

## PRACE ORYGINALNE • ORIGINAL PAPERS

## Adolescence crisis and attitude towards values

## Kryzys adolescencyjny a postawa wobec wartości

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A – Study Design, B – Data Collection, C – Statistical Analysis, D – Data Interpretation, E – Manuscript Preparation, F – Literature Search, G – Funds Collection

**Streszczenie** **Wstęp.** Artykuł stanowi refleksję nad związkiem nasilenia normatywnego kryzysu przeżywanego przez młodych ludzi w okresie dorastania a ich postawą wobec wartości.

**Cel pracy.** Poznanie związku płci i typu formacji edukacyjnej (klasy) z częstością przeżywania kryzysu wartości, jako jednego z obszarów kontestacji młodzieńczej. Podstawę teoretyczną pracy stanowi koncepcja klasycznej, obiektywnej hierarchii wartości Maxa Schelera.

**Materiał i metody.** Badaniami objęto 54 uczniów (31 chłopców i 23 dziewczęta) z Liceum Ogólnokształcącego. Autorzy poszukują związków między postawami wobec wartości młodzieży w wieku 18, 19 lat, a sposobem radzenia sobie przez nich z symptomami kryzysu adolescencyjnego, takimi jak: między innymi depresja, lęk, utrata sensu życia, sięganie po używki. Pytanie, na które starano się znaleźć odpowiedź, dotyczy wpływu modyfikującego indywidualnej hierarchii wartości na trudności przeżywane przez dorastającą młodzież.

**Wnioski.** Współczesna polska rzeczywistość stanowi znaczne wyzwanie dla wartości tradycyjnych przekazywanych młodym przez starsze pokolenia. Badanie tej problematyki wydaje się istotne nie tylko ze względu na zrozumienie zachowania współczesnej młodzieży, ale dostarcza również danych co do transformacji pokoleniowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** adolescencja, kryzys, wartości.

**Summary** **Background.** The report reflects on relations between normative adolescence crisis experienced by young people and their attitude towards values.

**Objectives.** The aim of this research is to explore the links between sex, the type of education (humanities or mathematical classes) and how often the value crisis happens, with its frequency, as a one of the adolescence objection fields. This research basis on the Max Scheler theory, specifying the classical hierarchy of values.

**Material and methods.** 54 students (31 boys and 23 girls) of the Secondary School (liceum ogólnokształcące) were subjects in the research. The authors try to find out relations between attitude towards values in the age of 18,19 and the manners of young people in coping with the symptoms of adolescence crisis such as : depression, anxiety, lost of meaning of life sense, addition to drugs and alcohol. The research focuses also on answering the question if some kind of hierarchy of values can modify the consequences of the experienced difficulties in adolescence age. The students were asked to fill two paper instruments : the Scheler Scale of Values and a questionnaire with opened questions.

**Conclusions.** Polish contemporary reality represents today a great challenge for the traditional values transmitted from the older generations. The authors state, that to explore this field is important for understanding of contemporary youth behavior and the social processes of generational transformation.

**Key words:** adolescence, crisis, values.

## Introduction

Adolescence is a dynamic time in the human development in the age of 11 to 20, that means a dynamic growth and transformation processes [1]. This temporary normative destabilization is called the adolescence crisis and defined as a specific change in the hitherto going psychological development. Its aim is to lead a young man to the better

self identification. The adolescence crisis involves formal and essential (connected with values) changes [2, 3]. Emotional instability, opposition and negation in behavior, worsening of cognitive and social functioning are here the typical signs of this change. Described above difficulties concern to the whole youth and have got a temporary character.

The change experienced by teenagers has also its developmental aim. According to Erik Erikson

this is the time for solving the two-pools dilemma: identity or role confusion. The result ought to be finding and define oneself [4]. The developmental helpfulness of crisis in the human life underlined Kazimierz Dąbrowski in his conception of the positive disintegration [5]. The teenager crisis is also the verge, that must be overgone in the process of selfconstitution. The experience of the developmental effort in the following changes is a necessary condition of the mental health, according to Dąbrowski.

