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## The birth of the first child as a positive event in the lives of young parents

**Abstract:** *The aim of the study was to research the relationship between level of knowledge possessed by the contemporary parents about the psychological needs of small children and their perception of the birth of their child as a positive event. Study involved 90 parents, aged 25-30, who are currently raising young children up to 1 year of age. The analyses that were carried out verified the existence of such a correlation, but the event of birth is not a positive event for all parents. In summary, the sense of satisfaction with the birth of a child and perceiving this situation as a positive event is especially high among women and those with a higher education. For men and for parents with a low level of education, it can become a positive experience if they raise their level of knowledge about the needs of small children.*

**Key words:** *knowledge about development; satisfaction with live and being parent; positive event*

### Introduction

Each day we experience a multitude of events, with but a few being of key significance in our lives. These meaningful life events can be perceived as positive – yielding a sense of satisfaction and manifesting a growth opportunity, or as negative – eliciting nervous tension and a sense of danger. A variety of factors affect perception of life events. This means that an individual affected by them can interpret events as positive life experiences or events of a negative nature, depending on that individual's previous experiences, acquired knowledge or subjective assessment of the situation said individual finds him or herself in.

The aim of this article is to analyze the correlation between perceiving birth as a positive event and knowledge possessed by parents on the topic of early childhood development. Searching for a correlation between the level of knowledge possessed by parents about the psychological needs of young children and a positive attitude to life and to the child is justified not only in a theoretical sense, but in a practical one as well. The objective consequences of a positive attitude to the child undoubtedly affect his or her development.

### A life event versus a critical event

In the work of developmental psychologists, in the domain of life-span development (Tyszkowa, 1990; Baltes, 1990; Erikson, 1997; Brzezińska, 2000) the following terms are used interchangeably to describe critical life events: „life event”, „critical event” or „developmental crisis”, which are not, in fact, equivalent. A description of these terms would exceed the scope of this article, which is why I shall venture only several of the most crucial explications. The aforementioned terms refer to experiences that manifest at every stage of life (from early childhood to later maturity), irrespective of gender, marital status, education or place of residence, although in each of these groups they manifest differently.

Life events are normative in character, meaning their emergence is consistent with the expectations of the individual and society. An example of normative life events are developmental tasks, as conceptualized by Havighurst (1993). These are challenges and competencies acquired in various areas of activity, which an individual must fulfil at particular stages of life in order to continue to develop. For instance, in early adulthood, one developmental task

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to be accomplished is the establishment of a family and the rearing of children. Thus in order for an individual to acquire the competence to perform efficiently a duty a subsequent developmental phase (middle adulthood) he or she should have a child. In line with Havighurst's ideas, the successful accomplishment of tasks (achievement) leads to satisfaction and success in undertaking subsequent tasks while failure causes an individual to be unhappy. Moreover, if the task is not completed within an optimal timeframe (unpunctually for a particular developmental phase or inconsistently with biological, psychological or socio-cultural demands) an individual experiences acute tension (conflicts) associated with external or internal mismatch. Crisis may be understood as a state of emotional stress, a type of difficult situation. It is accompanied by a disruption of balance between the resources of the individual and the demands of the environment and negative emotions, e.g. fear or anger (Sęk, 1991). The intensification of stress prevents individuals from continuing to realize their tasks and forces them to mobilize defensive mechanisms. We identify such a situation as a negative event. A negative event is very frequently a new and unexpected situation in which individuals find themselves and when their knowledge and means of dealing with stress turn out to be insufficient (Cambell, 1976). Consequently, this overloads the individual's regulatory mechanism between the self and the environment and causes changes, which may be negative, acute or chronic.

On the other hand, as indicated by other researchers, a crisis may contribute to positive changes in an individual's behavior. These are mostly qualitative changes and relate to, for instance, a modification of aims and values or a restructuring of the 'self' (Erikson, 1997). Particularly in Erikson's model, crisis is a positive manifestation, a natural component of development. In accordance with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, parenting is associated with overcoming crises in phase five, six and sometimes seven (see Erikson, 1997, compare Brzezińska, 2000). In stage five, the period of adolescence, the main developmental aim is to find an answer to the question: Who am I and who can I become? This question is of particular significance in late adolescence (17-22 years old), when it is imperative to resolve the conflict: personal identity versus role diffusion. The appearance of a first child in the life of a woman or man is associated with the positive resolution of an identity crisis and forging a so-called mature identity. A young person becomes aware of his or her individual, specific characteristics and, concurrently, is ready to fulfil an important social role (for example the role of a parent). Having acquired a sense of personal identity at this stage, he or she becomes ready and willing to connect his or her identity with others. In the sixth developmental phase, according to Erikson, an individual must resolve the conflict: intimacy vs isolation. Achieving intimacy within a relationship without a loss of personal identity gives an individual a satisfaction due to having fulfilled the aims attributed to the subsequent - the seventh - developmental stage. In this phase the main psychosocial crisis is connected with a conflict: generativity vs stagnation. Having a child

