits, suffer from a lack of care due to parental economic migration, experience "Euro-orphanhood," or find themselves caught in identity conflicts within multicultural relationships (Sowa-Bethane 2019; Szczurek-Boruta 2023). Kawula (2006, 7) also notes the shifts in "the parental roles of women and men, raising questions about the extent to which contemporary family functioning is connected to these changing gender roles". These evolving parental roles alter the traditional family landscape, often placing the mother outside the bounds of home-cantered care and, in some cases, positioning her as the "head of the household," frequently due to economic migration. Transnational parenting is one manifestation of these cultural changes within the modern family, though not without its consequences. "Parental economic migration disrupts the family's fundamental functions. The absence of one parent upsets interpersonal relationships within the family and alters the ways in which social and family roles are played by its members" (Skoczyńska-Prokopowicz 2015, 171). This leads to child loneliness, not only as a result of economic migration but also due to parents' excessive professional engagement. The internet becomes a compensatory social environment, providing the interpersonal interactions that parents do not develop. Global culture imposes new behaviour patterns on children, often putting them in conflict with their parents. Parental and child expectations become increasingly unmet, deepening the deprivation of parental roles. "The family can also become a threat to its members when it too easily succumbs to external influences and trends, relinquishing traditional values and norms and accepting everything brought by global culture. In a passive, adaptive stance, it adopts many aspects of mass and commercial culture" (Skoczyńska-Prokopowicz 2013, 37). The globalization of culture leads to identity changes and new value systems within the family, ultimately deconstructing its functions. These changes do not always strengthen family bonds or support the effective fulfilment of parental roles.

Conclusions

Presenting two eras, and thus two different socio-cultural contexts, with a focus on the perspectives of the child, childhood, family, and its functions, offers only a narrow cross-section of the topic. This study serves neither as a critique nor an endorsement of any of these periods. Its purpose is to highlight differences arising from vastly different political and socio-cultural conditions, while also bringing to light the threats and crises affecting children and families. Each historical period has its own unique characteristics, achievements, and shortcomings. Believing in the superiority and accomplishments of our civilization may be overly optimistic. Technological progress is not equivalent to the growth of human awareness

or responsibility toward future generations. The crisis of the modern family has become a consequence of neglecting its functions, which are sine qua non conditions for the child's harmonious development and the family's social value in its traditional sense. A safe and happy childhood is not a function of economic wealth, family social status, or cultural emancipation. Nor is it entirely dependent on the political system, as long as it is characterized by care for the child's safety and optimal material conditions. Unquestionably, the core criterion is relationships based on love, care, respect, and responsibility within the family, irrespective of external circumstances.

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SEMINARE

Religious and Patriotic Education in Peasant Families during National Captivity

Wychowanie religijne i patriotyczne w rodzinach chłopskich w czasie niewoli narodowej

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Abstract: The family is the basic educational environment for children. When speaking about upbringing, we also have in mind religious and patriotic education. The family home is the place where a child acquires first religious and patriotic patterns. However, the condition for arousing the correct religiosity or patriotic attitude in children is also the maturity of these values in the parents, who pass on certain, specific patterns of conduct. Love of the homeland is strengthened and shaped by the national and religious upbringing of the child. Introducing the child to the world of values is an inseparable element of their upbringing, helping to preserve their own cultural and national distinctiveness. The most important place in the hierarchy of values has always been homeland, family, Catholic religion, history of Poland, tradition and national symbols, while the moral traits most valued were patriotism, courage, diligence and readiness to make sacrifices in the name of the highest values.

Keywords: family, education, child, patriotism, Church, values

Abstrakt: Rodzina jest podstawowym środowiskiem wychowawczym swych dzieci. Mówiąc o wychowaniu, mamy na uwadze również wychowanie religijne oraz patriotyczne. Dom rodzinny to miejsce, w którym dziecko nabywa pierwszych wzorców zarówno religijnych, jak i patriotycznych. Jednak warunkiem wzbudzenia u dzieci prawidłowej religijności lub postawy patriotycznej jest również dojrzałość tychże wartości u rodziców, którzy przekazują pewne konkretne wzory postępowania. Miłość ojczyzny umacnia się i kształtuje przez narodowe, a także religijne wychowanie dziecka. Wprowadzanie dziecka w świat wartości jest nieodłącznym elementem jego wychowania, który sprzyja zachowaniu własnej odrębności kulturowej i narodowej. Najważniejsze miejsce w hierarchii wartości zawsze zajmowały: Ojczyzna, rodzina, religia katolicka, historia Polski, tradycja oraz symbole narodowe, zaś cechami moralnymi najwyżej cenionymi były: patriotyzm, odwaga, pracowitość i gotowość do ponoszenia ofiar w imię najwyższych wartości.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, wychowanie, dziecko, patriotyzm, Kościół, wartości

