

Adam Depta¹, Iwona Staniec²**FACTORS DETERMINING THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS LIFE**

The aim of this paper is to identify the factors influencing the quality of students life at the universities in Lodz. A survey was conducted in the first quarter of 2013 for data collection. The population consisted of full-time students in their final year of study. The impact factors were identified using the correlation analysis method. The only objective factor significantly affecting the quality of students' life was marital status, defined as "single" and "having children". The subjective factors significantly and positively influencing the evaluation of life quality include satisfaction with individual personal circumstances, relations with the outside world, intended area of activity, physical and mental well-being.

Keywords: quality of life; factors of influence; university students.

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ЧИННИКИ, ЩО ВИЗНАЧАЮТЬ ЯКІСТЬ ЖИТТЯ СТУДЕНТІВ

У статті визначено фактори, що впливають на якість життя студентів університетів у м. Лодзь (Польща). Для отримання первинних даних у першому кварталі 2013 г. було проведено опитування студентів, до вибірки увійшли студенти денної форми останнього року навчання. Головні фактори впливу було виявлено за допомогою кореляційного аналізу. Єдиний об'єктивний чинник, що впливає на якість життя студентів, — це сімейний стан, при цьому найсильніший вплив мають змінні «незаміжня/не одружений» та «с діти». Суб'єктивні чинники, що суттєво та позитивно впливають на сприйняття якості життя, виділено такі: задоволеність особистими життєвими обставинами, відносини із зовнішнім світом, наміри відносно майбутньої роботи, фізичне та розумове благополуччя.

Ключові слова: якість життя; фактори впливу; студенти університетів.

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ФАКТОРЫ, ОПРЕДЕЛЯЮЩИЕ КАЧЕСТВО ЖИЗНИ СТУДЕНТОВ

В статье определены факторы, влияющие на качество жизни студентов университетов в г. Лодзь (Польша). Для получения первичных данных в первом квартале 2013 г. был проведён опрос студентов, в выборку вошли студенты дневной формы последнего года обучения. Главные факторы влияния были выявлены при помощи корреляционного анализа. Единственный объективный фактор, влияющий на качество жизни студентов, — это семейное положение, при этом сильнейшие влияния имеют переменные «не замужем/не женат» и «есть дети». Субъективные факторы, которые существенно и позитивно влияют на восприятие качества жизни, выделены следующие: удовлетворённость личными жизненными обстоятельствами, отношения с внешним миром, намерения относительно будущей работы, физическое и умственное благополучие.

Ключевые слова: качество жизни; факторы влияния; студенты университетов.

Introduction. Quality of life is the overall level of well-being, which is the total of individual and collective perception of life circumstances and their measure at the same time (Banka and Derbis, 1994: 5). It is a popular global indicator; complex, interdisciplinary and indefinite as it is, life quality has been attracting the attention of scientists, politicians, economists, sociologists and psychologists. Literature presents two major views on the quality of life: objective and subjective. From the objective point of view, life quality is determined by living conditions, environment, objects and

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culture, as well as factors pertaining to the standard of living or social position, objectively evaluated by individuals. From the subjective point of view, the determinant of life quality is the satisfaction people derive from their lives and the conditions they happen to live in (Borys, 2015: 1–18). The objective approach to life quality came under criticism from A. Campbell (1976) who demonstrated that under no circumstances can objective improvement of living conditions be assumed to be always accompanied by a respective sense of satisfaction. According to the theory of A. Hirschman (1973: 545), the subjective approach to life quality is not flawless either – since individual satisfaction is predicated not only on the current sense of satisfaction, but also on the expectation of future quality of life. Life quality index is usually a statistical measure being a product of comparison of various economic, environmental and health-related parameters concerning living conditions (Topor-Madry, 2011: 25–49), whereas in socio-psychological models it is the subjective assessment of the individual (Levine and Moreland, 2012: 383). It has been assumed in this paper after Ch. Hatton (1998) that life quality is impacted by both objective and subjective factors simultaneously.

The purpose of the survey is to indicate which factors from those under investigation determine the subjective quality of students' lives and in what manner. This identification has been performed based on the analysis of the dependence between subjective assessment of quality of life and the values of the examined objective and subjective factors.