provides an opportunity to develop caregiving and increases the need to share knowledge and experience, thereby positively resolving yet another developmental crisis, which falls in the period between 35-65 years old.

### **The birth of the child – a critical event or a positive one?**

The majority of contemporary research suggests that the birth of the first child is perceived as a critical life event – a type of difficult situation, which requires the parent to deal with stress and negative emotions (Brzezińska, 2000; Sęk, 2001; Kuryś, 2010). In a difficult situation, a dichotomy emerges between the needs or tasks of an individual and the capacity to meet these needs or fulfil the tasks (Tomaszewski, 1984). The key difficult situations are: deprivation, over-exertion, danger and difficulty (see also Telerak, 2001). According to other researchers, a difficult situation is a kind of „set of tasks (aims), operating conditions and capacities of the subject to act, in which the balance between the aforementioned elements has been disrupted to the extent that a rearrangement is required, which causes over-exertion of the regulatory system and negative emotions” (Tyszkowa, 1976). Taking into account changes to the model of social life of contemporary young people, it must be noted that for many young adults, parenthood is associated with so many changes in the area of their personal, professional, social and even intimate life, that they assess these circumstances as taxing or exceeding their capacity and endangering their welfare (Terelak, 2001). For most young adults, the birth of the first child elicits fear and panic on account of the fact that it is associated with loss of freedom and independence and a lower standard of living. This event also has a significant impact on relations between spouses and disrupts the system that they had constructed so far. Couples which decide to have a child experience serious crises and difficulties associated with the changes that a newborn child introduces into the heterosexual or the homosexual dyad (Beisert, 2000). This is why so many couples delay the decision to expand their family. The rise of childlessness and foregoing giving birth to additional children are common aspects of changes taking place in Europe within the evolutionary process of the family. They can also be observed in Poland, though they commenced in Poland later than they did in Western European nations. There are very few documented studies indicating the birth of the first child can be a positive life experience; not just a critical (stressful) event, but an event that gives rise to much satisfaction and many positive emotions. In several reports that do exist on the subject, it has been demonstrated that only having children correlates with life satisfaction (Budrowska, 2000, Angeles, 2011). It must be noted, however, that the observed effect of having a child on the sense of satisfaction can vary across different people. This is articulated in theories that focus on an individual's psychological well-being and consider the subjective assessment of living conditions to be of prime importance. The strength of factors affecting satisfaction undergoes changes depending on the life phase, knowledge

and education, social roles or preferred values. Studies have shown that, in general, young adults experience emotions more intensely, both positive and negative ones (Zalewska, 2003). Women claim to experience positive emotions more frequently, although they experience negative emotions more intensely and more often suffer from depression (Czapiński, 2004). A decidedly positive correlation exists between satisfaction and family life – married individuals (regardless of age), and in particular women and individuals with children, experience a greater level of satisfaction with life (Angeles, 2011). It has been observed that in this control group, the level of satisfaction with life rises as does the number of children in the household. Intelligence, by contrast, differentiates the level of satisfaction with life only in those societies that value it. Similarly, the level of education increases satisfaction with life, provided that it is meaningful to the individual – in which case it allows the individual to look forward with optimism (Czapiński, 2001). In researching a subjective sense of satisfaction with life, the significance of cognitive processes is also emphasized, which serve as a basis for reflection on one's own life and the individual's perception of self and the world. Studies demonstrate a linear correlation between self-awareness and quality of life (Kowalik, 2001). This means that greater knowledge pertaining to the self and the world at large, in conjunction with an understanding of reality, results in a higher level of satisfaction with life.