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Introduction

The 19th century across Europe was a time marked by the emergence of national identity based on the bond of members of a group who shared the same history, traditions and culture. This was a particularly important time for Poles, who had a sense of belonging to one nation during the period when the Polish state did not exist, and among the cherished values that accompanied Poles were love of the Fatherland, subordinating one's own needs and interests to it, a sense of justice, respect for others and honesty.

The oldest and most important educational environment has been, is and will be the family. In the life of every person, the family plays a vital role. It is in this family that the child's personality and identity are shaped naturally. In the family, children learned the Polish language, respect for the family, Polish tradition, the Catholic faith, patriotic attitudes, respect for work and the Polish land understood as the Homeland from their parents and grandparents. It is thanks to the family that a young person acquired everything that prepared them for adult life and formed their earliest beliefs and worldview.

During the period of national captivity, the Polish nation retained its durability and identity thanks to various factors, including the family. During the partitions, when the Polish nation existed without a homeland, it was the family that played an important role in maintaining national identity by cultivating everyday rituals, traditions and customs. Religion and patriotism were foremost in shaping the atmosphere of Polish homes, including peasant cottages. Therefore, every Polish home in which Polish traditions were cultivated, and where care was taken to maintain Polish nationality, became a bastion of Polishness (Nawrot-Borowska 2012, 125-178).

1. The life situation of peasant families

Peasants were a group of owners or users of small family farms passed down from father to son, where all household members performed a range of work and duties closely related to their place in the family hierarchy (Jabłonowska 1975, 52-55; Staniszewski 1995, 34-56). Peasant families usually had many children. The larger the family, the greater its power and recognition in society (Konsała 1972, 2; Małłek 1976, 75; Samsel 2015, 279). It was claimed at that time that children from large families caused the least problems in upbringing, because they were hard-working and obedient. Children were treated as a blessing and a gift from God. Catholic newspapers wrote that "God's blessing descends on a home with many children, and parents who give society, the Church, and the state many offspring - what a rich reward awaits in heaven" (Dąbrowski 1927, 360).

During the period of national captivity, the economic situation in the Polish countryside was very difficult. Lack of hygiene – because children were bathed only on so-called "holidays", i.e. very rarely – caused diseases and epidemics, which, due

to the lack of medical care, resulted in high mortality, especially among children, whether in infancy or early childhood (Słomka 1983, 119; Gawron 1986, 8; Stryczek 1984, 26). It should be mentioned here that the rural population trusted healers and herbalists more than qualified doctors (Jabłonowska 1975, 59). Their fate was very difficult. Small children, who were no longer breastfed, were fed like adults, which often led to illness or death. Many peasant families were starving. The poor peasant population ate little bread, and if there was any, it was treated with great respect, and before cutting the first piece, mothers would always make a sign of the cross on it. In families with better living conditions, although there was more bread, meat appeared only on Sundays and holidays (Chałasiński 1984, 215-216; Słomka 1983, 43). The housing conditions of peasant families were miserable, and for some even tragic. The village huts themselves were built of wood and covered with thatched roofs. In the winter, they were insulated with straw or leaves. A peasant's house usually consisted of one living room, a large hall and a pantry. The living room was the main residential area, while grain and food products were stored in the pantry. Many huts still had workshops in the pantry. The second part of the house was used to keep farm animals, or if the animals were outside during the warm season, poorer peasants would bring a cow into the room for the winter, keep a pig under the stove, and keep chickens under the bed (Kunysz 1973, 50). Farm equipment such as millstones for grinding grain, a block of wood for chopping, etc. was kept in the hall. The floors were made of compacted clay. Clothes were hung on poles in the room, hall, or chamber (Słomka 1983, 34). In such conditions, even basic hygiene was out of the question. Children slept on the floor or on a bench. An additional problem that made even rest difficult was lice. The huts were semi-dark, as people economised on oil lamps. It was often cold, because the huts were heated with poor-quality wood and only as much as was necessary for cooking a meal (Kunysz 1973, 74). Small children were often left alone in their cradles because their mothers had to go to work in the fields. Children were left without food for many hours. They cried from hunger and loneliness (Słomka 1983, 120; Fołta 1987, 29). Only in the huts of wealthier peasants were the conditions better. Wealthier farmers built larger houses with two rooms. They also had separate stables for farm animals and a barn. Farm buildings were still built in a rather primitive way. The walls of the buildings were made of brushwood, which was sealed with clay. The yards were small, muddy in spring and autumn and usually littered (Kunysz 1973, 50).

