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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN'S QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FAMILY. THE CASE OF LODZ, POLAND

Abstract

The article is focused on the analysis of the relationship between socio-economic status of the family and the quality of life of the child. The sixth-graders living in Lodz from the schools selected on the basis of the share of pupils getting fee-meals were respondents of the auditorium questionnaire. Conducted statistical analysis show the disadvantaged position of children brought up in the low status families. In all crucial spheres of life of a child taken into account in the research: living conditions, family relationships, peer relationships, school, health, and subjective well-being, we can argue that children from above mentioned category experience lower level of the quality of life than their better off peers. Furthermore, the level of global quality of life differs substantially between groups selected with regard to SES of the family of the respondent.

Key words: quality of life, sociology of childhood, social inequalities

INTRODUCTION

The existing research shows that Lodz, the 3rd largest city in Poland, is experiencing a number of social and economic problems[1]. Sociological studies that have been conducted since the 1990s by a team of sociologists (with research

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[1] Before 1990, Lodz's economy focused on the textile industry, which in the nineteenth century had been extensively developed in the city. The textile industry declined dramatically in 1990 and 1991 (as a result of the socio-economic transformation). The sharp decline of the industry caused dramatic growth in the unemployment rate and the emergence of other social problems, many of which have not yet been overcome.

focused on poverty and social work) indicate that social exclusion, ghettoisation, and inter-generational transmission of inequality are among the city's major social problems (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska ed., 1998, 2001, Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Jankowski, 2010). These processes affect the youngest inhabitants of Lodz. Social diagnoses of the situation of children points to the inheritance of socio-economic status, spatial segregation of the city, and the juvenilisation of poverty (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, 1999, Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Petelewicz, 2010[2]). Impoverished neighbourhoods are characterised by decrepit and run-down apartment houses, where the living conditions are tough. The impressions of negligence and impairment are sharpened through the processes like gentrification and revitalisation of particular areas, which stand out in marked contrast to adjacent buildings. As W. Warzywoda-Kruszynska writes: *children growing up in dysfunctional families, located in physically degraded parts of the city, are the victims and 'transmitters' of poverty to another stage of their life and to another generation* (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, 2009, p. 15). This article analyzes the life situation of the youngest inhabitants of Lodz from a structural perspective. The quality of life concept is applied as a framework to show the multidimensionality of childhood and its significant diversity (Ben-Arieh, 2010). The strong, practical orientation of this approach enables the transmission of knowledge between researchers and other stakeholders, for example practitioners, and attempts to influence social policy makers.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

Analyses of the quality of life of children and teenagers are an example of those situations wherein the empirical research is much more advanced than the theoretical examinations. Until today the main charge towards the sub-discipline considered in this article is a lack of a consistent, consolidated theory (cf. Oleś 2010, Casas 1997, 2007). Theoretical influences, or inspirations, can be found rather than solidly anchored points of theoretical references. The modern shape of the approach is undoubtedly connected with the theoretical and methodological advances within the framework of sociology and other disciplines interested in the study of the life situations of children. The works of O. Brim in

[2] Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Petelewicz (2010) is a text summarizing the empirical research done within the framework of the project "WZLOT". The within article is based partially on the same data, i.e. the part concerning schools located in enclaves of poverty. However the presented analyses was prepared by the author for the purpose of her doctoral dissertation and have not been published before.

the 1970s laid the foundation, and the dichotomy of "becoming" versus "being" remains especially influential. In past years the level of interest and usage of the concept fluctuated, nevertheless since the 1990s the researchers in childhood studies widely consider it in their scientific reflections. Moreover the idea of perceiving children as social subjects here and now, rather than concentrating on shaping them into future members of society, constitutes the basis of theoretical deliberations within the child indicators approach. O. Brim also formulated the idea, nowadays cherished, of drawing up a set of universal indicators describing the situation of the child in the wide ecological context (Ben-Arieh, Bowers, 1999).