### **Child-rearing skills and parental knowledge**

Each individual, for his or her own benefit, formulates a system of knowledge about the world, including knowledge about children – their nature, needs and ways of dealing with children in particular situations. Studies in the area of developmental psychology show that this process is ongoing in nature, manifesting throughout the duration of one's entire life in a variety of everyday settings and is often animated and spontaneous. Rarely does it become a fully conscious and planned activity focused on the accomplishment of specified life goals (Brzezińska, 2000). Knowledge about children is an important factor shaping opinions about and attitudes towards one's own child. Its impact is reflected in the variegation of child-rearing theories, the perception of the child's individual needs and the inculcation of specific values in the child. All the above coupled with self-knowledge, knowledge about the world and awareness of goals lead to differences in perception of life circumstances after the child is born.

Knowledge about development – both common and scientific – is predicated upon the capacity to access information about the child and his or her needs. This information is contained in social messaging, coming from the family, friends, caregivers, but also from broadly understood channels of social communication. The way the information is used depends on the individual's level of education and personal experiences accumulated in the personal development. Therefore research conducted far into understanding children's needs took into account aspects of socio-economic status, parental experience and

the father's role in child development. It concludes that the level of knowledge of psychological needs of small children, and awareness of their significance in development is insufficient (Cudak, 1999; Wójtowicz-Dacka, 2012). Published studies conclude that contemporary young parents, lack child-rearing experience, which is transmitted between generations in families (Delle Fave, Pozzo, Bassi, Cetin, 2013). They also lack awareness about the needs of a young child and knowledge on how to deal with the child in such a way as to establish a positive and lasting bond in order to convey to the child clear rules of behavior and create, together with the child, a durable system of values. Published studies conclude also that the current generation of parents differs substantially from parents from the beginning of the twentieth century. Young parents today have different priorities when it comes to the needs of a young child in everyday situations. The younger generation of parents attends not only to the nutritional needs of their child but they also dedicate their time to play with the child; although they do not always know how to do it to satisfy the child's needs (Wójtowicz-Dacka, 2012). Young, uneducated people reveal a worryingly low level of knowledge about psychological needs of infants and young children (Cudak, 1999). Uneducated parents (particularly fathers), who care for a child, acknowledge solely the physiological needs of their child (e.g. the need to sleep, feed, maintain hygiene). Uneducated mothers, on the other hand, demonstrate a greater than fathers understanding of the need for autonomy, play, acceptance, etc. They confer unconditional love and positive emotions upon their offspring and contact with small children gives them more joy and satisfaction with life (Cudak, 1999; Delle Fave, Pozzo, Bassi, Cetin, 2013).

The aim of the present research was to determine the level of parenting skill and knowledge about the development of a small child, and to verify whether these factors correlate with satisfaction with life and satisfaction with being a parent; do they contribute to a positive experience and interpretation of events associated with the birth of a child?

### **Research aims and problems**

Research to date has not verified whether the feeling of satisfaction with life and being a parent after giving birth to the first child depends on the parents' level of knowledge about the psychological development of a young child. Additionally, there is a lack of sufficient data on differences in the level of knowledge about child development across women and men with different levels of education. Furthermore, research also lacks data on the relationship between the knowledge possessed by these individuals and the level of satisfaction with birth of a child. It has only been observed that a birth of a child causes changes in other domains of life among women (e.g. self-image, social functions) and among men (inter-spousal relations, achieving maturity, social contacts). Perceptions of having a first child also differ across educated individuals (those with a higher education) and those less educated (with a basic education). Educated people raise their self-



image, redefine their life goals and contacts with their environment, whereas those with a basic level of education notice significantly fewer changes in their lives after the arrival of a child and attribute considerably less importance to them – both to positive and negative ones (Kuryś, 2010).

In light of the above, the following questions have been posed in the present research:

1. What is the level of parental knowledge about the psychological development and ways of nurturing an infant? Are the differences in the level of knowledge about child development among women and men and among parents with different levels of education?  
**H1:** It is assumed that a significantly higher level of parenting skills will be observed among women and among parents with a higher level of education.
2. Is the level of parenting skills among women and men and among parents with a higher or lower level of education based on various aspects of knowledge about satisfying the needs of a newborn child?  
**H2:** It is assumed that the level of parental skills is based on the knowledge parents have regarding the child's exploring own environment, establishing social relationship, playing, maintaining hygiene, feeding or sleeping differently across men and women and with a different level of education. On base of earliest research, I forecast, that uneducated parents (particularly fathers), who care for a child, will acknowledge solely the physiological needs of their child (e.g. the need to sleep, feed, maintain hygiene). On the other hand, mothers (equal educated as well as uneducated), will demonstrate a greater than fathers understanding of the need for autonomy, play, etc.
3. Is there a relationship between child-rearing skills and parents' perception of having a child as a positive event?  
**H3:** It is assumed that a high degree of parental skills (a various aspects of knowledge about satisfying the needs of a newborn child) will correlate with a positive attitude to that child, satisfaction with being a parent and satisfaction with life.
4. How does the gender and the level of education of parents affect the relationship between parental skills (based on various aspects of knowledge about satisfying the needs of a newborn child) and parents' perception of having a child as a positive event?  
**H4:** It is assumed that the event of giving birth is perceived positively particularly by women with both a higher and low level of education and only by men with a higher level of education.

## Method

### Subjects

Ninety parents, recruited at children's consulting room (residing in the Pomorskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodships), participated in the study. The sample was selected from parents aged 25-30 who were, at the time of the study, raising their first children up to 1 year of age. The sample distribution was: women=46; men=44; the sample was divided into two groups in terms of the level of education: higher/medium =47 or basic/vocational =43.

### Material

1. Knowledge about the psychological development of young children was evaluated by means of the **Knowledge about Development Questionnaire (KAD)**. It made, on base of data from literature, 48 statements – 6 subscales with 8 statements each - regarding the psychophysical needs of a young child in everyday situations, when performing basic activities, such as:
  - exploring own environment (e.g. *I allow my child to freely explore his or her environment*) – Cronbach's alpha was 0.79
  - establishing social relationship (e.g. *I allow my child to play with other children*) - Cronbach's alpha was 0.68
  - play (e.g. *I provide toys and encourage the child to play with me*) - Cronbach's alpha was 0.80
  - sleep (e.g. *I sing lullabies to my child*) - Cronbach's alpha was 0.81
  - hygiene (e.g. *I clip my child's fingernails*) - Cronbach's alpha was 0.79
  - nourishment (e.g. *I make sure that my child consumes meals on a regular basis*) - Cronbach's alpha was 0.80

For each statement, parents could select one option, namely: never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often and score 0 points, 1 point, 2 points, 3 points, 4 points respectively. The highest aggregate score possible on the entire questionnaire was 192 points, and 32 points on each subgroup of statements relating to different types of activities of a child. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire sample was 0.78 (for each subscales writing above - Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0,81 to 0,68).

2. The degree of positive attitude to a newborn child was assessed with the **Positive Emotion Scale (PES)**, as developed by M. Kossakowska, in which the subject attributed a degree of intensity, on a scale of 1 to 6, to 15 positive emotions with respect to a newborn child, where 1 referred to experiencing the emotion to a slight degree, while 6 referred to experiencing the emotion to a high degree. As adopted by the author of the scale, the result below, 45 points, indicates a poor experience of positive emotions to the newborn child, a score between 46 and 74 an average positive attitude to that child, a score above 75 points indicates a clear positive attitude to a newborn baby. The factor analysis to prove the existence of two subscales: **joy**

(defusing, eagerness, enthusiasm, pleasure, happiness, weather of morale, amuse) and **love** (nostalgia, hope, affection, passion, sensitivity, sentimentality, estimate, thirst). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire sample was 0.83 (for the subscale joy Cronbach's alpha was 0.86; for the subscale **love** Cronbach's alpha was 0.83) (Kossakowska, in preparation).

3. Satisfaction with life was assessed with the **Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)**, by E. Diener and associates and adapted by Z. Juczynski. For the purposes of this paper, the criterion for satisfaction with life was taken as per Diener (1993, see Juczynski, 2001):

- a normative standard with respect to which human life is compared
- the individual's valuation of his or her own life
- experiencing positive emotions and reducing the significance of the features of negative circumstance

The SWLS is a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with own life. The SWLS used a 7- point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) with respect to the following questions:

- In most ways my life is close to my ideal
- The conditions of my life are excellent.
- I am satisfied with my life.
- So far I have gotten the important things I want in life
- If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

According to Diener, final results were converted into units described as:

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral or average
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

4. Satisfaction with being a parent was assessed with the **Satisfaction with being a parent scale (SWBP)** – developed in accordance with the same principles as the SWLS. It was assumed that the subjective sense of fulfilment and the predominance of a positive affect / mood over a negative one could pertain not only to life circumstances, but also to the condition of being a parent of a newborn child.