The authors have present already partially different aspects of this study in (Depta and Staniec, 2013, 2014).

Literature review. No single universally acceptable definition of life quality has been developed in social sciences to date. Researchers rather attempt at conceptualising the term, taking into consideration the context of its use and the study purpose. There is a consensus among the researchers that the key importance in describing the scope of the term "quality of life" is attached to the analysis of both objective and subjective determinants. S.P. McKeena (1997) distinguished two groups of definitions:

- health-related quality of life;
- quality of life based on the model of needs, which assumes that individual's functioning is conditioned by his/her needs, whereas the quality of life depends on the possibilities for their satisfaction.

According to H. Schipper, J. Clinch and V. Powell (1990), life quality is based on subjective evaluation of 3 dimensions of physical, mental and social life.

L. Nordenfelt (1993) identifies life quality as subjective cognition and emotional perception of the world. He emphasises that in social life, individual is constantly receiving and sending various messages, with positive or negative feelings. They will determine the quality of life level. L. Nordenfelt stresses that life quality can be evaluated as high irrespective of the degree to which subjective needs are met. Thus, it is the quality of individual everyday experiences whose sources can be found in the subjective cognitive system that decides upon the quality of life. L. Nordenfelt proves that the stronger are individual cognitive abilities, the higher is the quality of life, while the poorer are individual cognitive abilities, the lower is life quality.

J.C. Flanagan (1978) drew attention to the fact that the predefined spheres of life may carry different meanings to participants, hence the proposition to use signifi-

cance index for evaluating the degree of satisfaction with particular domains of individual life. He claimed that thus assessed quality of life would be more subjective. A. Michalos (2007) holds a similar view, emphasising that respondent should individually determine the spheres he deems to be of prime importance. Then, quality of life could be analysed based on current preferences, since whatever was of value some time ago may no longer hold this value now. A. Michalos stresses the dynamics of the importance of diverse subjective values.

J.M. Raeburn and I. Rootman (1996) claim that life quality may be measured based on goals achievement. The researchers emphasise at the same time the importance of subjective self-fulfilment. In other words, the more self-fulfilled an individual feels, the greater is the probability of the quality of their life being ranked as high.

According to A. Campbell (1981), life quality is a degree of satisfaction with family life, professional life, neighbourly relations, social relations, health, leisure, education, occupation or general standards impacting the quality of life within a given local community.

As concluded by N.C. Dalkey and D. L. Rourke (1972), life quality is a combination of the satisfaction with life and the sense of happiness.

K.W. Smith, N.E. Avis and S.F. Assman (1999) highlight that life quality should be measured using generic scales which cover several dimensions and enable the comparison of life quality across various groups. One of the advantages of these metrics is the coverage of a relatively broad sphere of life of the respondents. Their disadvantage lies in low sensitivity to changes inherent in a given classification.

Problem statement and research objective. Subjects of this research were the students pursuing full-time graduate studies at the Lodz University of Technology: field of study – Management and Management and Production Engineering, at the University of Lodz: field of study – Management, and at the Medical University of Lodz: field of study – Public Health. According to the statistics, 350 such students are registered at these universities. The participation in the survey was voluntary. 186 students from randomly selected groups took part in it.

The object of the research was students' subjective feelings concerning life quality. An auditorium testing using a questionnaire was carried out in the 1st quarter of 2013. In compliance with life quality models presented in (Seed and Lloyd, 1997) it was assumed that quality of life comprised: objective conditions (economic conditions, leisure time, social security, housing conditions, natural and social environment, health etc.) and subjective mood (self-assessment of general and specific living conditions seen in terms of satisfaction). Literature overview suggests that these conditions positively or negatively impact the perception of life quality; the same importance was attached to personal beliefs, perceptions, goals and desires referring to existence-related values and the level of satisfaction from their achievement.

Empirical data captured in the course of the survey was subject to qualitative and quantitative analysis in "STATISTICA 10". The properties under study were measured using nominal and ordinal scales. Satisfaction level scores were represented on the 5-point Likert scale. Since the factors under investigation were measured using different measurement scales, the relevance of a given factor was assessed using independence test χ^2 , Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and Kruskal-Wallis rank

test (Kruskal and Wallis, 1952). Only the factor's direct impact on subjective assessment of life quality was examined.