According to A. Ben-Arieh (2010), there are three influential normative and theoretical approaches that have had particular impact on the contemporary child indicators' movement and the research into the quality of life of children.

1. The ecology of child development. *Children interact with their environment and thus play an active role in creating their well-being by balancing the different factors, developing and making use of resources, and responding to stress. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development conceptualizes child development on the basis of four concentric circles of environmental influence, with time as an underlying factor, recognizing both individual changes over time and time itself. (...)In interacting with the different systems and subsystems, children and their families encounter both barriers and facilitators. These barriers and facilitators can be considered, in many respects, to be indicators of children's well-being.* (Ben-Arieh, 2010, pp. 10–11). On the one hand U. Bronfenbrenner refers to Piaget's theory, treating the child as an agent adapting to the external situation, and on the other pointing out the activity of various environments of children's development.
2. The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention offers a normative framework for understanding children's well-being, and the idealistic vision of fulfillment of their rights can be synonymous with the model of a high quality of life.
3. New Sociology of Childhood. Children are treated as integral components of the social structure; their status is defined by culture and normative structure. As James and Prout write: *The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture* (Prout and James, 1997, p. 7). The key concept is that childhood is important in its own right, and that children should be studied not only as the future adult members of the society, but also as entities that have needs and rights in the here and now. Childhood is as stage in and of itself.

The ideas put forward by the representatives of the normative and theoretical approaches are reflected in the recommendations concerning methodology and empirical research. It should also be noted that the development of methodology in the research of the quality of life of children is linked with the advances in social statistics, especially in the area of social indicators, as well as the analysis of the quality of life of adults. Since Campbell's famous statement *quality of life must be in the eye of the beholder*, the subjective perspective in the research on the quality of life of adults became a golden standard; however as far as children are concerned, it still remains controversial. The role of the child in the research on well-being is still under vivid discussion, however according to scientists like F. Casas, A. Ben-Arieh, or R.A. Cummins, only the combination of subjective and objective data and incorporating the point of view of children themselves enables researchers to make a complex and in-depth diagnosis of the situation of children. F. Casas (2010) writes that *we must not confuse child well-being with adult opinions of a child's well-being. Both are important, but they are not the same, and both are a part of the complex social reality we call child well-being* (p. 564). Such an attitude poses a challenge: how to include children as reliable respondents in sociological research.

An analysis conducted within the framework of research on the quality of life lets us describe children's life situation from their point of view, to get to know its characteristics as well as conduct an analysis of the determinants of the level of quality of life. The presented research is one of the first studies of the quality of life of children in Poland where children are informants about their own situation. It allows for confronting, and confirming, the common-sense knowledge about the life situation of children living in families with different SES in many spheres, and also to make an overall analysis of the diagnosis of the situation of the youngest, fragments of which can be found in the results of research carried out under the sub-disciplines of sociology and social work. The main aim of this article is to present an analysis of the relationship between particular dimensions of the quality of life, as well as global quality of life, and the socio-economic status of a family in which a child is raised. Emphasis will be put on their subjective well-being, as this sphere is not often present in the sociological examination, whereas it is inherent in the studies of quality of life.

DIMENSIONS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Analogously to the definitional problems with the term 'quality of life' of adults, there is a similar chaos concerning the quality of life of children. Pollard and Lee, authors of an in-depth analysis of more than 1,500 scientific articles concerning children and containing the terms in their title – quality of life, well-being, satisfaction with life or related phrases – state that: *Well-being*[3] *(...) is commonly used but inconsistently defined. A systemic review of child well-being literature reveals that the definition of well-being is highly variable (...) the great variability among definitions and indicators of well-being hampers efforts to compare findings across studies* (2003, p. 63). The authors postulate developing a commonly accepted definition and, referring to the most frequent strategy used by researchers, they suggest defining this concept via an enumeration of its dimensions. They lean towards acceptance of the definition of the well-being of children and youth created by Columbo, i.e. *a multideimensional construct incorporating mental/psychological, physical, and social dimensions* (Pollard, Lee, 2003, p. 64). OECD experts, in the publication "Doing better for children" (2009), refer to this suggestion and indicate that the main shortcoming of this definition is the lack of a material dimension. According to Ben-Arieh and Frones (2007a, p. 1) *the concept of well-being is rooted in traditions of analyses of the quality of life and happiness, as well as in traditions of studies on standard of living and health.* For this reason it should comprise all of the dimensions/ indicators relevant to the mentioned areas.