The SWBP used a 7- point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) with respect to the following questions:

- I associate motherhood / fatherhood as something pleasant.
- My life became meaningful after the birth of my child.
- I'm happy with my decision to become a parent.
- I can't imagine life without my child.
- My family with child is ideal.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient assessing the reliability of the entire scale in the current sample was 0.63 and an average correlation between the variables was 0.19. After removing the fifth question „My family with child is ideal” Cronbach's alpha increased to 0.69 and an average correlation between the variables was 0.24. By that reason, in further analyses only four positions (questions) of the SWBP scale will be taken into account.

## Results

The STATISTICA 6.0 software suite was used to carry out the statistical calculations. The test T-students and test F Fishera-Snedecora analysis of variance was used to determine the significance in variation between the means of the variables under analysis. The degree of linear correlation between the variables was measured on the basis of r-Pearson correlation coefficients. Regression analysis was used in order to identify indicators of satisfaction with life, satisfaction with being a parent and positive attitude to the child, as aspects of interpreting the birth as a positive event.

### The parental child-rearing skills – an various aspects of knowledge of parents about the psychological needs of small children

Descriptive statistics pertaining to the level of parental child-rearing skills are contained in table 1. (see page 108)

The results in table 1 and analysis of variance indicated that a significantly higher level of parenting knowledge was observed among women ( $F(1,88)=37.34$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and among those with a higher level of education ( $F(1,88)=50.17$ ;  $p<0.0001$ ).

In analysis of variance no correlation was observed for sex and education variable, which means that both in the subjects with low and high level of education the difference between women and men was not statistically significant. Both men and women with a higher level of education scored proportionally higher on parental skills than men and women with a lower level of education.

Comparisons between individuals with different levels of education demonstrated that these differences were observed particularly in the knowledge pertaining to meeting the needs of exploring the environment ( $t=7.12$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), establishing relationships ( $t=6.32$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and

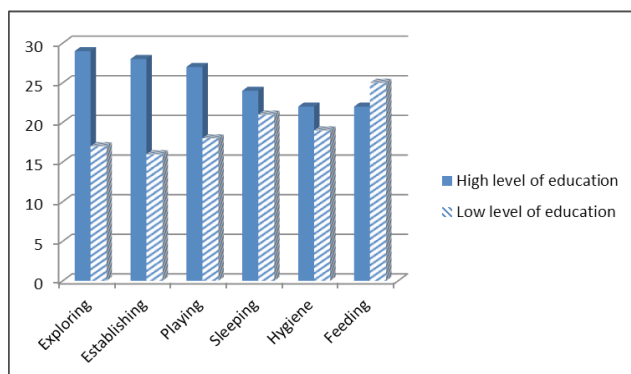
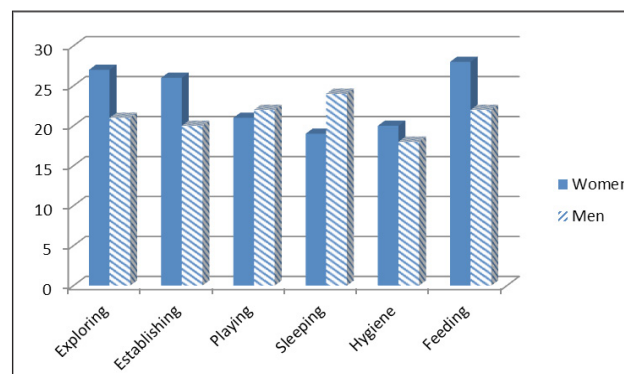
**Table 1. Descriptive statistics regarding the level of knowledge of parents (including women and men and individuals with a higher level of education and a lower level of education) about early child development**

