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Existential/spiritual resources and the subjective quality of life experiences among elderly adults

Abstract

My paper presents the results of a research study on the relationship between existential/spiritual resources, that is, spiritual sensitivity (a disposition to experience spirituality, manifested in the embracement of the nature of things in the transcendent and final perspective, in moral sensitivity, and the ability to find meaning in paradoxical and limiting situations), spiritual sensitivity components and subjective quality of life (a generalized attitude to one's own life mode, in the four existential dimensions: psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical). Study subjects were older adults (60+, $n = 522$) living in the current, dynamic, uncertain and fluid modern world conditions. The study had two phases – quantitative and qualitative (narrative interviews). To measure the phenomena, the Spiritual Sensitivity Inventory (Straś-Romanowska, Kowal, & Kapala, 2013) and the Quality of Life Questionnaire (Straś-Romanowska, Oleszkowicz, & Frąckowiak, 2004) were used. The results obtained confirmed a strong mutual relationship between spiritual resources and quality of life, also providing an answer to some questions about the nature of spiritual sensitivity, and its integrating, pro-development and pro-health role in the elderly adults' life in the post-modern era.

Keywords

elderly adults, spiritual sensitivity and its components, quality of life, conception of a multi-dimensional human being, Spiritual Sensitivity Inventory, narrative interviews

Streszczenie

W artykule prezentuję wyniki badań dotyczących związku między zasobami egzystencjalnymi/duchowymi, a więc wrażliwością duchową (dyspozycją do doświadczania duchowości, przejawiającą się w ujmowaniu natury rzeczy w perspektywie transcendentnej i ostatecznej, wrażliwości moralnej i zdolność do znajdowania sensu w sytuacjach paradoksalnych i granicznych), jej składnikami i poczuciem jakości życia (zgeneralizowane ustosunkowanie do własnego trybu/formy życia, w czterech wymiarach egzystencji: psycho-fizycznym, psycho-społecznym, podmiotowym i metafizycznym). Badanymi były osoby w okresie późnej dorosłości (60+, $n = 522$) funkcjonujące w dynamicznych, niepewnych i płynnych warunkach współczesnej rzeczywistości. Badanie składało się z dwóch etapów – ilościowego i jakościowego (wywiady narracyjne). Do pomiaru badanych fenomenów wykorzystano Inwentarz Wrażliwości

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liwości Duchowej (Straś-Romanowska, Kowal i Kapala, 2013) oraz Kwestionariusza Jakości Życia (Straś-Romanowska, Oleszkowicz i Frąckowiak, 2004). Uzyskane wyniki potwierdziły silną wzajemną relację między zasobami duchowymi i poczuciem jakości życia, a także przyniosły odpowiedź na niektóre pytania dotyczące charakteru wrażliwości duchowej i jej integrującej, pro-rozwojowej i prozdrowotnej roli w życiu osób w podeszłym wieku w epoce postmodernizmu.

Słowa kluczowe

późna dorosłość, wrażliwość duchowa i jej składniki, poczucie jakości życia, koncepcja człowieka wielowymiarowego, Inwentarz Wrażliwości Duchowej (SSI), wywiad narracyjny

Introduction

Spirituality is an issue of utmost importance in psychology, if we assume that the primary aspiration of the study is a complete, holistic understanding and description of human beings and their existence. The conception of a multi-dimensional human being (Straś-Romanowska, 1992) adopted in this study implies thinking of the man as a whole – a bodily and psycho-spiritual entity, and indicates that these spheres coexist and influence one another. Observing modern reality makes one ask the following question: is there still place for spirituality in today's human life? The term that appears most frequently in scientific publications and mass media, and which offers a concise and multi-contextual description of the modern *entourage* of life and the development of individuals and societies alike, is “globalization” (Giddens, 1990; Fukuyama, 1992; Bauman, 1999, 2000; Friedman, 2001; Beck, 2002; Rybinski, 2007; Elliott, 2011). Globalization is of particular interest to many sciences, including sociology, political science, and economics. It has also recently attracted the attention of psychologists, who concentrate on globalization treating it as the context of contemporary life of individuals, and a phenomenon that is necessary to fully describe human existence. For example, Senejko and Łoś (2011, 2013) describe globalization as the flow and interrelationship of economic, political and socio-cultural factors, under conditions of the dynamic development of information technology – which have direct reference to the psychological condition of modern man. The literature describing the modern world *milieu* and its influence on the human condition is dominated by the voices that stress the harmful side of this phenomenon. The list of its negative effects includes, among others, extreme individualism and fragmentation of personality (Fukuyama, 2000; Starosta, 2001; Sarnat, 2002); need for constant redefinition of concepts and their boundaries, uncertainty, fluidity, and having no roots (Mamzer, 2002; Bauman, 1994; Friedmann, 2001; Dionne, 2001); cf. problems with identity (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997; Arnett, 2003; Luyckx et al., 2008; Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2012; Sugimura & Mizokami, 2012); loneliness, alienation, exclusion, mistrust, and social polarization (Sassen, 2007; Piketty, 2013, after: Nobis, 2014; Sztompka, 2012; Riesman, 1996;