Referring to the lack of developed definitions and models, I assume that the quality of life of children is a multidimensional construct. The operationalisation of this concept needs to indicate areas that are important from the viewpoint of children. Based on the study models of children's quality of life used in international research[4], review of the literature, as well as taking into account the character of the research territory, six fundamental areas which comprise children's quality of life have been singled out.

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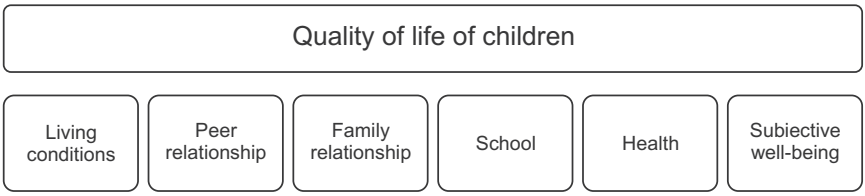
[3] The terms 'quality of life' and 'well-being' are often treated as synonymous. Even though I do not agree with such an approach, it is not the aim of this article to concentrate on the definitional disputes.

[4] Model Innocenti Research Center (UNICEF), Child well-being index (CWI) USA – (Land et al., 2007), EU-25 Child Well-being Index – (Bradshaw, Hoelscher, Richardson, 2007), The State of London's Children (SOLC) reports (Hood, 2007), Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale – school version (Cummins, 1997), The Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (Cummins, 1997).

DIAGRAM 1. Model of children's quality of life



Indicators of particular spheres, synthetic indexes of each dimension of the quality of life of children, were constructed on the basis of empirical data using factor analysis or an analysis of reliability[5].

THE EMPIRICAL BASIS OF ANALYSIS

An analysis of quality of life of sixth-graders in Lodz was carried out using the empirical material gathered within the framework of the project "WZLOT" – to enhance changes and lessen poverty transmission among the inhabitants of cities in the Lodz Voivodeship[6]. As part of the diagnostic component, research on specific groups, i.e. those *particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the life cycle and in intergenerational transmission* (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Golczyńska-Grondas 2010, p. 16) were conducted. Some of these studies were focused on the students in the last grade of primary school and living in the areas known as "enclaves of children's poverty"[7]. Firstly, an attempt to characterise the school with regard to students' economic status was made. As an indicator, the share of children from families with a low economic status in school was calculated. Support in the form of free meals at school was taken as an indicator of bad material conditions in the household. Free meal in school/kindergarten is the only benefit (in kind) addressed directly to children. Pupils eligible for

[5] Detailed description of the construction of particular dimensions of the quality of life of the repondents are presented in the unpublished dissertation "Quality of life of children from the low SES families. The case of Lodz", by the author of the article.

[6] The project was realized in 2007–2010 by the Dep. of Applied Sociology and Social Work at the University of Lodz, in collaboration with the Institute of Social Initiatives. Professor Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszynska was coordinator of the project. It was co-financed by European Union from the European Social Fund. The project was composed of three components: diagnostic, didactic, and promotional-informational.

[7] This methodology was created in a master thesis seminar conducted by professor W. Warzywoda-Kruszynska in 2005, and three unpublished master theses were written on the basis of contemporaneously gathered data.

getting it have to be members of low-income families as defined in the Act of Social Assistance. It was 526.5 PLN per month per person at the moment of the fieldwork study. It is worth mentioning that the subsistence minimum for a family of four, as calculated by The Institute of Labour and Social Affairs was at that time higher (656.1 PLN per person) (Kurowski, 2008).