Instability symptoms can manifest heavier and longer in some young people. The differential diagnose can help in such cases and answer the question about psychopathology. The sighs of the intensive adolescence crisis are lost of the meaning of life, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, suicide tendencies, alcohol and drugs addiction Teenagers can react on the inadaptative way in confrontation with some life events, using it as a coping strategy.

Difficulties experienced by young person have different meaning for him, in contrast to the adult person. The school problems, friends conflicts or social opinion can often be taken very serious, as a dramatic end of the individual world. Extreme hard life events were described by Karl Jaspers as border situations [6]. The border character comes from the individual attitude towards it, in connection with the question about sense of the ones existence. The border situation have got a determined nature, it is impossible to avoid their. They are necessary and inscribed in the human life, lie the life-span along from birth to death. The attributes of the border situation are sadness, suffering, helplessness, distress. They are experienced as terminal moments in life and seemed to have got no exit. They are the confrontation with borders of ones possibilities. Classical border situations according to Jaspers are: involving in a concreat situation, faith, death, fortune, guilt. There are more moments in ones life, possible to describe as a extreme hard with the characteristics mentioned above.

He axiology field (of values) is often involved in devaluation and transformation processes in adolescence. This domena is close connected with the adolescent rebel against authorities, what conducts to the opposition towards their values. The question central for this paper is demanges achieving the high level of the cognitive development. The meaning of many axiology concepts are not open for the younger teenagers. Therefore young people above 16 were subjects in this research. This age is considered as a mark line between early adolescence (with overweight biology dynamics) and older adolescence with dominance of reflectation and identity transformation. In this time it comes to the increasing of sensitiv-

ity. In 16 years old teenagers is the highest level of neurotismus to observe [7].

## Material and methods

The aim of the research is to find out the relations between individual hierarchy of values and experiencing of the adolescence crisis. Moreover there is interesting to explore the group of values with the helping function in coping with difficulties in the adolescence period. Not everyone of the young people experiences dramatic ones growing. It is interesting to ask about those values, which can protect us in the extreme hard life situation and help in the coping with suffering in this time. The presumption means that higher values (moral and sacral) are the most constant in the objective hierarchy according to Max Scheler. The research hypothesis assumpts, that the person, who copes better in the border situation respects rather higher values.

54 students (31 boys and 23 girls) of the Secondary School (Liceum Ogólnokształcące) were subjects in the research. The group gathering of the research material took place in spring 2008 in two classes. There were choosen two different classes profiles – humanities and science (mathematics and informatics).

The research was preceded by the short introduction with the topic axiology. There were explained the terminology connected with the project, the place of values in the human life and the classical definition of the border situation. The research was conducted in groups in their classrooms. The students were asked to fill two paper instruments. The first one was the Scheler Scale of Values [8] with ordering of 50 detail values with regard their importance for subjects. The scale basis was the Scheler conception of the objective hierarchy of higher and lower values. To the first group belong hedonistic values H (eg. erotic love), vital values V (eg. fitness), estetic E (eg. harmony) and values of truth (eg. knowledge). The second group consists of moral values M (eg. Honesty) and a sacred values S (eg. Redemption). The vital level deals to fitness and body power values group (F) and endurance values (EN). The sacred level deals to the laic sanctity LS (homeland) and religious sanctity RS (God).

The second measure instrument was a questionnaire with opened questions:

1. Have you ever experienced the crisis of values? With what value was it connected and in what circumstances took it place?
2. What are your experiences and the consequences connected with the border situation in your life?

## Results and discussion

Over half of the teenagers in the sample (51.9%) with a little overweight of female part experienced a crisis of the values in their life. The strength of relation between sex and declaration of experiencing of crisis is not great ( $\eta^2 = 0,23$ ) and statistical not significant (what can mean a deficit of such a connection or a possibility to manifest it in the greater sample). In the whole teenager group The most frequent experienced crisis was connected with the level of sacral values (24%, the next one was trust to the other (9.2%) and category "all values" (7.4%). The results agree with the pattern of opposition and rebel against the authorities (God, parents, adults) characteristic for adolescence. Moreover the results are expression of the formal thinking without taking into consideration such factors as of relativity of the social phenomena and complexity of the human behavior (what causes a severe estimation and quick negation).