In peasant families, there were no conditions for showing affection to their children. Hard, daily work prevented the development of sensitivity. Children received little affection from their parents, which does not mean that they were not loved. Hunger and cold were troublesome, because children did not have shoes. During the warm seasons, children, like adults, went barefoot, while in winter they had to stay indoors due to the lack of footwear (Gawron 1986, 9; Chałasiński 1984, 174; Męczyński 1962, 7; Magryś 1987, 23-24; Librachowa 1934, 33).

In such poor conditions, small children often fell ill and developed more slowly. From the youngest years, regardless of gender, children had to learn hard

work on the farm, often beyond their strength. Even children as young as a few years old had to help adults with some duties (Szczepański 1984, 34; Jabłonowska 1975, 14-23). Small children were cared for by their mothers, but at the age of three and four, children were introduced to work, and depending on their age, they were assigned increasingly difficult and responsible duties. From the youngest age, they were taught a sense of duty and shared responsibility for the family (Bujak-Boguska 1918/1919, 24-25). The youngest children helped with household chores, such as bringing wood from the firebox and feeding poultry; the older ones tended domestic fowl, then looked after cattle, pigs or horses, usually from sunrise to noon and from afternoon until dusk (Dąbrowska 1969, 12), and not only on their parents' farms, but very often on the farms of wealthy farmers, for whom they worked to help support the family. The duties of older children were more responsible and dependent on gender. Girls as young as four helped their mothers with household chores, including caring for younger siblings and helping around the house, while boys helped their fathers with men's household chores (Magryś 1987, 27). Learning through imitation of adults and sharing their duties were the basic educational tools in the countryside. The value of each person in the family depended on their usefulness on the farm. In those times, raising children was rigorous and strict. Although parents loved their children, they did not show their feelings so much. Children were subject to unconditional obedience towards their parents, especially their father (Witos 1878, 40; Baranowski 1969, 22-29; Jabłonowska 1975, 53; Kalniuk 2014, 135-137; Marciniak 2009, 239; Librachowa 1934, 67; Chałasiński 1984, 200).

Some children could not attend school due to their constant work or, if possible, they only attended during the winter season, when there was no field work. The time when children worked on the farm lasted from early spring, usually from April 23 (St. Adalbert's Day) until late autumn, that is until November 11 (St. Martin's Day) (Bień 1999, 201; Cichy 1980, 24). Even if children could study at school, their parents did not release them from their duties of working on the farm. Before children could go to school, they first had to do everything on the farm that was needed from early morning, such as taking care of the cattle and driving them out to pasture. After returning from classes, there was often no time to revise lessons, because they had to work in the field. It should be remembered here that many peasants at that time still had a negative attitude towards education, believing that only hard physical work could provide a living for the family. The second reason for peasant children dropping out of school was the lack of money to buy books, clothes, and shoes (Chałasiński 1984, 318, 504).

2. The role of parents in the religious upbringing of children

Peasant families were large. The basis of support was a farm or their own workshop. Peasants were tied to their own farm, which they usually inherited over several generations, and which was the only source of support for their entire family. The

head of the family was the father, who had power and authority. In families at that time, there was a strict hierarchy. This model of the traditional peasant family lasted for a very long time. It was still relevant in the realities of the last quarter of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Both the father and the mother observed moral and customary norms. The main features of the peasant family were stability, cohesion, a close connection with the farm, treating marriage as a holy sacrament, and patriarchalism. These patterns were based on the personal models of the time, primarily the father and the mother. There was a strong connection with tradition and a sense of duty. Parents tried to instil all of this in their children (Szlendak 2010, 31; Turowski 1967, 203-223; Jabłonowska 1975, 52-71; Ossowski 1946, 156-175).