Dembiński, 2001; Szymański, 2001); decrease in the ability to communicate, to enter into direct interaction with others, and to maintain that interaction (DiMaggio, Hargitai, Neumann & Robinson, 2001; Fontana, 2006; Turkle, 2011; Zimbardo & Coloumbe, 2015); avoiding long-term commitment, fear of responsibility, “freedom from”, but no “freedom to” (Giddens, 1990, 2001; Fromm, 2014; Frankl, 2009; Grzybowski, 2001); aversion to reflection and existential questions (Kapała & Frąckowiak, 2009); overestimation of external activity and underestimation of internal activity (Kapała & Frąckowiak, 2009); and incomplete perception of the person (Straś-Romanowska, 1992).

As existing research and current observations show, technological development (information and communication), trade, and international business introduce the need for a change in macro systems (economic, social, and cultural) and on the micro level – in the life of individuals (personal, professional, and social). From the perspective of developmental psychology, two age groups seem to be particularly sensitive to these changes: adolescents, who are just at the stage of starting to define themselves and specify their identity, and seniors, whose patterns of perceiving reality, the way of functioning, and lifestyles are relatively fixed and were formed under conditions that differ significantly from the current ones (in Poland, in addition to global, technical, and civilizational changes, there were also significant changes in the socio-political and historical conditions). The issue of seniors is particularly timely. Demographic forecasts show that the share of older people in Europe is increasing. In 2008, the proportion of economically active people over age 65 was 4 to 1, while it will be down to 2 to 1 in 2060. People aged 65+ will make up approximately 30% of the EU population, compared with 17% in 2008 (Eurostat, after: Finogenow, 2011). Poland is no different in this respect from other European countries: in 1988, elderly people accounted for 14.5% of the population, already reaching 19.6% in 2010. Paradoxically, even though the world of today is shaped by younger adults, the majority of the Europeans are seniors. Therefore, there has been a postulate to develop a so-called *silver economy*, that is, products and services for seniors, and the economic system that would make use of their potential. Also, the aging population is a subject of interest for such institutions as WHO and certain bodies at the national level (the Council for Policy on Seniors [*Rada Polityki Senioralnej*] and the Long-Term Senior Policy Program [*Program Długofalowej Polityki Senioralnej*]).

Theoretical background

My study concerns seniors for whom the quickly changing uncertain contemporary reality poses challenges that are not only threats but also opportunities. In the conditions created by the modern world, the categories describing reality, and institutions constituting that reality are continuously being redefined. This requires from people the ability

to constantly adapt to flexible changes in thinking, lifestyle, and goals. The present day demands that changes even be made in the system of values, an area that is particularly important for defining ourselves and for our direction in life. “The new environment forces the birth of a new kind of man” (Łędzińska, 2006, p. 176). The conditions of modernity can impinge on the quality of life, for example, by contributing to the following phenomena: marginalization, loneliness, mistrust, and failure to find meaning in life.

A remedy for the instability and fluidity of reality may be sought in developing existential/spiritual resources and in using them skillfully. To this end, the following may prove particularly useful: existential wisdom, awareness and self-awareness, reflectiveness, the ability to adopt a holistic and multi-contextual look at reality, openness to values and the ability to look through their prism on one’s own existence, the ability to find meaning in life, and sensitivity to others. Also, religion and faith offer a point of reference that is especially important for people in late adulthood, who make their life balance under the resolution of developmental tasks (Erikson, 2000; Straś-Romanowska, 2011). Universal values can raise the man above the divisions resulting from diversity (ethnic, religious and national) characterizing *the global village*, and can become a platform for inter-generational, social, and cultural dialogue.

Much has been written about the integrating and development-oriented role of spirituality in life (e.g. Chlewiński, 1982; Allport, 1955, after: Hall & Lindzey, 1994; Hill & Pargament, 2000; Welte, 1980, after: Król 2002; Szmyd, 2002; Young & Morris, 2004; Straś-Romanowska & Kapala, 2010). In those authors’ view, we cannot easily extract and place spirituality in human existence as, for example, a sphere of activity, or a biological or social area. It is, rather, a general category that relates to deeper layers concerning other existence spheres, as well as in penetrating them. According to Straś-Romanowska (1992), a fully developed personality takes place in the following dimensions: psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical, with the latter being associated with the individual’s cognitive openness reaching the essence of things. It manifests itself in crossing the borders of empirical reality (*transcendence*), which takes place within cognition as broadly understood (i.e. experiencing). Describing the areas that manifest spirituality (consciousness and self-awareness, understanding and wisdom, feelings, life’s aesthetic dimension, creativity, morality, religion, worldview, and faith), Socha (2000) states that people can realize spirituality, for instance, in their passion for reaching the truth, the desire to express beauty, the willingness to bring peace to humanity, and seeking a universal meaning in everyday life. Batson and Stocks (2004) claim that spirituality, as a response to existential questions, can relate to each need distinguished by Maslow in everyday situations, transcending them toward higher values. Smith (1971) points out that spirituality is not a slice of life, but its deeper dimension,