Hypothesis: Young people, who better cope with the border situation, respect rather the higher values.

The research material gathered for the verifying this hypothesis comes from the questionnaire. The spontaneous subjects' answers are ordered to the specified categories.

52% of subjects declared experiences, which was described as a extreme hard life event. The border character were connected with following situations: serious parents' illness, to be a mobbing victim in the school, the end of the many years friendship, a deception in the family. Teenagers wrote about reactions for that terminal hard life moments. The reactions seemed to be similar to those in the strong stress situation [8]. The most often were enumerated distress, overloading and lost of the meaning of life (each 28.6%), closeness and isolation (17.8%) and strong anxiety (14.2%).

Difficulties and suffering are inscribed in the human life. The possibilities to cope with the extreme hard situation are important factors for the optimal development and the keeping of mental health. Teenagers in the sample spoke in the majority (66%) about negative consequences of their confrontation with the hard life events. Only 34% of the students declared the positive solution, effective coping and achieving new abilities in such a situation.

**Table 1. Type of reaction to the border situation, N = 28**

| Symptoms                    |    | % answers | % cases |
|-----------------------------|----|-----------|---------|
| Distress                    | 8  | 17.02     | 28.57   |
| Closeness                   | 5  | 10.64     | 17.86   |
| Overloading                 | 8  | 17.02     | 28.57   |
| Suicide tendencies          | 3  | 6.38      | 10.71   |
| Alcohol, drugs              | 2  | 4.26      | 7.14    |
| Lost of the meaning of life | 8  | 17.02     | 28.57   |
| Anxiety                     | 4  | 8.51      | 14.29   |
| Guilty feeling              | 2  | 4.26      | 7.14    |
| Sleep disturbances          | 2  | 4.26      | 7.14    |
| Helplessness                | 3  | 6.38      | 10.71   |
| Loneliness                  | 1  | 2.13      | 3.57    |
| Eating disorders            | 1  | 2.13      | 3.57    |
| Total                       | 47 | 100.00    | 167.86  |

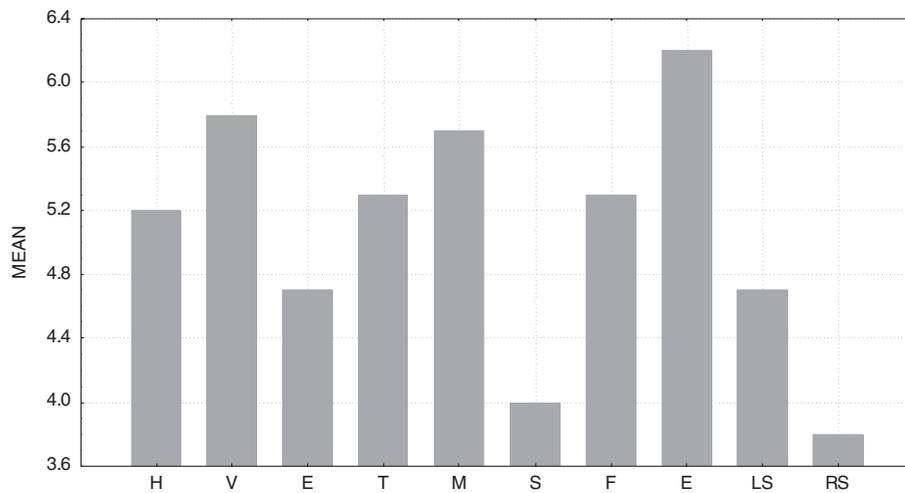
The base for next analyses in this hypothesis was the Scheler Scale of Values. The results in percentages were changed into means and then into stens with regarding sex and age of the subjects. Quality analysis shows the effects of the choice of values among people who overcame the border situation in their life. The analysis gave the answer for the question if it is possible to find values with the helping function in the difficult life moments and facilitating function in coping with the individual suffering in this period.