The traditional model of a peasant family had the following main features: a close connection with the farm, stability, unity, marital fidelity, patriarchalism in intra-family relations, as well as cultural patterns that regulated the division of duties on the farm. Here, children were completely under parental authority, especially that of the father, who was obliged to take care of both moral and material well-being of his family (Turowski 1967, 203-223; Jabłonowska 1975, 52-71). It should be added here that, in accordance with the principle of industriousness, upbringing in a traditional peasant family did not tolerate children's free time. In addition, they were taught to be hardworking and punished for laziness (Słomka 1983, 121).

The high position of a woman as a mother and patron of the home in the family, regardless of social class, was associated with great value, because it was, she who was primarily responsible for raising children and who was burdened with household chores. She was the first teacher of the Polish language and the principles of faith. Motherhood was one of the first duties of a woman towards the rural community. According to the social principles and religious requirements of the time, a woman was expected to give birth to children and thus fulfil herself as a mother to her family. From their youngest years, children observed their environment and became like their parents, because it was their cares and efforts that determined how their character was shaped (Kostrzewska 2002, 449). The role of the mother herself was the most important in the entire process of shaping the child's personality and acquiring values. The mother's religiosity and morality were very important, because she passed on to the child the tradition and heritage of ancestors, but also taught how to cultivate church and family holidays. It should be noted that a child's idea of God is always connected with the image of its parents, therefore parents should always give their child a correct testimony of life and talk to them about religion. The family environment therefore has a fundamental influence on the formation of a person's religiosity (*Zarys dziejów religii* 1986, 321-322)

The upbringing of peasant children was linked to the social situation of the estate. Not all peasant families could afford to send their children to school. The only teachings that children could learn at that time were those heard in the parish church from their priest during sermons and parish announcements. In those

times, the educational ideal was a God-fearing and hard-working man, obedient towards his lord and priest (8).

The family home was a place where children acquired their first religious models. Religion was a very important value in peasant families at that time. Thanks to it, people found it easier to endure everyday hardships, suffering and death, because faith gave hope for a better life in eternity. It was religion that gave meaning to the lives of peasant families. Children were raised from an early age in respect for the truths of faith. In rural cottages there were many religious symbols such as images of the Mother of God, Jesus Christ or the saints, crosses, and altars, before which whole families prayed together every day, and the teachings of the Church were received in a realistic way (Wójcik 1995, 158-166). There was a very strong bond between the Church and the peasant family, because it accompanied them in all important moments of life – from wedding to funeral. The saints played an important role here. Mothers in particular told their children the stories of great Polish saints from ancient times, because their appealing examples were a very important help in raising them in the religious and national spirit (Helsztyński 1937; Samsel 2010, 149).

Due to their great piety, parents paid attention to the religious upbringing of their children. They made sure that they learned the Lord's Prayer, the truths of faith, the hours in honour of the Mother of God and other essential prayers. Parents took their children on pilgrimages and indulgences. Places of worship were very important for religious life, especially Marian sanctuaries and calvaries, to which entire families and even entire villages would travel during major parish holidays. The Mother of God was considered the main protector of people, while calvaries brought them closer the Passion of Jesus Christ. Frequent pilgrimages served to regain and deepen faith (Czachowski 2010, 142; Ohler 2000, 13-26). This was a very important help in raising people in the religious spirit. For many peasant children, a trip to distant sanctuaries was an incredible experience and an adventure in learning about the world (Witkowska 1984, 20-26; Helsztyński 1937, 11-16; Olszewski 1996, 15).

Parents attached great importance to Sunday Masses. It was a day off from work and the whole family went to church. In addition to attending church every Sunday, peasants eagerly participated in all church holidays (Kabacińska-Łuczak and Ratajczak 2013, 291). All celebrations, prayers, holidays and services included children in the religious tradition of the Polish nation, helping to cultivate the customs of religious and national culture (Chłosta 1986, 22).