On the basis of the data obtained from the Social Welfare Centre (the number of children fed in each particular school) and The Education Office in Lodz (the number of children in each particular school), the share of pupils getting free meals was calculated for every primary school. The first part of the research was conducted at schools with the highest share of children getting free meals, and the second at schools with the lowest share of children getting free meals (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Petelewicz, 2010). The main research technique was an auditorium questionnaire; the survey was conducted in 19 primary schools (N=951).

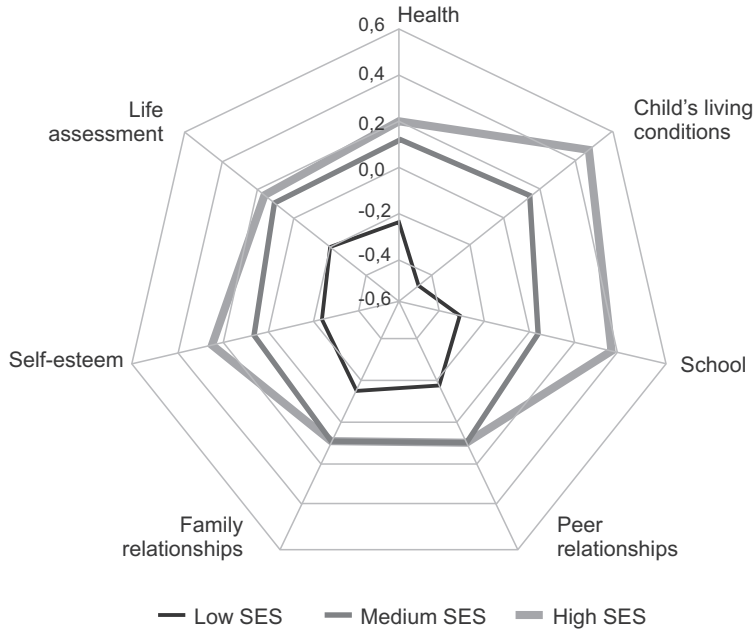
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FAMILY AND DIMENSIONS OF CHILDREN'S QUALITY OF LIFE

While analysing particular dimensions of children's quality of life, each time I used the one-way ANOVA to check if there is any relationship between the groups selected with regard to family SES[8] and quality of life in each sphere. It turned out that being classified into a category of low family status matched with a significantly lower result of the mean for every dimension. However, not in every case the differences between the groups were statistically significant. It concerns both – family and peer relationships indexes. In those cases children from families with a medium and high status was qualified to one subset.

The chart below (No. 1) is a graphic summary of the relationships between particular dimensions of children's quality of life and the socio-economic status of a child's family.

[8] Such variables were the part of the socio-economic status' index: material conditions of a family, mother's professional status, father's professional status. Factor analysis indicates that these variables create one dimension, so they can be used as a synthetic indicator. Factor loads of the variables are very similar (from 0.726 to 0.741). Owing to the fact that many values were missing, it was impossible to append a variable of parents' education level to the analysis.

CHART 1. Relationships between dimensions of children's quality of life (mean) and SES of a respondent's family



Source: Own study

Analysis of the data contained in the chart highlights the disadvantaged position of children living in families with a low SES. There is no dimension in which the mean achieved by this category would be similar to that achieved by children growing up in families with a medium or a high SES. Moreover, in each dimension the mean is significantly lower than the average for the entire sample, and children from families with a medium and a high SES are located at above average for each of the dimensions. Furthermore, there is a much greater disparity between children from families with a low and a medium SES than children from families with a medium and a high SES. Between children from families with a medium and a high SES relatively significant inequalities relate to dimensions of living conditions and school, and to a smaller extent, self-esteem. The greatest disparities between the categories, singled out with respect to a family's SES, are associated with the dimension of the child's living conditions, his or her functioning at school, and self-esteem. The difference is the smallest in the areas of peer and family relationships; it should be noted that mean values for children with medium and high status are almost equal in these dimensions.