Key results. Quality of life could be rated using 4 categories ranging from poor (6 indications – 3.23%), average (64 indications – 34.41%), good (104 indications – 55.91%) to very good (12 indications – 6.45%). Students predominantly rated the quality of their life as very good. Data analyses were intended to point at the factors which significantly influenced the rate given in the assessment of life quality.

The impact of gender on the evaluation of life quality was analysed using the independence test, $\chi^2 = 5.672$. It was stated based on the score ($p = 0.12870$) that gender has no substantial impact on the evaluation of life quality (Figure 1). The similarity index calculated for women and men is 83.25%. It means that the surveyed women and men assess the quality of their lives in a remarkably similar way.

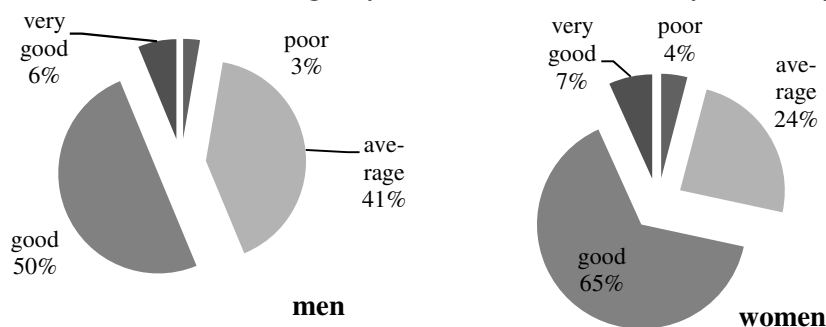


Figure 1. Assessment of life quality by gender, authors'

The next stage was investigating the impact of students' marital status on their assessment of life quality. In view of the absence of certain popular marital status categories, the following rates were available for this factor:

- single – including single, divorced, widowed etc. (87%);
- non-single – married (13%).

It is worth noting that none of non-single students rated their quality of life as poor; yet the sample is too small to claim with certainty that only the single consider the quality of their life poor. What is more, attention should be brought to the fact that non-singles more often tend to rate the quality of their lives as very good (Figure 2). Independence test scores at $\chi^2 = 10.115$ ($p = 0.017 < 0.005$) confirm that marital status defined as single and non-single statistically significantly influences life quality assessment. The number of children was taken into consideration to bring the family status into an even stronger focus. 165 (88.7%) of the students did not have children, only 13 (7%) had one child, 6 (3.3%) had two children, and only two students (1%) had more than two children. It should be observed that students with more than two children assessed their quality of life as poor or average. Spearman's coefficient calculated for the number of children and assessment of life quality is 0.0973 ($p = 0.1866 > 0.05$). It does not show statistically significant dependence, which means that the number of children does not influence life quality assessment. There were few students having children, which underpinned the authors' decision to analyse two categories: students with children and students without offsprings. The results of the inde-

pendence test for the data listed in Table 1 indicates that having and not having children has a statistically significant impact on the evaluation of life quality.

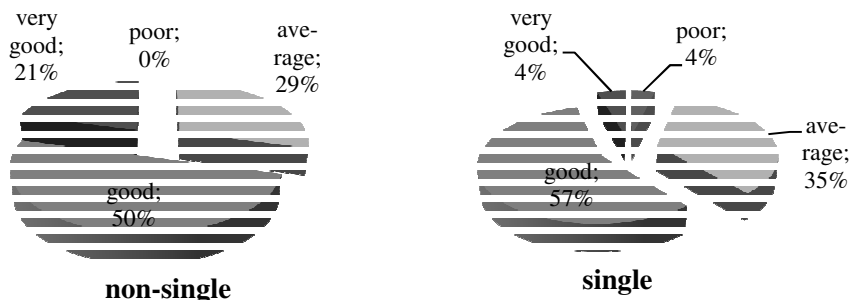


Figure 2. Assessment of life quality by marital status, authors'

Table 1. Assessment of life quality vs. having or not having children, authors'

| Assessment of life quality | Children | | |
|--|-------------|----------|-------|
| | no children | children | total |
| poor | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| average | 58 | 6 | 64 |
| good | 95 | 9 | 104 |
| very good | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| total | 165 | 21 | 186 |
| $\chi^2 = 12.1847$, with $p = 0.0068 < 0.005$ | | | |