3. The times of national captivity and the role of the peasant family and the Catholic Church in patriotic education

A person can be educated in patriotism. However, this should be done from the earliest years of life. The role of the first teachers of love for the homeland was fulfilled by parents (Adamski 1918, 17-20). The family, regardless of its place in society, has always played a significant educational role and helped shape the personality of children. The function of the family was realized by teaching its

children certain patterns of behaviour, the division of family roles and activities performed by its individual members.

For many centuries, the rural population lived on the sidelines, having no access to education or culture, i.e. to the changing world. During the partitions, the majority of Polish families were peasant families, based on patriarchy and subject to moral control by the Catholic Church. Religion in peasant families was an important educational factor. It was during the partitions that a special bond was created between the peasants and the Church. At that time, both sides served as a guarantee of each other's survival. Religion had a strong influence on morality, customs and organization of family life. Patriotism and religion were mutually intertwined at that time. To be a patriot, one had to be religiously committed. Love for the homeland was also love for God. Regardless of social class, religion was a very important educational factor at that time, because it influenced morality, family life and customs. This was evident in everyday life among peasant families, where the year was organized according to the church calendar. In a Polish, rural cottage, parents, and especially the mother, taught prayers and religious songs in Polish. There was a custom of regularly saying family prayers in the following months: October and May for the Mother of God and in June for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Although prayers and long services were burdensome for children, they became a serious educational element. Thanks to such teachings, children were included in the religious and cultural tradition of the Polish nation (Chłosta 1986, 22). It was also within the family that the child learned the Polish language, Polish traditions and customs. Such practices distinguished Polish families from foreign communities. It was a kind of struggle to preserve traditional values and to pass them on to the younger generation. This was a guarantee of the survival of the Polish nation. Religious education was aimed not only at introducing the child to the Church community, but also at strengthening family ties and cultivating Polish traditions, which were closely related to religious rites (Adamski 2002, 57; Samsel 2011, 98; Kałwa 2015, 234-235).

In the times of national captivity, it was the family and the Church that were the stronghold of Polishness. This was a time of intensive activity raising the awareness of peasants in terms of nationality. One could freely speak Polish among close family members. Parents shaped the system of moral values in their younger generation. Young people took over basic values from their parents, grandparents, other family members and even from wanderers who visited villages and promoted Polishness. Young people listened eagerly and with curiosity to the stories their parents and grandparents talked about their participation in the uprisings. The continuity of culture and tradition was maintained thanks to the family, which for centuries stood guard over traditional values. Thanks to this, it was the family that saved Polish culture despite the lack of its own state (Dyczewski 2002, 36; Zabielski 1980, 70; Syska 1970, 158; Nawrot-Borowska 2010, 195; Samsel 2011, 93). An example can be found in the recollections of one diarist of the time, who came from a peasant family and recorded his own memories: "I remember how my

mother told us about Poland, that it used to be great and rich, but that evil enemies had dismantled it; and she taught us to sing 'Boże Ojcze' and explained the words 'we in captivity, we in captivity' by saying that we were in captivity under Austria, and others under the partition of Muscovites and Prussia" (Chałasiński 1984, 63). In the family, the intergenerational transmission of values was essential for maintaining the continuity of culture, and at the same time served as a guarantee of the survival of society. Introducing the world of values was an inseparable element of raising the young generation (Samsel 2015, 54).

The fall of the Republic of Poland and its subjugation by three invaders put Polish society to a very difficult test. Poles, against everything and everyone, had to maintain their national identity and, in the absence of their own state, maintain their own culture and native language. After the fall of the November Uprising in 1830, the invaders tightened their policy towards Poles, and even more repressions affected them after the defeat of another uprising, this time the January Uprising in 1863. The fight undertaken by the invaders against Polishness, the denationalization of Polish society, along with deportations, prisons, and torture, meant that Poles were forced to take a certain, specific attitude towards the invaders and their actions. The loss of freedom made Poles realize how important their homeland was. The longing for the lost, once powerful state with an incredibly rich past and interesting culture made it one of the most important values, hence families had a sacred duty to pass on the most important values to their descendants (Buzek 1904, 27-31; Krąpiec 1999, 132-136).