The conducted analysis of variance and the graphic illustration of the results in Chart 1 clearly show significant inequalities in particular aspects of the quality of life in childhood between the categories of children growing up in low and high SES families. It seems that in all the crucial spheres of life, children from families with low SES are located below the other categories, selected with regard to status, and below the average for the whole sample. To sum up, based on the results of the analysis of the gathered empirical material, a proportional relationship between a respondent's quality of life and his family's socio-economic status can be identified. This can be seen in each dimension of the quality of life: living conditions, family relationships, peer relationships, school, health, and subjective well-being.

It should be noted that particular dimensions are characterised by different disparities, so different impacts may be assumed in particular cases. The low quality of life experienced by children from families with low SES exerts the strongest influence on the dimension of living conditions. However, differentiation with regard to family status also substantially affects the dimensions of functioning at school and self-esteem, which is an element of subjective well-being. In contrast, family and peer relationship, as well as health, are differentiated less by a family's SES. It should be emphasized that the situation of children from underprivileged families is worse not only objectively, but it also considerably affects their subjective well-being as measured by two components: self-esteem and evaluation of life. The conducted analyses indicate the existence of a group of children who experience an accumulation of difficult situations, they overlap with the challenges posed by the life cycle stage. This group requires intensified and appropriately targeted interest and support from those institutions broadly defined as a social support system.

As W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska and A. Golczyńska-Grondas point out (2010, p. 47) according to the analyzed research projects *the mechanism of resistance to unfavorable conditions of development caused by the poverty experienced during childhood is not fully recognized. It is connected with the ability to cope with stress and a high level of the self-esteem, nevertheless the origin of the relationship is not examined.*The analyses which were carried out clearly show that in the category of children from families of low SES, in which the risk of poverty is greater, self-esteem is at a much lower level than in better-off families. Referring to the above quote, it can be assumed that the possibility of these children's capacity to resist the impact of negative external factors – unfavourable conditions for development – remains limited.

Taking the above mentioned results into consideration, the question about relationship between particular dimensions seems crucial. Table 1 below presents the correlation of particular dimensions.

TABLE 1. Relationships between dimensions of children's quality of life – values of Pearson's correlation coefficient

	Health	**Child's living conditions**	**Self--esteem**	**School**	**Peer relationships**	**Family relationships**	**Life satisfaction**
Health	1	0,139**	0,216**	0,192**	0,164**	0,314**	0,256**
Child's living conditions	0,139**	1	0,315**	0,230**	0,191**	0,174**	0,140**
Self-esteem	0,216**	0,315**	1	0,458**	0,417**	0,391**	0,398**
School	0,192**	0,230**	0,458**	1	0,315**	0,341**	0,223**
Peer relationships	0,164**	0,191**	0,417**	0,315**	1	0,307**	0,280**
Family relationships	0,314**	0,174**	0,391**	0,341**	0,307**	1	0,518**
Life satisfaction	0,256**	0,140**	0,398**	0,223**	0,280**	0,518**	1

** Correlation is critical at level 0.01 (bilaterally)

Source: Own study

The correlations between all the above-mentioned dimensions are statistically significant, moreover in many cases the calculated values of Pearson's coefficients r are high. The chain of relationships between particular quality of life areas is dense and complicated. The strongest correlation exists between the index of family relationships and life satisfaction and a cause-effect relationship can be assumed, i.e. family relationships greatly determine life satisfaction. Similar conclusions can be drawn regarding the relatively strong correlation between self-esteem, health and life satisfaction. It can be assumed that the higher quality