At the next stage the authors attempted to check whether the place of residence defined as: living in a dormitory, living with parents, having own flat or house, living in a rented room or a flat impacts life quality of the respondents. The scores of independence test $\chi^2 = 10.1154$ ($p = 0.0176 < 0.005$) confirm that the above categories have a statistically significant influence on the life quality of students in this study. The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA rank test ($H(3, N=186) = 9.2249$, $p = 0.0264$), evaluating the distribution of the subjective assessments of life quality (compare to Figure 3) show that:

- life quality is rated as the poorest (on average) by the students living in rented residential premises;
- there is no substantial differentiation in the rates given to the quality of life by the students having their own residential premises, the predominant, average rank is good, indicated by 60% of the respondents;
- students living in dormitories and with their parents give life quality similar rates.

It is worth noting that the students resided outside their hometowns assess the quality of their lives in a strikingly similar manner. The structure similarity index is 92%, which means that students living in and outside their hometowns assess the quality of their lives very similarly (Table 2). The results of independence test $\chi^2 = 4.6521$ ($p = 0.1991 > 0.005$) prove that living outside one's hometown does not have a statistically significant impact on the quality of lives of the respondents.

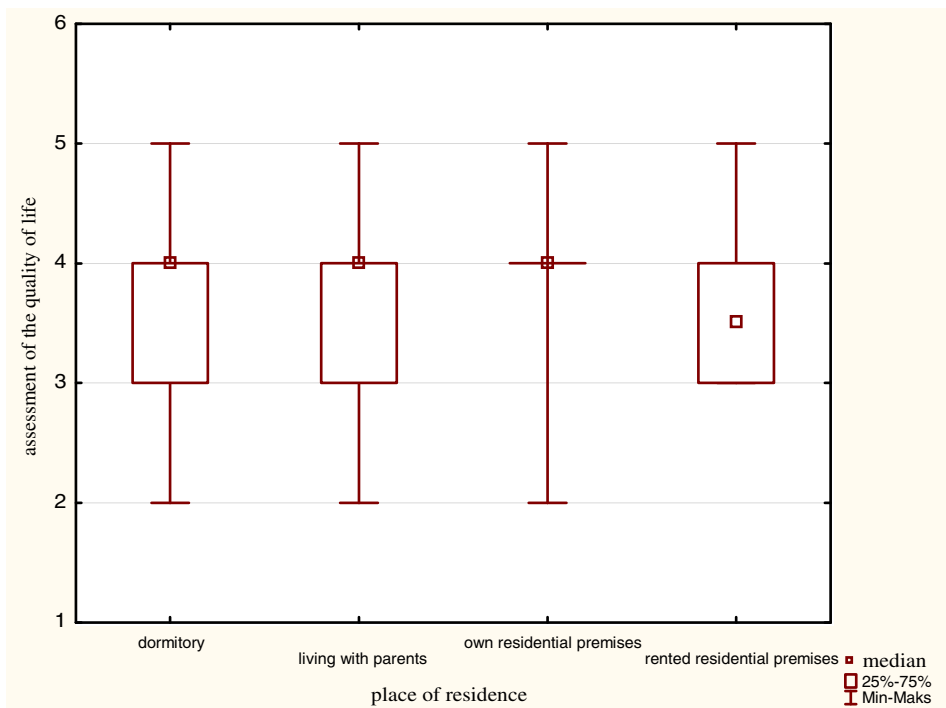


Figure 3. **Assessment of life quality by the place of residence, authors'**

Table 2. **Assessment of life quality by living outside hometown, authors'**

| Subjective assessment of life quality | Living outside of one's hometown | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----|-------|-------|------|------------------|
| | yes | no | total | % yes | % no | % w _p |
| poor | 3 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| average | 32 | 32 | 64 | 32 | 37 | 32 |
| good | 55 | 49 | 104 | 55 | 57 | 55 |
| very good | 10 | 2 | 12 | 10 | 2 | 2 |
| total | 100 | 86 | 186 | 100 | 100 | 92 |

$\chi^2 = 4.6521, p = 0.1991 > 0.05$

The most common life goals indicated in the survey included: ensuring material prosperity (72%), achieving professional success (68%), continuous self-development and striving for excellence (61%), full personal self-fulfilment (58%). To be carefree and to enjoy life was considered to be the least important life goal (10%). The data presented in Table 3 shows that the prevalence of these goals is comparable for each category in the assessment of life quality.