The history of the Republic at that time, its political and military weakness, the marches of enemy troops and the occupation of the invaders, left little opportunity for peasants to participate in the defence of the country, which could have had a serious impact on the formation of their political attitude and national awareness (especially in regions such as Lublin, Podlasie and Western Lesser Poland).

At that time, the Church played a very important role. There was a strong bond between it and the Polish nation, which the invaders were unable to break and destroy (Wysocki 1983, 23). The Church, as the only Polish institution, provided Poles with knowledge about both religious, moral and social values. The teachings preached during sermons awakened Polish national consciousness and called for the pursuit of Poland's independence through loyalty to the Catholic religion and strong patriotism. The Catholic religion united Poles, whose faith differed from that of the non-Catholic invaders, who persistently attempted Germanization and Russification, attacking the Catholic Church in order to deprive Poles of its support. However, the more the Church was attacked, the closer the bond between it and the Poles grew (Samsel 2010, 148-149; Krąpiec 1999, 132-136). Polish society, very often participating in masses and services for the homeland, manifested its patriotism in this way. Close cooperation between the Church and Polish patriots resulted in the fusion of Polishness with Catholicism in the 19th century to such an extent that a Pole was and still is associated with this denomination. The Catholic religion was treated as the heritage of the fathers. The combination of the Catholic faith with Polishness had many dimensions, which resulted in the cult of the first patron of

Poland, St. Stanislaus, or the Mother of God as the Queen of Poland. One can say that a certain close symbiosis was created between the Polish nation and the Church, from which both sides drew strength to survive (Samsel 2010, 148-149).

Conclusion

The 19th century went down in history as a period that demonstrated the patriotism and courage of the Polish nation, as well as its determination and cooperation in the name of the highest good – a free and independent Fatherland. This period also shaped attitudes such as patriotism, readiness for sacrifice and the willingness to make even the greatest sacrifices. The values formed in families during national captivity left such a profound mark on the consciousness of Poles that, despite the subsequent difficult times, these values preserved the national identity of the Fatherland. It can be said with full certainty that family upbringing, together with the decisive role of the Church at that time – through the fulfilment of its educational functions and values – ensured that Polish society, despite 123 years of national captivity, did not lose its identity, tradition and language.

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SEMINARE

Report on the Activities of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society for 2024

Sprawozdanie z działalności Towarzystwa Naukowego Franciszka Salezego za rok 2024

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Scientific societies play a crucial role in fostering debate and the exchange of ideas, bringing together specialists and enthusiasts dedicated to advancing specific fields of knowledge. Through research, dissemination, and integrative activities, they not only advance science but also support its application in real-world social contexts. Thus, they play an essential role in the broader scientific community.

The mission of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society (TNFS) is to promote and conduct scientific research and to support educational and formative initiatives related to the "world of youth." The Society's activities are rooted in the spirit of Christian humanism inspired by St. Francis de Sales and focus on generating scholarly reflection and translating it into formation, education, and social practice. Through collaboration with academic and cultural institutions, TNFS aims to address current civilisational and educational challenges and provide competent and responsible responses.

During the reporting period from January 1 to December 31, 2024, the activities of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society included the following areas and events:

I. 16th TNFS General Assembly and Scientific Conference

The key statutory event of the year was the 16th General Assembly of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society, held on May 17–18, 2024 in Frombork. The location was chosen in connection with the conclusion of the Copernican Year (marking the 550th anniversary of Copernicus's birth) and the historical presence of the Salesians in Frombork (1946–1981). The event gathered 31 participants.

The first day of the Congress included a meeting of the TNFS Board and the editorial team of the journal *Seminare:*

Learned Investigations. The program also featured cultural and integrative activities, including a tour of sites associated with Nicolaus Copernicus and an evening community gathering. On the second day, participants celebrated the Eucharist in the Frombork Co-Cathedral. The Mass was presided over by Rev. Dr Krzysztof Niegowski SDB, recipient of the 2024 TNFS Award, and the homily was delivered by Rev. Dr Jacek Wojtkowski, Dean of Frombork.

The formal session of the General Assembly followed the liturgy. During the session, the *Praemium Societatis Scientiarum Francisci Salesii* was ceremoniously awarded to Rev. Dr. Krzysztof Niegowski SDB in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the development of *Seminare*. The laudation was delivered by Rev. Prof. Henryk Skorowski SDB.