of life in the dimensions of self-esteem and health, the greater is the satisfaction with life. It should be noted that life satisfaction correlates poorly with a child's living conditions. Self-esteem is the only dimension of children's quality of life included in the model, which correlates at least at the level of 0.2 with all the other dimensions, therein with the index of functioning at school and the index of peer relations the strongest. Self-esteem correlates the least with a synthetic index of health. It seems very interesting that the index of the living conditions for a child correlates most strongly with the self-esteem index. This suggests that material resources are very important for self-esteem among teenagers. There is insufficient data to determine in what ways these dimensions influence each other, but it can be supposed that it has both a direct and indirect nature. According to the data, children who reach the higher level of the index of living conditions perform better at school. The correlation of the child's living conditions with other dimensions is low. Except for the strong correlation with self-esteem, the interdependence – of a moderate strength – between functioning at school and family and peer relationships draws attention. It is difficult to conclude the direction of a cause and effect relationship. It appears that the impact of the variables on each other can be of two types, which, taking into account the characteristics of variables is not excluded. Children receiving more support at home, feeling satisfaction with contact with their loved ones, which undoubtedly affects their sense of security, confidence and competence, find it easier to obey the rules of school life and be successful in this field. It can be also presumed that children who do not have problems at school, which is for many parents one of the key elements of the "assessment" of a child, to a lesser extent, experience interaction of a negative nature with their parents, are not so often punished, nor do they have a feeling that their parents are not satisfied with them or treat them too harshly.

Teenagers who are satisfied with their relationship with friends, and who are able to obey the prevailing rules in the peer groups, probably cope better with adjusting to school norms. In this period of life, being accepted by one's peers has a very significant impact on self-esteem and competence. Furthermore, it can be assumed that personality traits such as openness and spiritedness are both beneficial for the relationship with peers as well as for educational achievements. On the other hand, children with learning and behavioral difficulties at school are marginalized in school life, and thus are also excluded from the peer groups. Problems at school can convert into auto-exclusive practices or aggressive behavior, which in turn influence one's position in a peer group. As mentioned before, the health index correlates with life satisfaction and self-esteem, and above all with the index of family relationships. Analyses have shown that this

is mainly due to pro-health behaviors and avoiding unhealthy behaviors, which are significantly influenced by a child's parents' behaviors and attitudes. Parents who are concerned about their child's health reassure the child of their care and engagement.

The quality of children's life is a complex, multidimensional construct. Among the selected areas of the quality of life, there is no area that does not correlate with another dimension. All of them are linked together in a chain of mutual, manifold relationships. Deterioration or improvement in one of the aspects has an impact on others. On the other hand, the obtained conclusions support the belief that efforts made to improve the quality of a child's life should be comprehensive, and that isolated activities in one of the areas are associated with a low probability of real and sustainable improvement in the quality of a child's life. Among the analyzed areas, relationships with parents seem to be the most pivotal, which, apart from the living conditions created for the child, have the strongest correlation with the other dimensions. According to the conclusions of developmental psychologists (Bee, 2004), and contrary to popular beliefs about the declining importance of parents in adolescence, relationships with parents are the key influence on the child's ability to cope in many aspects of his or her life. Another important conclusion is that the self-esteem which is an important element of subjective well-being, is linked with all of the selected areas of the quality of life under investigation.