referring everything to “the sacred”. This can be experienced in any part of reality through the prism of “the sacred”: wonderment about nature, momentary great joy, felt love, a well-done task, and so on. According to Heszen (2003), spirituality is a disposition to transcendence, which is manifested specifically in observable activities and through inner experience. It can be directed to “I” (self-development), to “the other”, to the Absolute, and to the universe.

Another phenomenon that is comprised in the spiritual realm and has an integrating and direct impact on human personality and activity, is the meaning of life. Frankl wrote that man “does not exist in order to be, but to become” (Frankl, 1984, p. 44). A sign of one’s maturity is reaching the ability to find meaning, especially in circumstances marked by suffering, by *transcending* it, and to dedicate meaning to someone or something. An important concept in the integrating role of spirituality in human life is also “higher-meaning” (*uber-sinn*, Frankl, 1984) – the meaning in itself, the meaning that is given (Frankl, 1984; Baumeister, 1991). Also Obuchowski (1995) claims that people have a natural need for creating their own conceptions of life, in which they may fulfill themselves, develop personality, and exploit their own potential. Such conceptions are created through the reflection on what life is, what the world is and the man living in it, and what is really important in life. The author emphasizes the role of intentional human activity in discovering the meaning in life.

Numerous research results show that spirituality can be a resource that has a positive impact on health (Heszen, 2003, 2004). People involved spiritually and/or religiously have better general well-being than the non-involved (Schumaker, 1992). Lotufo Neto (1997), and Sousa et al. (2001) demonstrated the beneficial effect of spirituality and/or religion on mental, physical, and social functioning. A developed spirituality and/or religion are associated with a lower incidence of chronic illness and lower mortality (Ball et al., 2003). For example, people with low spiritual and/or religious commitment are 1.29 times more likely to die from cardiovascular problems than are those with high involvement (Mc Cullough et al., 2000). Oxman et al. (1995) found that people involved spiritually and/or religiously return to health faster and have better results in convalescence after severe illness or surgery.

Moreover, Levin & Taylor (1998) observed a positive relationship between spirituality and/or religion and mental health. A positive impact of spirituality and/or religion on mental health is indicated by 77% of research on the subject (Bergin, 1983; Levin & Chatters, 1998). People involved spiritually and/or religiously have fewer psychopathological symptoms than those less involved (Hannay, 1980). Spiritual and/or religious caregivers (nurses, assistants, social services professionals) of chronically sick patients enjoyed a better emotional state and were less prone to burnout than were the non-spiritual/non-religious caregivers (Rabins et al., 1990).

McCracken and Yang (2008) came to similar conclusions in a study of 100 physiotherapists. “Spiritual” factors, including acceptance values – awareness and self-awareness – and taking action associated with them, correlated with better health, greater vitality, lower levels of stress and burnout, and better social and emotional functioning. Other studies have shown that developed spirituality and/or religiosity correlated negatively with schizoid thinking in healthy subjects (Feldman & Rust, 1989) and positively with lower levels of depression (Koenig 1995; Levin et al., 1994; Hussain, 2011). According to Levin and Chatters (1998), and Nisbet et al. (2000), spirituality and/or religion is a protective factor against suicide, substance abuse, irresponsible behavior, mental suffering, and certain mental disorders.

Spiritual sensitivity and subjective quality of life in elderly people – the study

Phenomena under investigation: I assumed that “spiritual sensitivity” can enhance an individual’s effectiveness as it is a resource that helps to maintain subjectivity, facilitating an understanding of (often paradoxical) contemporary reality, self, and others, and creating a basis for dialogue in interpersonal relations and between social, national, cultural, and religious groups. Spiritual sensitivity is a disposition to experience spirituality, manifested in embracing the nature of things in a transcendent and final perspective (beyond empirical perspective), in moral sensitivity, and the ability to find meaning in paradoxical and limiting situations. It is a collection of related (specific) abilities, with a direct reference to everyday life, that are used in adaptive problem-solving and fulfilling one’s aims (especially in the moral field), which is necessary for full development in adulthood (Emmons, 2000). Among the capacities that make up spiritual sensitivity we can find: Holism and Harmony; Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning; Religiosity and Faith; Ethics and Moral Sensitivity (Conscience); Openness to Other People; Spiritual Involvement; and Aesthetic Sensitivity. These components are described in detail in Table 1 in the Annex.