The results of the independence test $\chi^2 = 15.8310$, with $p = 0.7790 > 0.005$ prove that the selected life goals do not have a statistically significant influence on the life quality of the respondents.

The subsequent stage in the research determined the professional status of the students participating in the survey. It transpired that 37% of the students work full-time, 30% of them have occasional work, and 33% does not work at all. Figure 4 pre-

sents the assessment of the quality of life in terms of professional status. The scores of the independence test $\chi^2 = 9.9925$ ($p = 0.1249 > 0.005$) attest that professional status does not have a statistically significant influence on the quality of life of students subject to the study.

Table 3. Assessment of life quality by chief goals in life, authors'

| Primary goals in life | Assessment of life quality | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------|------|-----------|-------|
| | poor | average | good | very good | total |
| to achieve professional success | 5 | 44 | 70 | 8 | 127 |
| to ensure material prosperity | 3 | 48 | 71 | 11 | 133 |
| to be beneficial to people, the society | 2 | 17 | 34 | 3 | 56 |
| to be carefree, to enjoy oneself | 2 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 19 |
| to work diligently | 3 | 20 | 34 | 2 | 59 |
| to earn respect of the community | 4 | 33 | 49 | 4 | 90 |
| to aim for continuous self-development and excellence | 5 | 32 | 69 | 8 | 114 |
| to aim for full personal self-fulfilment | 5 | 31 | 64 | 8 | 108 |
| total | 29 | 230 | 399 | 48 | 706 |

$\chi^2 = 15.8310, p = 0.7790 > 0.05$

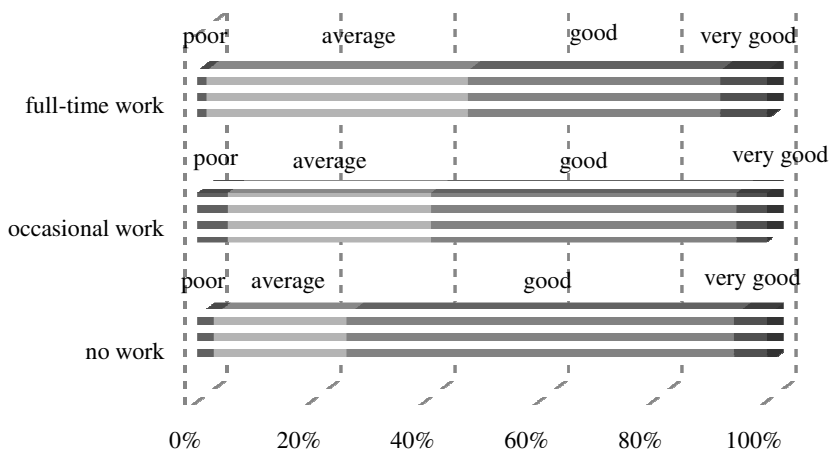


Figure 4. Assessment of life quality by professional status, authors'

39% of the students declared 2–3 hours of leisure time a day. 28% of the students declare over 3 hours of leisure time a day, whereas 22% of the respondents – 1 or 2 hours. Only 11% of the students have less than 1 hour of leisure time a day. Students spend most of their leisure time surfing the Internet (84%), listening to music (74%) and socialising with friends (53%). Spearman coefficient calculated for daily leisure time and life quality assessment is 0.0839 ($p = 0.1249 > 0.05$). It shows no statistically significant dependence, which means that daily leisure time does not impact the assessment of life quality.

As part of subjective factors, the respondents defined their current satisfaction with their lives. The students satisfied with their lives (43%) and students satisfied with their lives on average (42%) prevailed in the group subject to the survey

(Figure 5). It is worth noting that only 5% of the students were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with their lives. Very satisfied students represent 10% of the group under study.