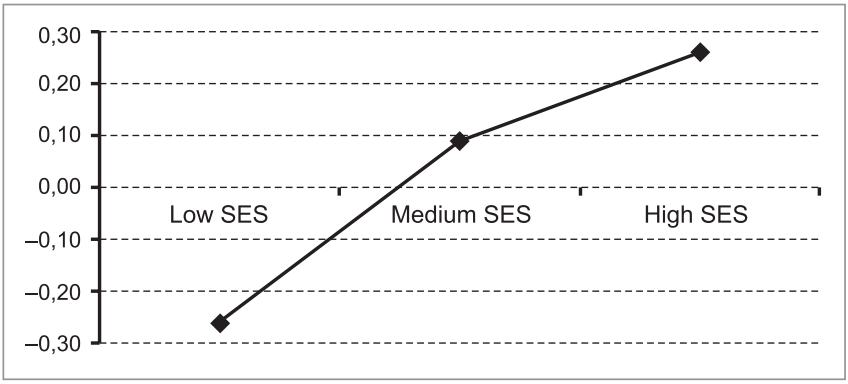
GLOBAL QUALITY OF LIFE

A synthetic index of a global quality of life was created taking into account the indexes measuring quality of life in different spheres. Particular indices have been transformed into Z – scores, and the average score was calculated for each respondent. The reliability analysis using αCronbach coefficient indicates that selected dimensions can be considered as one construct, and that the level of the coefficient – 0.738 indicates the adequate reliability of the scale formed by the following dimensions: health and living conditions of the child, self-esteem, education, peer relationships, family relationships, and satisfaction with life.

On the basis of the above findings, it can be assumed that the global quality of life will significantly vary according to the socio-economic status of the family of the respondent. In order to confirm this assumption, I conducted the one-way analysis of variance. The analysis has confirmed that the level of the global quality of life differs substantially with regard to the socio-economic status of the family. As the *post hoc* analysis done using a Scheffe test shows, all the groups differ

from each other in a statistically significant way, the category of children from families with a low SES from both categories with a higher SES ($p < 0.001$), and the category of children coming from families with an average SES and from families with a high SES ($p = 0.005$)

CHART 2. Analysis of variance: global quality of life and family SES



Source: Own study

Confirmation of the relationship – the higher the status of a family, the higher the global quality of life – can be clearly seen on the Graph no. 2. Summing up, on the basic on the conducted analysis it can be stated unequivocally that children from families of a low socioeconomic status experience a lower quality of life, understood as a whole, than their peers growing up in families with a higher social status.

An attempt to create a linear regression model, in which the global quality of life is the dependent variable, failed, taking into account the extensive set of independent variables, most of which turned out to be statistically insignificant. In the final version only two variables were included in the model: material conditions of the family and the child's sex, but together they account for 23% of the variability of children's global quality of life level.

TABLE 2. Linear regression model, the dependent variable: the global quality of life

Variable	B	S. E.	B	p
(Constant)	–0,215	0,057	–	0,000
Family material conditions	0,301	0,018	0,472	0,000
Sex (ref.=boy)	0,146	0,037	0,115	0,000

S o u r c e: Own study

Based on regression analysis shown in Table 2 above, it can be concluded that the global quality of life largely depends on the material conditions, and less on sex. While girls often experience a higher quality of life than boys, the question is whether other variables such as family structure, or occupational status of parents actually do not affect the quality of children's life, and so if the material conditions are such a strong determinant, whether a variable characterizing the situation of the family is influenced by the other variables that are linked to it.

SUMMARY

Childhood is usually defined as a period of immaturity and understood as a universal category, which cannot be questioned from the biological point of view. However the question arises if the same is true from the social point of view? Since there are a magnitude of the diverse situations involved in growing up, should the singular or plural form be used? Is there a universal situation of childhood or are there many childhoods, with respect to the social class, place of living, gender, ethnicity, and so on? These theoretical questions are often discussed within the framework of the sociology of childhood and the vivid dispute seems never-ending. However, on the basis of the conducted analysis it can be stated that the life situation of the category under study is undoubtedly highly differentiated, and that it is difficult to describe using one category. The results of available research and observations of everyday life allows us to assume that children growing up in families with a low status are in a worse situation compared to their peers growing in well-off families, but the analyses clearly shows the specific and complex nature and scale of these relationships. Children raised in families with low SES experience a lower quality of life in all investigated areas: living conditions, family relations, peer relations, school, health, as well as subjective well-being. The evidence is clear – the myth of a romantic, carefree childhood cannot be applied equally. Childhood as well as adulthood is highly socially unequal.