“Spiritual sensitivity” is an original idea of understanding spirituality, although there are similar concepts in psychological literature: so-called *spiritual intelligence* (Fairholm, 1996; Gardner, 1999; Emmons, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2001; Sisk & Torrance, 2001; Wolman, 2001; McHovec, 2002; Wigglesworth, 2003; Vaughan, 2003; Hyde, 2004; Hense, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Korcz, 2006; Katz, 2006; Smith, 2006; Amram, 2007) and other conceptions relating the spiritual realm to everyday life and activity (Bradford, 1995; Hay, 1998; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001; Wilber, 2000; Socha, 2000; Heszen, 2003; Hill, 2009). Spiritual sensitivity, as an existential/spiritual resource, may be helpful:

- in everyday situations and relationships between people;
- in tragic, existential situations as a coping resource;

- in psychology, education, and pedagogy (Sisk & Torrance, 2001; Johnson, 2006) – the educational process involves not only acquiring knowledge, but also holistic education, education of values, and actions taken that form a mature personality;
- in the professional domain, in business environments and organizations (Zohar & Marshall, 2004; Wigglesworth, 2003; Korcz, 2006; Smith, 2006; Katz, 2007), for instance in choosing leaders and managers, and in managing human resources;
- in the social and political domain, and in religious life (Kriger, 1999; Wigglesworth, 2003; Hense, 2006; Amram, 2007; Sisk, 2008) – spiritual sensitivity and skills are essential for being an effective social or religious leader, facilitator, coach, and spiritual adviser.

In this study, spiritual sensitivity was the independent variable. The dependent variable was quality of life. It is “a generalized attitude to one’s own mode or life (i.e. to the way in which a person realizes his/her values and meets his/her needs), in the four existential dimensions: psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical”. The definitions of life quality and its spheres, according to a multidimensional human being (Straś-Romanowska, 1992) are given in Table 2 in the Annex.

Quantitative phase of the study

Aim, research questions and hypotheses: In my study I investigated the relationship between spiritual resources (*spiritual sensitivity*) and quality of life in a specific population – people in late adulthood (aged 60+), facing modern world challenges – its opportunities as well as threats. This is the age group for which the question of the contemporary social, cultural and economic conditions seems to be as important as for adolescents. In the case of the latter, a concept has been developed which shows a relationship between the modern cultural context and psychological development (*emerging adulthood* – Arnett, 2000, 2002). But how do the circumstances of the modern world affect seniors’ quality of life: in its global dimension and in the psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical areas? Do they see a place for themselves in the current reality? Do they see chances for themselves to implement their developmental potential? Do the spiritual resources help them to achieve this goal?

Late adulthood is sometimes defined as a stressful stage (due to the multitude of concurrent changes to which the subject struggles to adapt). In the *theory of stress of aging*, Neugarten, Tobin and Havighurst (1968) emphasize that seniors are exposed to numerous critical events – losses (losing one’s health, job and social position after retirement, the death of a spouse or friends) and related negative emotions, to which they have to constantly re-adapt. The continuous need for re-adaptation is a secondary stres-

sor. Moreover, there is a specific susceptibility to stress that increases with age, which is associated not only with sudden, difficult events, but with having to continuously struggle with the petty limitations of everyday life (Straś-Romanowska, 2011). Uchnast (1998, p. 1) writes: “Human existence [...], its dynamic aspect [is expressed] in the ability to go beyond the current state, to develop and become a fully-functioning personality. The dynamics of this self-direction reveals itself — inter other things — in the aspiration for differentiating and perfecting the forms of relationship with the world, creating the world of meanings of one’s own, realizing one’s potentialities to act in a free, rational, effective and social manner”. These words also apply to seniors, and old age is often seen as the time to obtain a fully-functioning personality. Seniors adapting Effectively can be achieved through: accepting the inevitability of aging and its resulting constraints; accepting life’s transience and its approaching end; adapting one’s lifestyle to the new conditions; perceiving the positive aspects of one’s own situation; adopting a creative attitude; and focusing selectively on what is important in life and what gives it meaning. Poor adaptation manifests itself in self-isolation, misanthropy, apathy, and negative emotions, such as hostility toward the world, anxiety, and guilt (Bromley, 1969). An elderly person can adopt one of the following functioning styles: adapted active, adapted passive, adapted defensive, and misfit (Reichard, Livson, & Petersen, 1962; Neugarten, Tobin, & Havighurst, 1968; Stuart-Hamilton, 2006). These styles are described in Table 3 in the Annex.