The table presents in the order the following groups of values: hedonistic, vital, esthetic, values of truth, moral, sacred and subgroups – fitness and body power values, endurance values, laic sanctity and religion sanctity values. The highest outcomes are connected with the values of the lower level: endurance ( $x = 6.2$ ) and vital values ( $x = 5.8$ ). Only one result links with the higher level: moral values ( $x = 5.7$ ). This order shows that the students who overcame the border situation in their life without negative emotional consequences estimate higher rather the lower values (vital) and only little part from the group of higher values (moral) The hypothesis saying that the person, who copes better in the border situation respects rather higher values is partially verified. Teenagers demonstrate a tendency to rely rather on their own resources like endurance, vitality, power and only in the sequence on the moral values.

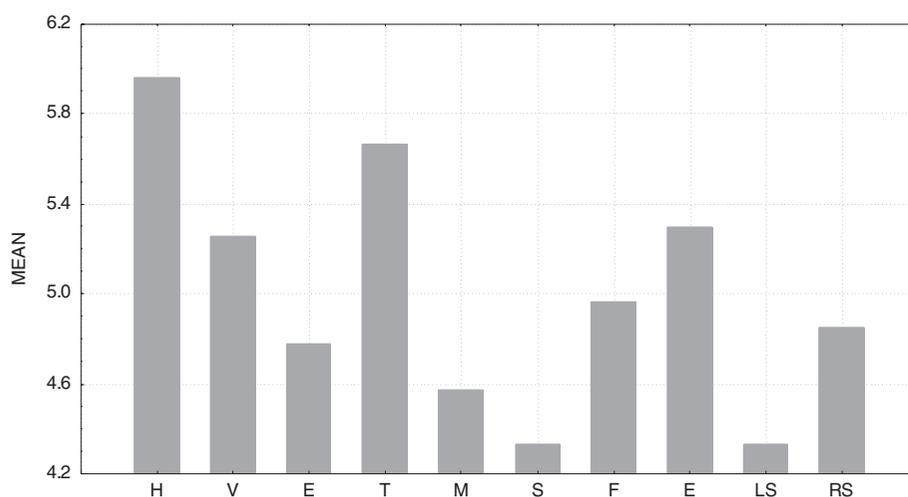
The comparison between the hierarchy of values in the whole sample and in the "better cop-

**Table 2. The choice of values among people who overcame the border situation in their life, N = 6**

| Value | H   | V   | E   | T   | M   | S  | F   | EN  | LS  | RS  |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Total | 31  | 35  | 28  | 32  | 34  | 24 | 32  | 37  | 28  | 23  |
| Mean  | 5.2 | 5.8 | 4.7 | 5.3 | 5.7 | 4  | 5.3 | 6.2 | 4.7 | 3.8 |



**Fig. 1.** The hierarchy of values among people who overcame the border situation in their life,  $N = 6$



**Fig. 2.** The hierarchy of values in the sample,  $N = 54$

ers" group results in some differences between them.

The obtained result corresponds with the data from researches on existential values in young people in 90. XX [9]. The interesting result of those explorations was the fact that teenagers and young adults (university students) mean challenges, effort and difficulties in life as important and valuable experiences. Their attitudes show the leave from the stabile, composed, safety life as a model of the great worth. Hard life events are treated as a possibility to proof and check his/her own abilities. Świda-Ziemia means the mass media influence as a reason for this mental change. The competition and success ideology create so called "transformation axiology" which differs from the hierarchy of values in the older generation.

## Conclusions

The research results lead to the conclusions that factors protecting the mental health in the

stress situation are to find in other personal fields too. The one of them can be resilience – the possibility to cope with the border situation without or with the only little losses [10]. Resilience is meant as a self-treat tendency.

The next concept which facilitates the understanding coping processes with the extreme stress is emotional intelligence [11, 12]. Such it's components as empathy, optimism, enthusiasm, independency, self confidence and persistence have a help function in the emotional hard life events.

Besides the approaches considering the adolescence as a specific difficult and full of dangers period there exists in psychology the another tendency. This concurrent approach, based on the empirical researches believes that psychopathology symptoms aren't more often in adolescence in the comparison with the other life periods [13]. The studies on stress experiencing and wellbeing in teenagers bring interesting outcomes. Only 27.5% of the young people group raport the experiences of a strength stress but the majority of them can usefully apply their inner resources in the coping process with the environmental stressors [14].

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