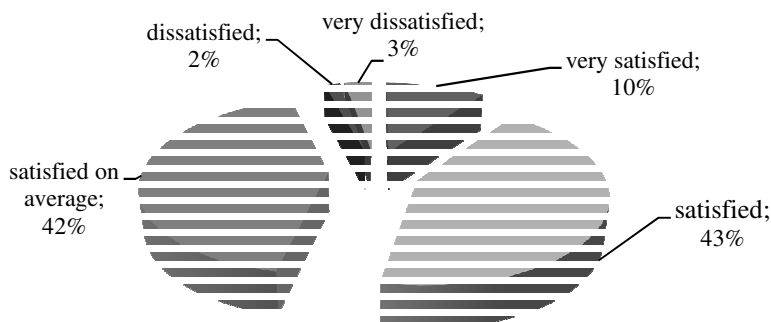


Figure 5. Satisfaction with life, authors'

Spearman's coefficient calculated for satisfaction with one's life and life quality assessment is 0.4627 ($p = 0.0000 < 0.05$). It shows there is a statistically significant dependence, i.e. satisfaction with life significantly impacts the assessment of life quality. The more satisfied with their lives the students are, the higher they assess their quality of life.

The students subject to the study (60%) believe that life is difficult in our country. 21% of them claim that life in Poland is very difficult. Unfortunately, only 14% rate life in Poland as easy and enjoyable (Figure 6).

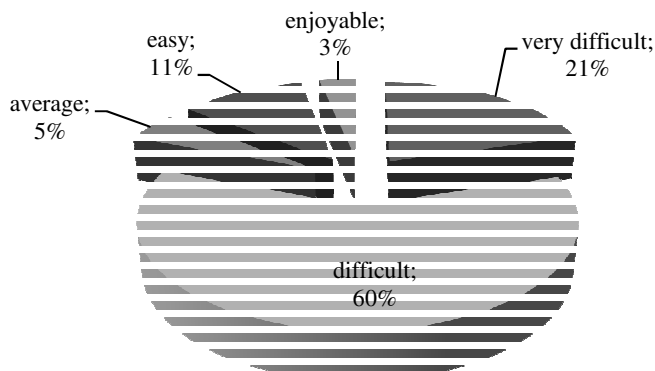


Figure 6. Assessment of life in Poland, authors'

Spearman's coefficient calculated for the assessment of life quality and for the evaluation of everyday life in Poland is 0.1849 ($p = 0.0115 < 0.05$), which demonstrates a statistically significant dependence, i.e. that assessment of everyday life in the home country significantly impacts life quality assessment. The higher the students rank everyday life in Poland, the higher is the assessment of the quality of their lives.

On the top of the above the students rated the level of satisfaction with their personal lives, with their neighbourhood and environment, health, mental well-being, housing conditions, education, the competence they have developed and leisure time activities, material situation and the position held in the society. The results present-

ed in Table 4 indicate a statistically significant (Spearman's rank coefficients are statistically significant) influence on the life quality assessment. Thus, the more satisfied with a particular aspect of life the student is, the higher is his/her assessment life quality. Satisfaction with material situation, mental well-being and nervous state and position in society had the most significant effect on assessing the quality of life.

Table 4. Dependence between the assessment of the quality of life and satisfaction with the selected factors, authors'

| Satisfaction | Spearman rank | <i>p</i> | Influence |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------|-----------------------|
| with surroundings and environment | 0.150076 | 0.0408 | significant, positive |
| with education | 0.221823 | 0.0023 | significant, positive |
| with housing conditions | 0.232461 | 0.0014 | significant, positive |
| with personal life | 0.236912 | 0.0011 | significant, positive |
| with leisure activities | 0.258476 | 0.0003 | significant, positive |
| with developed competences | 0.262795 | 0.0002 | significant, positive |
| with health | 0.268843 | 0.0002 | significant, positive |
| with the position held in society | 0.395997 | 0.0000 | significant, positive |
| with mental well-being | 0.451289 | 0.0000 | significant, positive |
| with material situation | 0.458885 | 0.0000 | significant, positive |

