

## **Family Life Satisfaction and Personal Identity of Mothers and Fathers of Persons with Down Syndrome during the Life Cycle**

Presented researches concern the field of interest of families with persons with moderate and severe intellectual disability with Down Syndrome.

Taking into account limited literature in this field of science I attempted to broaden chosen aspects of knowledge about functioning families with a person with moderate and

severe intellectual disability with Down Syndrome.

Because there is significantly more literature available regarding intellectually disabled with Down Syndrome themselves than their families I primarily focused on elaboration of identity and general assessment of family satisfaction of their mothers and fathers.

The main aim of conducted researches was to verify if mothers' and fathers' satisfaction

with family life changes depending on the family life stage, especially how are changing such components of family life satisfaction as:

The research sought to determine whether the level of satisfaction of mothers and fathers

with family life changes depending on the phase of the family life cycle, in particular, whether their life satisfaction changes, subjective assessment of the family and approval

of the parent's role (depression, sense of stress, perception of self-autonomy, subjective assessment of the child, sense of self-efficacy, sense of support). In particular, attempts were made to answer the question whether mothers and fathers differ in the severity of individual dimensions and identity statuses depending on the phase of the family life cycle. The area of research interest was also an attempt to answer questions about the relationship between the level of satisfaction with family life in individual phases of the family life cycle and the dimensions and statuses of the personal identity of mothers and

fathers.

The adopted theoretical approach was embedded in the systemic approach to family

life (Plopa, 2006; Liberska, 2001; Rostowska, 2009), Maria Tyszkowa's (1999) concept of individual development, the dichotomous classification of family models (Liberska, Matuszewska, 2012, p. 82), the processual approach to assessing family life (Bobkowicz-

Lewartowska, 2013, s.79, Rostowska, 2009), the possibility of changing this assessment in the life cycle.

The obtained research results are the basis for formulating the final conclusions presented below:

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1. The level of satisfaction with the family life of parents of people with Down syndrome with a deeper degree of intellectual disability varies. One of the factors differentiating the levels of the discussed variable are the stages of the family life cycle.

Among parents of people with Down syndrome with a deeper degree of intellectual disability, there are different levels of satisfaction with family life and different levels of components of this satisfaction, i.e.: life satisfaction, subjective family assessment, parental involvement, parental depression, sense of autonomy and subjective assessment

of a child with disabilities. The differences in the level of general satisfaction with family life and in the level of individual components depend on the stage of the family life cycle.

2. The dimensions and personal identity statuses of parents of people with Down syndrome with a deeper degree of intellectual disability vary and depend on the stages of the family life cycle.

There are differences in the severity of dimensions and personal identity status of parents

of people with Down syndrome with a deeper degree of intellectual disability. The severity of differences in the status of personal identity of parents depends on the stages

of the family life cycle.

3. There are statistically insignificant relationships between the overall satisfaction with family life and the dimensions of personal identity of parents raising people with Down syndrome. Significant links are found between overall satisfaction with family life and parents' personal identity statuses.

This relationship is influenced by the stages of the family life cycle. Parents' formation of higher developmental statuses of personal identity is influenced by the stages of the family life cycle. As parents move through the stages of the family life cycle, their personal identity undergoes progressive changes towards an attained identity.

The presented work does not exhaust a wide range of issues related to the satisfaction with family life and personal identity of parents of people with Down syndrome. The obtained research results may be a factor in an extended and in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis.

Additional scientific benefits for presented work may include:

1. Extending the scope of research that will include such factors as: social status, economic conditions, education of mothers and fathers, vocational activity and quality as well as accessibility of the support from local institutions.

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2. Presenting outcomes from conducted studies as implications for wider group of receivers.

**Keywords:** family with a person with intellectual disability, family life cycle, identity of a parent, people with intellectual disability, satisfaction with family life