Variables	All respondents		Women		Men		Higher level of education		Lower level of education	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The general level of knowledge	134.9	13.1	140.9	12.1	128.1	12.6	145.8	6.5	7.2	7.2
Knowledge about the needs of establishing	23.7	6.23	27.1	6.29	20.9	6.17	28.9	3.67	3.72	3.72
Knowledge about the needs of establishing	24.2	4.89	25.8	5.32	19.9	4.94	27.8	5.22	4.99	4.99
Knowledge about the needs of playing	21.8	5.66	20.8	4.69	22.1	5.12	26.7	6.26	5.47	5.47
Knowledge about the needs of sleeping	21.1	6.21	18.8	5.22	23.7	6.38	23.9	3.39	3.31	3.31
Knowledge about the needs of hygiene	19.2	4.72	19.8	3.59	17.9	4.02	22.1	3.31	3.12	3.12
Knowledge about the needs of feeding	23.5	6.01	27.6	5.99	21.8	4.48	22.2	3.87	4.03	4.03

play ( $t=5.28$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) – among educated individual - fig. 1. Differences between women and men were observed in particular to the knowledge pertaining to the need of establishing social relations ( $t=3.71$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and feeding ( $t=3.07$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) – among women, as well as meeting the needs associated with the child's sleep, among men ( $t=2.98$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) – fig. 2.

#### The relationship between the level of parental skills and satisfaction with life, satisfaction with being a parent and attitude to the newborn child

Descriptive statistics pertaining to the level of satisfaction with life, satisfaction with being a parent and the intensification of positive emotions with respect to the newborn child can be found in table 2. (see page 109)

**Fig. 1. The various aspects of knowledge about the psychological needs of small children among those with a higher and lower level of education****Fig. 2. The various aspects of knowledge about the psychological needs of small children among women and men**

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics pertaining to the level of satisfaction with life (SWLS), satisfaction with being a parent (SWBP) and positive emotions with respect to the child (PES), among test subjects (including women and men, as well as those with a higher and lower level of education)**

Variables	All Respondents		Women		Men		Higher level of education		Lower level of education	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
SWLS	18.9	1.9	20.7	1.2	17.2	0.9	19.1	2.1	18.7	1.8
SWBP	15.6	1.7	16.1	1.8	15.1	1.0	15.9	1.7	15.2	1.4
PES	78.9	4.7	81.5	4.2	75.6	3.1	80.6	4.6	76.7	4.1

The data contained in table 2 allows us to state that women displayed a significantly higher intensity of positive emotions with respect to small children than average scores ( $t=2.71$ ;  $p<0.5$ ) and also a higher level of satisfaction with life ( $t=3.42$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) than average scores. A significantly lower level of satisfaction with life ( $t=2.64$ ;  $p<0.5$ ) than average scores was observed among men.

Women displayed also a significantly higher intensity of positive emotions with respect to small children ( $t=3.54$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) as well as a higher level of satisfaction with being a parent ( $t=4.62$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) than men. The mean level of satisfaction with life among women also significantly differed from that of surveyed men ( $t=5.91$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The conclusion is that for the female test subjects, the birth of a child was definitely a positive event.

Comparisons between individuals with different levels of education demonstrated that the differences between the compared groups were not statistically significant. Both the educated and the uneducated displayed a comparatively level of satisfaction with life and satisfaction with being a parent, and they experienced many intensely positive emotions with respect to the child.

In analysis of variance no correlation was observed for sex and education variable too, which means that both in the subjects with low and high level of education, the difference between women and men was not statistically significant.

It was subsequently verified whether the interdependencies observed above correlate with the level of knowledge about an early child development among parents. The results of a correlation analysis of the variables are presented in table 3.

The analyses indicated that the level of parental skills correlates significantly with a higher degree of positive attitude towards the child and with a higher level of satisfaction with life. These interdependencies pertain to both women and men. A detailed correlation analysis of various aspects of knowledge about [early child] development with intensification of positive emotions indicated that in men an elevated level of intensity of positive attitude towards the newborn child correlates with a greater level of knowledge about satisfying the child's needs in terms of play and sleep. Dominant among women were interdependencies between the level of knowledge about the need of infants to establish social relations and play, and the sense of satisfaction with life and a positive attitude towards the newborn child.

In the group of parents with differentiated levels of education, it was observed that a higher degree of a positive attitude towards the newborn as well as a greater sense of satisfaction with life and being a parent correlate significantly with a higher level of knowledge about child development. These correlations were particularly pronounced in the group of test subjects with a lower level of education and pertained predominantly to knowledge about satisfying the need to feed and sleep.

#### **Selected aspects of parental knowledge about the psychological needs of infants as predictors of positive perception of the event of birth**

The results of the analyses presented in the previous subsection suggest that a positive perception of birth may be based on various aspects of knowledge about satisfying the needs of a newborn child. Regression analysis was used to determine, in detail, which correlations exist between the variables presented above.