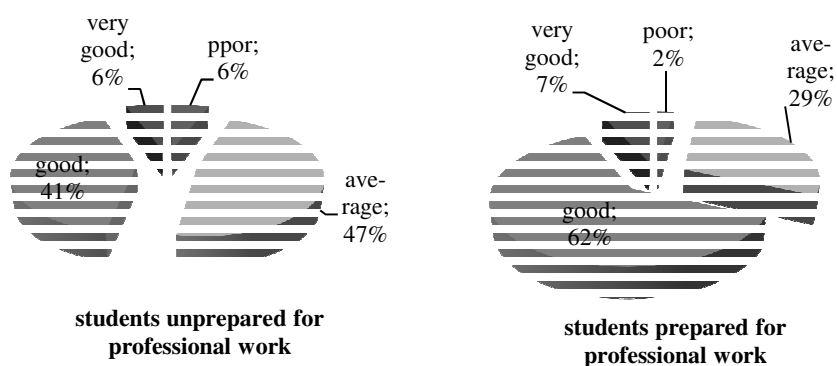


Figure 7. Assessment of life quality by the level of preparation for work, authors'

28.5% of the students claim to be unprepared for professional work, while 71.5% think the opposite. It is also worth noting that 37.7% of the students who do not work and 24% of the students who work believe they are unprepared for professional work. Independence test scores $\chi^2 = 7.692$ ($p = 0.05282 > 0.005$) prove that student's prepa-

ration for professional work does not have a statistically significant influence on the assessment of life quality of the students in this study.

86% of the students claim that in the last two years their competence has improved, whereas 13% claim it has not changed and 1% reported their deterioration. Due to scarce opinions regarding competence deterioration, further research provides only for improved competences. Also in this case, the results of the independence test $\chi^2 = 8.7845$ ($p = 0.0323 < 0.005$) prove that development of competences in the last two years has a statistically significant influence on the assessment of life quality by the students in this study.

Table 5 lists all the dependencies that have been subject to investigation. Attention should be given to the fact that marital status defined as "single" or "having children" was the only objective factor significantly influencing life quality assessment.

Table 5. Operationalisation of students' quality of life, authors'

| Adopted perspective | Variables | Operationalisation |
|------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Objective perspective | Gender | no influence |
| | marital status (single and non-single) | influence |
| | number of children | no influence |
| | with and without children | influence |
| | place of residence (dormitory, living with parents, having one's own flat our house, renting a room or a flat) | no influence |
| | living outside hometown | no influence |
| | professional status | no influence |
| | leisure time | no influence |
| Subjective perspective | chief life goals | no influence |
| | satisfaction with life | positive influence |
| | assessment of everyday life in the country | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with personal life | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with surroundings and environment | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with health | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with mental well-being | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with housing conditions | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with education | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with developed competences | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with leisure | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with material situation | positive influence |
| | satisfaction with the position held in the society | positive influence |
| | professional preparation | no influence |
| | competence development in the last two years | influence |

Subjective factors significantly and positively influencing the evaluation of life quality include satisfaction with various personal circumstances, relations with the outside world, intended activity, physical and mental well-being.

Conclusions and directions for further investigation. The concept of "quality of life" is dynamic, multi-dimensional and complex, it is encompassing both objective and subjective macro-social and individual, positive and negative influences which

come into interplay. Thus, life quality should always be viewed from the perspective of the interested parties.

The conducted studies prove that dependences between objective and subjective life quality measures are ambiguous, i.e. none of the objective factors of life quality explains the subjective quality of life and vice versa, which has also been confirmed by (Brown, 1997). The study has fulfilled its intended purpose, i.e. the identification of objective and subjective factors having significant influence on the assessment of life quality of the students. The objective factor with significant influence on the students' assessment of life quality is marital status defined as "single" and "having children". As regards subjective factors, satisfaction with individual personal achievements, relations with the outside world, intended activity, physical and mental well-being had a significant positive influence. The results are in line with the conclusions drawn by A. Campbell (1981).

The study constraints included selected homogeneous group of students, cross-sectional study at a particular point in time and disregarding the objective economic perspective. In further studies one should refer to the achievements of L. Nordenfelt's (1993) in demonstrating that the stronger are individual cognitive abilities, the higher is the quality of life, and to the conclusions arrived at by J.C. Flanagan (1978) and A. Michalos (2007) in the diversification of fields of human activity, or in their comparison in time, i.e. carrying out longitudinal studies.

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