Today, the following are defined as resources for coping with stress in late adulthood: philosophical attitude, affirmation of fate, wisdom, and religiousness (Straś-Romanowska, 2011). Zych (2014) wrote: “The last task in life in the old age, I think, is to achieve reconciliation with oneself (that is, with the new image of oneself, with the loss of beauty, attractiveness, and with the decrease in physical fitness and intellectual capacity) and with the whole world” (p. 354). As the author observes further: “The most important gift of old age is life itself and its meaning, and maybe redefining the meaning of our existence, or giving life a new meaning” (p. 351). Looking at the classic psychological conceptions, Jung (1968, 1995) wrote about “the transcendent function”, the “pursuit of self” and the characteristic return toward one’s own interior in life’s second half. Erikson (1963, 1968) drew the reader’s attention to the role of life balance and emphasized the virtue of wisdom revealed in late adulthood due to positively solving the developmental dilemma that integrates the ego vs. despair. Kohlberg (1981, 1984) and Fowler (1981, 1984) pointed to the possibility for achieving moral and religious heights at this stage.

Therefore, as part of my study, I looked for answers to the following questions:

- Are existential/spiritual resources (spiritual sensitivity) conducive to high quality of life (in its global dimension and in the psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical areas) in the elderly people living in the modern world?

- Do existential/spiritual resources help seniors to cope with the dynamic, fluid and unpredictable conditions of the modern world?

Hypotheses. There were two main hypotheses about the variables described above and the correlations between them.

1. There is a relationship between spiritual sensitivity and quality of life in elderly adults:
 - A developed, high spiritual sensitivity is beneficial for high subjective life quality.
 - A low level of spiritual sensitivity is accompanied by a poor subjective life quality.
2. There is a relationship between spiritual sensitivity and the way in which seniors cope under modern world conditions:
 - Developed spiritual sensitivity favors efficient coping under modern world conditions, taking chances offered by contemporary reality, and adaptation in general (consistent with the Adapted active and Adapted passive styles).
 - Low spiritual sensitivity is associated with poor functioning (consistent with the Adapted defensive and Misfit styles) under contemporary world conditions, and with succumbing to modernity's negative effects.

Research methods. To explore spiritual sensitivity, the Spiritual Sensitivity Inventory (SSI) (Straś-Romanowska, Kowal, & Kapala, 2013) was used. The method was constructed in the course of my own research on spiritual sensitivity and its structure (for more details, see Straś-Romanowska, Kowal, & Kapala, "Spiritual Sensitivity Inventory (SSI). The construction process and method validation", in press). The measure is designed to diagnose spiritual sensitivity as a general factor and its constituent abilities. It is an inventory – it contains items that consist of claims rather than questions. This method is based on self-report activity, by referring to the indicators available to introspection (Fiske, 1971, after: Paluchowski, 2007). Thanks to the objectification of responses, the inventory provides quantitative results with appropriate psychometric properties (they are reliable, accurate, and normalizable). Although the inventory is based on self-reports, it meets the criteria for psychological tests set out in the *APA Standards* (Hornowska, 2001; Zawadzki, 2006). The inventory comprises 56 items, the summarized results of which form the overall score.

This process allows us to measure the intensity of spiritual sensitivity and to distinguish, within the inventory, the items that make up the seven scales measuring the spiritual sensitivity components (Holism and Harmony; Wisdom, Awareness, Meaning; Religiosity and Faith; Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience; Openness to Other People; Spiritual Commitment; and Aesthetic Sensitivity). In keeping with the standards set for the questionnaire construction, the inventory features instructions for use by the subject, explaining

how to respond to the claims. This relies on selecting one among several answers possible, without intermediate options, expressed on a numerical scale ranging from 1 to 4 (1 – *strongly disagree*, 2 – *somewhat disagree*, 3 – *somewhat agree*, 4 – *strongly agree*). A multi-categorical four-point scale with so-called “forced choice” excludes the possibility of mechanical “acceptance” or “denial”. The inventory’s individual items describe heterogeneous behavioral forms in different situations and operationalize behavior – that is, they indicate individual spiritual sensitivity components. Inventory items include: a description of reaction (internal and external); a description of personal attributes; a description of interests and expectations; and a description of attitudes and beliefs (Angleitner & Riemann, 1991). The test sheet is given in the Annex.

To measure subjective life quality of life, the Quality of Life Questionnaire (Straś-Romanowska, Oleszkowicz, & Frąckowiak, 2004) was used. This method is based on a multi-dimensional human being by Straś-Romanowska (1992), and in keeping with this theory, it consists of four scales describing the four existential spheres: psycho-physical, psychosocial, subjective, and metaphysical. The questionnaire comprises 60 items, the summarized results of which form the overall life quality score. The tool features items that can be selected to make up the scales measuring the quality of life. The inventory contains instructions for use. The subjects respond to the claims by selecting one from among several options possible, without intermediate options, expressed as a numerical scale from 1 to 4 (1 – *strongly disagree*, 2 – *somewhat disagree*, 3 – *somewhat agree*, 4 – *strongly agree*). As is the case with the SSI, a multi-categorical four-point scale with forced choice excludes mechanical “acceptance” or “denial”. The test sheet is attached in the Annex.