**Table 3. The results of a correlation analysis between the level of parental skills (including women and men, as well as those with a higher and lower level of education) and the level of satisfaction with life (SWLS) and being a parent (SWBP) and a positive attitude towards the child (PES)**

Level of parental skills	All Respondents	Women	Men	Higher level of education	Lower level of education
SWLS	<b>.63*</b>	<b>.47*</b>	<b>.71**</b>	<b>.69*</b>	<b>.74**</b>
SWBP	.45	.39	.27	<b>.44*</b>	<b>.53*</b>
PES	<b>.59*</b>	<b>.46*</b>	<b>.41*</b>	<b>.73*</b>	<b>.76**</b>

Note: statistically significant correlation at the level of: \*  $p<.05$  or \*\*  $p<.01$



A simplified model of the relationship between variables is presented in fig. 3.

On the basis of the above analyses it was observed that a high level of knowledge of parents can account for 46.1% of the variance of all aspects of circumstances that contribute to the perception of the birth of a child as a positive event, i.e.: the intensification of positive emotions with respect to the child, a feeling of satisfaction with being a parent and sense of satisfaction with life (which is confirmed by the values of the *F*-statistics and their corresponding statistically significant *p*-levels <0.001).

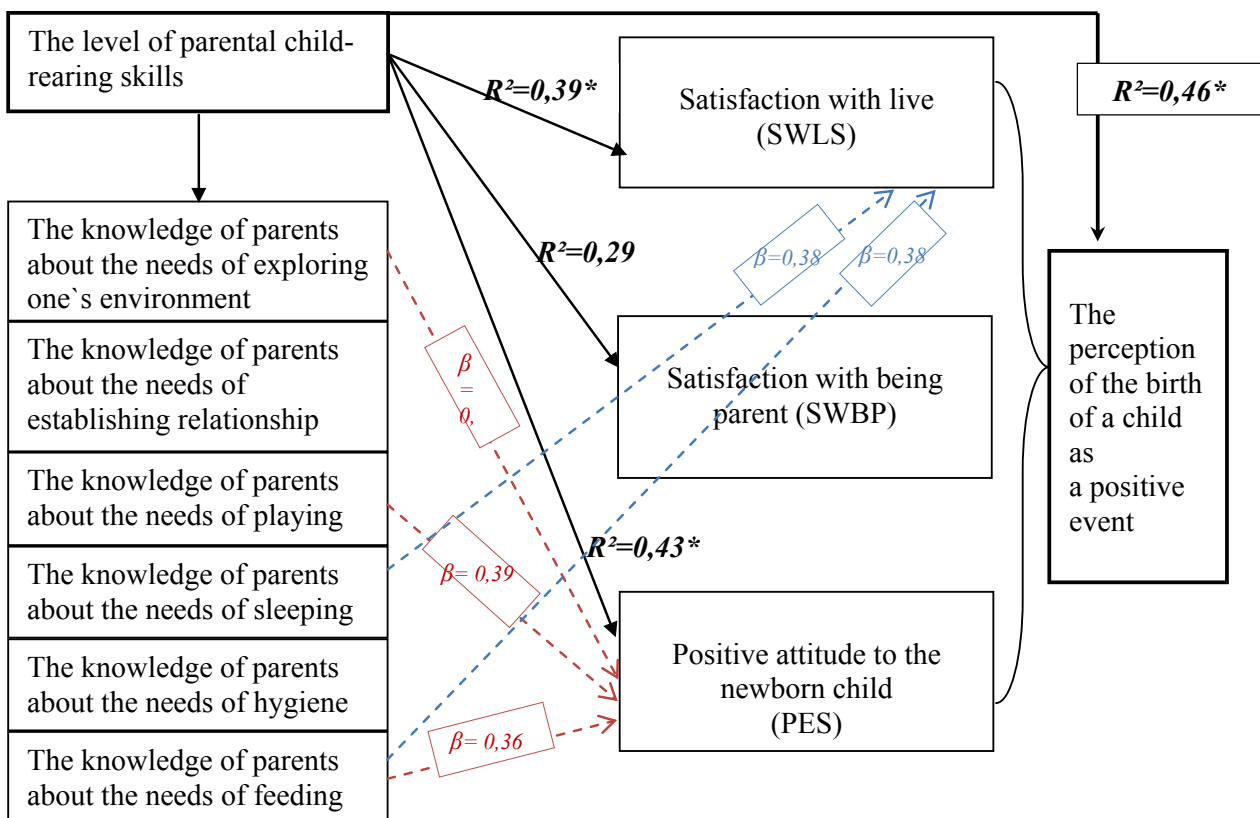
A detailed analysis conducted by means of stepwise regression, demonstrated that the best predictors of a positive attitude towards the child are three factors: knowledge about the needs of infants related to exploring own environment (*beta*=0.44; *p*<0.05), feeding (*beta*=0.36; *p*<0.05) and play (*beta*=0.39; *p*<0.05). These account for 43% of the explained variance in intensification of positive emotions with respect to the newborn child, which is confirmed by the *F*-statistics: *F*(2.89)=3.79; *p*<0.05).