Due to an insufficient number of voting members present at the first session, a second session was held following the academic conference. In accordance with the Society's statutes, the Assembly adopted the following resolutions: approval of the financial and activity reports, distribution of profit, and acceptance of the Audit Committee's report. A change in the composition of the Audit Committee was also confirmed: Radosław Błaszczyk SDB was succeeded by Jan Niewęgłowski SDB.

The central academic event of the Assembly was a scientific conference from the *Youth and Their World* series, titled *Youth in Cyberspace: Opportunities and Threats*. The conference comprised two parts: the first featured three presentations, and the second consisted of a panel discussion involving experts and young people. The session was chaired by Dr. Dariusz Wesołowski, Dean of the Faculty of Administration at the Higher School of Managerial Personnel in Konin. The conference addressed educational, parenting, and cultural issues related to youth's presence in the digital world, highlighting both its developmental potential and the real threats involved.

The plenary session featured the following presentations:

- Diana Mościcka (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn; inspector in the Social Prevention Team of the Municipal Police Prevention Department in Olsztyn) and Senior Sergeant Anna Depczyńska (Municipal Police Prevention Department in Olsztyn): *Cyberspace as a New Dimension of Youth Activity*.
- Prof. Piotr T. Nowakowski (University of Rzeszów): *(New) Media as an Opportunity?*
- Prof. Monika Podkowińska (Warsaw University of Life Sciences): *Cyberspace – Communication Threats and Challenges for Youth and Families*.

The panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Mirosław Wierzbicki SDB, featured representatives of youth, parents, and educators: Dr. Magdalena Kosche (moral theologian, doctoral dissertation on Manuel Castells's theory of network society) and Dr. Michał Kosche (theologian, personalist, IT professional) – representing the voice of parents, educators, and media experts in the field of new media; Jakub Szajkowski, MA – expert in media informatics and computer science teacher at the Dominic Savio Salesian School in Konin and the Romek Strzałkowski High

School in Poznań; Maria Teresa Lebiedz – student of psychology at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow and of journalism and social communication at the Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow; Wojciech Piaskowski – student at the Poznań University of Technology and educator at Oratory of the Blessed Oratorians of Poznań in Ląd on the Warta River. The discussion facilitated an exchange of views on digital engagement among youth. The open and inclusive nature of the panel discussion, which enabled a genuine encounter between academic, parental, and youth perspectives, was warmly appreciated.

The next TNFS General Assembly is scheduled for May 15–16, 2025. TNFS President, Rev. Prof. Jerzy Gocko SDB, expressed his gratitude to all participants and in particular to Dr Zdzisława Kobylińska and Dr Mirosław Wierzbicki SDB, for organising the conference.

II. Board Meetings of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society in 2024

In the reporting year 2024, the Board of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society held six meetings in various formats: in-person (Łomianki), online (via MS Teams), and hybrid. Meetings took place on January 29, March 23, May 17, June 15, September 23, and November 20.

Key decisions and initiatives included:

1. Organisation of the 16th TNFS General Assembly and scientific conference (Frombork, 17–18 May 2024), including:
   – logistical and academic planning.
   – awarding the TNFS Prize to Dr Krzysztof Niegowski SDB.
2. Approval of a new TNFS research project for 2025–2029, titled *Youth in Search of Meaning*, coordinated by Prof. Henryk Skorowski SDB and Prof. Monika Podkowińska. The first conference in this series will be held during the 17th TNFS Assembly in 2025 under the title *Youth and the Meaning of Life*.
3. Establishment of the Youth Research Centre, a TNFS-affiliated research unit based in Łomianki, dedicated to developing interdisciplinary research on youth in social and educational contexts.
4. Admission of new members: eight new individuals joined TNFS in 2024 – one in May, four in June, and three in September.
5. Granting TNFS scientific patronage to the following events:
   – Symposium *Character Formation* (Salesian Spirituality Centre, Ląd),
   – Symposium *A Dream of Educating and Evangelising Youth: Challenges and Responses* (Szczecin),
   – 36th Liturgical Symposium (Ląd, April 12, 2024),
   – Art competition *Images with a Message – Inspired by Don Bosco's First Prophetic Dream* (Association JESTEM, Lublin),
   – XVI Borderlands Debate: *Camino 2024* (Łeba, September 21, 2024),

- Symposium on youth rehabilitation (Youth Educational Centre in Trzciniec, November 22, 2024),
- Educational events organised by the Office for Education of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Salesian Province (Warsaw),
- 19th International Conference *Humanistic Ecology*, co-organised with the Faculty of Philosophy, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW).