Research sample and procedure. The study was conducted among a population of 522 randomly selected seniors (aged 60+) from different regions in Poland. Their demographics varied in terms of age, gender, educational level, socioeconomic status, and religious creed. They were divided into two groups as called for by WHO (Nowicka, 2006; Szarota, 2002):

- group I: subjects in early old age – aged between 60 and 74 years, $n = 266$;
- group II: subjects in middle old age – aged between 75 and 89 years, and long-lived subjects – aged 90 years and more, $n = 256$. It was decided to combine both age categories due to the limited availability of long-lived individuals, especially in good mental condition.

The procedure consisted of two phases:

- a) Phase I: **quantitative phase**, in which the correlated variables were measured. The data were collected twice (in June and July 2015, with 261 subjects in each month). Respondents had been previously informed about the study’s purpose and proce-

dures and about possibly becoming involved in the study's second part – that is, in the narrative interviews. The subjects filled out questionnaires individually or in groups – in their homes or institutions (e.g. community centers, local and parish senior clubs). Statistical analyses were performed for the two groups (I and II) together and separately. The results obtained were compared with the scores received by a group of young adults (aged 18–35, $n = 278$) in a previous study.

- b) Phase II: **narrative interviews** (performed and analyzed in accordance with the procedures proposed by Schutze, 1980, after: Prawda, 1989) conducted in August 2015 among 31 seniors with extremely high ($x + 2SD$; group 1) and extremely low ($x - 2SD$; group 2) results on both variables. The aim of the interviews was to find out how spiritual resources (spiritual sensitivity and its components) affected the quality of life experiences of older people (the Annex provides questions for the interview). The interviews were followed by comparative narrative analyses, which were made with reference to a) the form, b) the content, and c) the presence of spiritual sensitivity indicators.

Results of the study's quantitative phase. The interrelationship was examined between quality of life (in its global dimension and in the psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical spheres) and spiritual sensitivity (global and its components: Holism and Harmony; Wisdom, Awareness, Meaning; Religiosity and Faith; Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience; Openness to Other People; Spiritual Commitment; and Aesthetic Sensitivity). The detailed results are presented in Tables 4-8 in the Annex. The Pearson Coefficient was used to estimate the relationship between the variables. The variables distributions normality had previously been checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The asterisk (*) marks statistically significant correlations.

The results confirmed the hypothesis that there is a strong, positive correlation between quality of life (both global and in particular spheres) and spiritual sensitivity (and its components), ranging between 0.44–0.72. Among life quality, the weakest link with spiritual sensitivity was found in the psycho-physical sphere. In the whole sample, and in the groups distinguished within it, correlations obtained average values. This does not mean that spirituality is not at all associated with physicality. Such a thesis would be disproved research that showed a positive spirituality impact on health (Frankl, 2009; Hill & Pargament, 2000; Idler & Kasl, 1997; Musick, 1996; Thoresen et al., 2001; Powell et al., 2003; Plante & Sherman, 2001). Such a correlation exists, but was rather low to medium, ranging between 0.26 and 0.57. Not surprisingly, the strongest correlation between spiritual sensitivity and quality of life was found for the metaphysical sphere, ranging between 0.60 and 0.79. The relationship between spiritual sensitivity and the psycho-social and subjective spheres were similarly strong – 0.40–0.67 and 0.38–0.70, respectively.

The relationships between spiritual sensitivity and quality of life in different dimensions had similar strengths. Also, the pattern, which turned out to be essential for quality of life, unvaried no matter which sphere was considered. The components that proved to be most important for quality of life were: Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience; Wisdom, Awareness, Meaning; and Spiritual Commitment. They formed the “core of spiritual sensitivity”, or in other words, these components reached the highest correlation with the overall spiritual sensitivity score.

Data analysis also included comparing the results in particular age groups. The seniors’ results in the two groups were compared with each other. In addition, seniors’ results taken together were confronted with the scores received by young adults (data collected in a previous study). Statistical significance of differences between the groups was tested. The distributions of analyzed variables checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test turned out to be normal, and the variances were homogeneous. The parametric t-student test was used for independent measurements to verify the significance of differences. Tables 9 to 11 in the Annex present the details of those comparisons, taking into account significant differences (marked with an asterisk).

An interesting tendency was found, after dividing the sample into age groups, one which – developmentally – testifies to the fact that spiritual sensitivity to quality of life increases with age. However, it must be borne in mind that this is a cross-sectional study, not a longitudinal one. For this reason, there can also be another explanation of these results, namely, that the generations differ in their quality of life and spiritual sensitivity.