The best predictors for sense of satisfaction with life (which accounts for 39% of the explained SWLS variance, which is confirmed by the *F*-statistics *F*(3.12)=; *p*<0.05) are two factors: knowledge about satisfying the infant's needs to sleep (*beta*=0.34; *p*<0.05), and feeding (*beta*=0.38; *p*<0.05). This means that the high level of parental knowledge associated with satisfying the infant's need to sleep and feeding correlates with of satisfaction with life.

After taking into account in further analyses the variable of gender, it was observed that the regression coefficient in the expression describing the interaction of variables (gender\*knowledge) does not differ significantly from zero. (*t*=0.76; *p*=0.45). As a consequence, the common influence of knowledge and gender on satisfaction with life and with being a parent, as well as on a positive attitude towards the child, was removed from the model. This means that an increase in the level of knowledge causes a comparable increase in the level of satisfaction with the birth of a child, in both women and men.

In subsequent analyses, a correlation with the education variable was assessed. It was observed that the regression coefficient in the expression describing the interaction (education\*knowledge), as well as directional coefficients, significantly differ from zero (*p*<0.05). As a result, the aforementioned correlations were evaluated separately for the educated and the uneducated. On the basis of these analyses, it was determined that an increase in the level of knowledge is particularly significant with respect to an increase in intensity of positive emotions regarding the newborn child and a greater sense of satisfaction with life and with being a parent among individuals with a lower level of education.

Fig. 3. A simplified model of the relationship between variables



Note: F-statistics corresponding statistically significant at the level of: \* *p*<0.05



## Conclusions

The aim of the study was to evaluate the level of knowledge among contemporary parents (among women and men and among parents with different levels of education) about the psychological needs of small children and to determine whether the level of knowledge possessed by parents of a small child has an impact on their perception of the birth of their child as a positive event. In the research it was assumed that there are three factors that influence the perception of the birth of a child as a positive event: a positive attitude towards the newborn child, a satisfaction with being a parent and satisfaction with life. The analyses that were carried out verified the existence of such a correlation, although it was not especially direct. Important variables modifying the aforementioned correlations turned out to be the level of education of parents and their respective genders.

The event of the birth was perceived positively in particular by women and by those with a higher level of education. In accordance with previous reports, women displayed a greater intensity of positive emotions than men with respect to the newborn child and declared a greater level of satisfaction with being a parent. Their knowledge about the psychological development of children was also at a higher level than that of men. As demonstrated by the study, women differed from men in terms of the level of knowledge about the need of exploring the environment, establishing relationships and feeding. However, further analyses showed that the level of knowledge about the needs of small children was comparable in its significance for both men and women as a factor in perceiving the birth as a positive event. As a result, greater knowledge of women and men about early child development contributed to the perception of birth as a positive event.

In studying the correlations between the level of knowledge of parents and the positive interpretation of the event of birth among parents with different levels of education, it was discovered that, consistently with expectations, educated parents have a higher level of knowledge about the psychological needs of small children. It refers particularly to the knowledge about the need of infants to explore their environment, establish social relations and play. In addition, their overall indicator of satisfaction with the event of birth, which consisted of markedly positive emotions, the sense of satisfaction with life and with being a parent, was higher than in individuals with a low level of education. In summary, the event of birth is not a negative event for all parents. As this study demonstrates, the sense of satisfaction with the birth of a child and perceiving this situation as a positive event is especially high among women and those with a higher education. It can be assumed that for men and parents with a low level of education, it can probably become a positive experience if they increase their knowledge about the needs of small children. Nevertheless, in order to verify this presupposition further research is required in this area.

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