6. Editorial activity of the journal *Seminare. Scientific Investigations*: The Board decided to resubmit the application to the Scopus database, to implement the Similarity Check anti-plagiarism system, and to continue promotion of the journal. The successful completion of the two-year funding programme from the Polish Ministry of Education and Science was noted, along with the migration to a new publishing platform.

Members of the Audit Committee regularly participated in the Board's meetings in an advisory capacity. According to the Audit Committee's resolution of February 28, 2025, the Board's activities in 2024 complied with the TNFS Statutes without remarks or objections.

III. Membership Affairs

As of December 31, 2024, the Francis de Sales Scientific Society had 128 regular members. During the reporting year, eight new members were admitted to the Society: Małgorzata Mróz, Paulina Jabłońska, Sylwia Jaskuła-Korporowicz, Leszek Korporowicz, Jolanta Łodzińska, Rev. Paweł Wątor SDB, Waldemar Urbanik, and Amadeusz Urbanik. One member resigned from the Society.

With deep sorrow, the Society marks the passing of two esteemed members: Rev. Prof. Jerzy Koperek (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) and Prof. Janusz Mączka SDB (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow).

Honorary members of the Society remain: Rev. Dr Pascual Chávez SDB, Rector Major of the Salesian Society (2002–2014) and Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime SDB, Rector Major (2014–2023). Supporting members of the Society include all Polish Salesian provinces and the Salesian Institute of Theology in Krakow (WSDTS), affiliated with the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.

TNFS pursues its statutory mission based on membership fees, grants, and donations. The annual individual membership fee remains 50 PLN. As of December 31, 2024, 63 members had paid their dues (48%).

IV. Scientific and Publishing Activity

In 2024, the scientific activity of the Francis de Sales Scientific Society centred on individual research projects undertaken by members within their respective academic institutions. The primary research direction remained the Society's core

project: *Youth and Their World*. The annual scientific conference, a platform for sharing findings, was focused on the presence of youth in cyberspace, addressing both the opportunities and threats. Discussions highlighted the educational and integrative roles of new media, their impact on youth identity formation, and concerns about the replacement of social reality with the digital environment.

The *TNFS Studies and Dissertations Series* published a monograph by Stefania Mazurek FMA, titled *The Province of Our Lady of Jasna Góra of the Salesian Sisters in Poland (1982–2007)*.

The Society co-organised the 18th International Conference in the series *Humanistic Ecology*, titled *Contemporary Environmental Dilemmas: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Bratislava, September 26–27, 2024).

The Society granted scientific patronage to the following events:

– Symposium *Character Formation* (Ląd, February 3, 2024),
– Symposium *A Dream of Educating and Evangelising Youth: Challenges and Responses* (Szczecin, March 15–16, 2024),
– 36th Liturgical Symposium (Ląd, April 12, 2024),
– Art competition organised by the JESTEM Association in Lublin: *Images with a Message – Inspired by Don Bosco's First Prophetic Dream*,
– 16th Borderlands Debate – Camino 2024 (Łeba, September 21, 2024).

As part of the *Scientific Journals Development Program*, a new website for the TNFS was launched, and actions were initiated to establish the Youth Studies Centre in Łomianki as an integral research unit of the Society.

The Audit Committee's report, dated February 28, 2025, confirmed that the Society's activities in 2024 complied with the TNFS Statute and regulations.

Conclusion

In 2024, the Francis de Sales Scientific Society continued its mission as defined in its Statutes, focusing its activities on the theme *Youth and Their World* and systematically enhancing the quality of the *Seminare* journal. Efforts continued to identify new platforms for addressing youth-related topics. The growing synergy between theoretical reflection and its educational and formative applications deserves particular recognition. The Society's Board extends its sincere thanks to all members for their active involvement in 2024.

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