These results defy common stereotypes. The eldest subjects received the highest global quality of life scores. It also turned out that there were no significant differences between the age groups psycho-physically. Whereas all the three groups – the youngest, middle, and oldest – comprised both healthy individuals as well as those suffering from chronic diseases, these symptoms were more frequent among the elderly. However, this did not significantly affect their life quality. This result confirms the fact that well-being depends only to a certain extent on objective living conditions (described by such variables as gender, income, and education, which together explain 10% of the variance in well-being), and more so on the subjective way in which an individual perceives them, while also depending on standards/reference groups (e.g. Diener, 1984). One’s health is a better predictor of life satisfaction than the objective condition of the body as assessed by a physician (Palmore, 1981), and perceived social interaction is more strongly associated with happiness than the number of friends one has (George, 1990; Gibson, 1990). Also, people may or may not be satisfied with their income, depending on the group which they compare themselves to (Diener, 1984). As far as the remaining life quality areas are concerned, there was no surprise – in the psycho-social and subjective

spheres, the older the subjects were, the higher their results were. Metaphysically, there was a similar pattern concerning global quality of life – the oldest subjects differed significantly from the rest of the sample and received the highest scores. The data described above allows for drawing the following conclusions: a) the older people become (thanks to their abilities that make up spiritual sensitivity), the more they are reconciled with the way in which they live; or b) the older generation appreciates their lives and what they have to a greater extent, than does the younger generation.

My study also revealed differences with respect to spiritual sensitivity, relative to a respondent's age. Tornstam (2005) wrote that late adulthood is the stage for redefining how one perceives time, space, life and death, transcending the ego, departing from what is physical and material, and for spending more time on internal activity, including existential contemplation. The results confirm these characteristics, drawing a specific pattern of change in spiritual sensitivity and its component as one ages. The results obtained are highest in the oldest group and differ significantly from the results in the younger groups. This finding is consistent with the generally accepted thesis that existential wisdom, commitment to values, and religiosity increase with age due to the accumulation of life experiences and growing self-reflection (e.g. Baltes, 1990; cf. Trempała, 2011).

Qualitative phase of the study – the narrative interviews

The second phase of the study was qualitative, in which brief narrative interviews with selected subjects were conducted. The examined seniors formed two groups: group 1 comprised subjects with extremely high scores in life quality and spiritual sensitivity; and group 2 was formed by subjects with extremely low levels in both variables.

Purpose of the qualitative phase and research questions. This research was aimed at improving knowledge about experienced individual relationships between quality of life and spiritual sensitivity. The interviews – the narrative's emotional climate, its everyday descriptive functions, activities and relations with the world and others – could also claim to reveal how elderly people function.

Research questions. There were twelve questions put forth:

1. What characterizes the seniors' life experience with high life quality and high spiritual sensitivity, and seniors with low life quality and low spiritual sensitivity?
2. Do the elderly with high life quality and high spiritual sensitivity perceive their storytelling manner about life's experiences differently when compared to those with low life quality and low spiritual sensitivity?

3. What kind of experiences are considered as “significant life experiences” by the seniors representing the two groups? How do they evaluate and interpret them?
4. Do, and in what way, significant life experiences affect one’s future life and its perceived quality (global and in the particular spheres)?
5. What kind of people/meetings/relationships have an impact on the further life of the surveyed elderly adults (a question about their “significant others”)?
6. In what way do subjects from both groups deal with difficult/tragic life events?
7. What kind of events (causes) induce a person to take the path of spiritual development?
8. What are the purposes (what are the people from both groups looking for) for taking the path of spiritual development?
9. What are the subjects’ key values, needs and goals in life from both groups?
10. What are the respondents’ main commitments from both groups?
11. What is the philosophy and the leading idea of life in the two groups?
12. What are the benefits and psychological costs involved in spiritual sensitivity development?

Research method. Because space is limited, I do not describe the research method in detail. The narrative interviews were based on the Shutze procedure (Shutze, 1980, after Prawda, 1989). After the interviews, a comparative analysis of the narratives was performed on a) the textual form or structure, b) the content and its main motives, and c) the presence of spiritual sensitivity indicators.

Research sample. Interviews were collected from 31 seniors who received high ($x + SD$ and $x + 2SD$) and low ($x - SD$ and $x - 2SD$) results in the two tested variables – quality of life and spiritual sensitivity. They formed Group 1 and Group 2, respectively.

Comparison of narrative interviews in both groups

The interviews’ structural and content analyses revealed a wealth of spiritual sensitivity indicators. They also showed that both groups perceived and interpreted reality differently, differed in their own place in the world, their lot, and their relations with the world and others. What were the main differences?

Language. Group 1 differed from Group 2 in terms of narrative liquidity, their length and complexity, and the degree of conventional phraseology. Stories in Group 1 were more fluent, characterized by longer sentences, a greater degree of complexity, unconventional

and creative language, and more frequent use of metaphors, comparisons, and linguistic embellishments. Narratives in Group 2 had less literary quality, were less colorful, mostly concrete, consisting of short sentences, and were expressed through simple, uncomplicated, everyday language.

Narrative structure and content. The main feature distinguishing the narratives from both groups was Group 1's deeper level of analysis of their own biographies and a greater ease in reaching their own feelings and experiences, which, in turn, determined the narratives' proportions and their structure. Table 12 in the Annex shows differences between narrations of seniors from both groups in greater detail.