The revealed inequalities do not relate equally to all areas. The largest variation refers to the dimensions such as: the child's living conditions, functioning at school, and self-esteem. The results are also consistent with the current knowledge about the inequalities in education, poorer performance, and alienation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Dolata, 2008, Szkudlarek, 2007), as well as the analyses of the lives of children brought up in families living in poverty. Living in poverty affects the whole life of a child, which is consistent with the results of

research on poverty in childhood (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, 1999, 2001, 2009; Tarkowska, EAPN).

The issue of subjective psychological well-being is usually omitted in sociological investigations. The conducted analyses reveals that it is a sphere of severe socio-economic inequalities. Even though inconstancy and a decrease in self-esteem is typical for the early phase of adolescence, children from the low SES families evaluate their life significantly lower and have less self-confidence. Moreover, their accessibility to psychological support is limited, especially for children growing up in disadvantaged families. Such problems can lead to mental and social disorders in the here and now, as well as in adulthood. According to the theories of resistance to poor living conditions, the psychical factor is the most important mechanism in breaking down the objective barriers (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Golczyńska-Grondas, 2010). It is evident that children from low SES families have lower self-esteem, which limits their opportunities to overcome external difficulties.

There is no doubt that quality of life research, even though already in the mainstream of the social policy research, will gain more adherents. Hopefully, more pressure will be put on theoretical advances and a more systemic approach. In many countries the systematic monitoring of the quality of life of both the entire population as well as particular groups, including children, has become a golden standard. Numerous organizations dealing with the diagnosis of the situation of children use the achievements of the child indicators movement. Nevertheless in Poland there is a lack of a systemic approach to the quality of life of children, and the subjective, well-being perspective is almost absent. What's more, children still seem to be invisible in the official statistics, where the main unit of observation is the household, which blurs the true picture of a child's situation. One of the main postulates of the child indicators movement is to make a change within the methodology of the social indicators which will reveal children's plight. This concept is accompanied by a contentious discussion. The skeptics are against it, as it can also lead to a demand for changes in social policy, from family-centered to the child-centered. However, the presented findings expose the real need for wide-range, child-centered, representative quality of life research, especially repeatable, which would enable the dynamic perspective.

To sum up, the conducted analysis reveals inequalities in the level of the quality of life of the youngest members of society in particular spheres, as well as the quality of life understood as a whole, which indicates the existence of social inequalities in childhood. Already in the 1990s the authors of "Childhood matters" (Qvortrup et al. 1994), one of the most important contributions to the

sociology of childhood, emphasised that children did not experience the positive effects of the economic growth of previous decades. Applying these words to the specificity of the situation in Poland, or locally in Lodz, it can be stated that the youngest members of society are experiencing, to a very large extent, the effects of macro-social transformation – systemic transformation. The consolidation of poverty and social exclusion, deepening the social inequalities, and inefficiency and the lack of the mechanisms to equalize opportunities, exert a significant influence on the lives of children.

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ZALEŻNOŚCI POMIĘDZY JAKOŚCIĄ ŻYCIA DZIECI A STATUSEM SPOŁECZNO-EKONOMICZNYM RODZINY. NA PRZYKŁADZIE ŁODZI

Streszczenie

Artykuł koncentruje się na analizie zależności pomiędzy statusem społeczno-ekonomicznym rodziny a jakością życia dziecka. Na podstawie danych uzyskanych techniką ankiety audytoryjnej, zrealizowanej wśród łódzkich szóstoklasistów w celowo dobranych szkołach, przeprowadzone zostały analizy korelacyjne oraz analizy metodą regresji liniowej. Wyniki pokazują upośledzoną pozycję dzieci wychowujących się w rodzinach o niskim statusie społeczno-ekonomicznym, doświadczają one niższej jakości życia w wyróżnionych sferach: warunków materialnych, funkcjonowania w szkole, relacji rodzinnych, relacji rówieśniczych, zdrowia i subiektywnej oceny życia, a także jakości życia ujmowanej globalnie.

Słowa kluczowe: jakość życia, socjologia dzieciństwa, nierówności społeczne