Further analysis revealed that regularities in constructing the biographies groups can be closely related to the level of spiritual sensitivity (and its components). As was mentioned earlier, respondents in Group 1 had higher spiritual sensitivity levels than did those in Group 2. The spiritual sensitivity components that seem of key importance for the differences in the narratives' structure primarily include: Wisdom, Awareness, Meaning, and – to a lesser extent – Holism and Harmony, and Aesthetic Sensitivity. Wisdom, consciousness and self-consciousness, reflexivity, the ability to draw conclusions, the ability to deeply understand existential questions, holistically perceived reality, the metaphorical perception of reality, the multi-level perception of reality (the material world/ the mental phenomena world /the spiritual phenomena world), the ability to organize experience in relation to a sphere of values, and the ability to see beauty – all these narrow skills characterizing spiritual sensitivity were reflected in the content of the narratives, and shaped their form. The seniors in Group 1 were more conscious and self-conscious, reflective, intuitive and sensitive than those in Group 2, and therefore had greater ease in constructing a biography, and the process of on-the-fly construction was a very creative one. As the respondents themselves admitted, and observation of their behavior and emotions confirmed – this process pleased them. Table 13 in the Annex presents spiritual sensitivity indices found in the interviews.

In general, the Group 1 seniors presented narratives that seemed to be more consistent and monolithic. The emotions contained in them were more toned down, while the biographies represented a greater degree of reflection on various issues and featured closing and summarizing phases of narratives and threads, even though they may have contained more threads than did the narratives presented by the Group 2 seniors. This can serve as evidence that – to put it more directly – the seniors from Group 1 had a greater personal maturity level, and in accordance with the concept on which my research is based – that spiritual sensitivity plays an integrating role in life and has importance for quality of life.

Conclusions

My study shows that in relation to people in late adulthood who live in a dynamic, liquid, uncertain modern reality, there is a positive and strong relationship between existential/spiritual resources (spiritual sensitivity and its components) and quality of life (global and in the psycho-physical, psycho-social, subjective, and metaphysical spheres). The study confirmed that spiritual sensitivity can be treated as a resource for the efficient and fully successful functioning of seniors in everyday life and for dealing with difficult or traumatic events, which has an impact on life quality, and in the long term – also on health. Seniors showed stronger effects than young adults, which is consistent with the claim existing in psychology that spirituality is a strength of the elderly, the potential that they naturally need to develop and implement as part of life's developmental tasks. What was especially important for seniors' life quality was "the core" of spiritual sensitivity consisting of: Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience; Wisdom, Awareness, Meaning; and Spiritual Commitment. There is some evidence from other research showing that a high level achievement in these spiritually sensitive components is important in life, even in the earlier stages, whereas in late adulthood it is some kind of a culmination of personal growth, a favorable life balance. For example, in a study of 112,000 students from 236 US universities, more than half attributed great importance to spiritual commitment, and indicated the following as important life goals: achieving life wisdom, developing one's own life philosophy that ensures a sense of meaning, being involved in activities aimed at becoming a better and fully loving person, and in a broader sense – demonstrating actions that improve the general existential condition of human beings (Green & Noble, 2010).

Therefore, it can be concluded that in a subjective evaluation of life as good and valuable, the most important are the following:

- the feeling that our life is based on values, and our way of life is consistent with them and with our conscience;
- the feeling that our life is guided by objective meaning or higher-meaning (hierarchical objectives, hierarchical meanings);
- the feeling that values, goals, and meanings are implemented in a life with involvement, that is, in a required quantitative extent (amount of time) and qualitative extent (strength of feelings, emotions, and experiences). It is equivalent to feeling that one is able to effectively combine the sphere of higher values with everyday activities.

The qualitative phase – that is, the narrative interviews – allowed for a closer look at the relation, detected in the quantitative stage, between quality of life and spiritual sensitivity and its components in elderly people's life experiences. The basic, and perhaps also somewhat surprising conclusion is that the content of the seniors' life histories from the

two contrasting groups did not differ significantly from each other, which is to say that the narratives from both groups had similar threads, and that participants experienced similar events – good and bad. However, due to the dissimilar ability levels that spiritual sensitivity consists of, they experienced those events in different ways. And so, it turned out that life quality is affected not only by the type and number of life experiences, but primarily by how the experience is perceived, interpreted, and perhaps even organized (this would be the impact from feedback).

This is consistent with the claim that what is subjective is more important for individuals' life quality than what is objective (i.e. the objective life conditions). Thus, seniors with high spiritual sensitivity and quality of life levels: treated life experience reflectively and, for this reason, it was more cognitive; included more complex narratives, richer in descriptions, comparisons, metaphors and reflections (which were contained in theoretical and argumentative comments); revealed a wider and more diverse range of life events that were considered as significant for them (these were also positive events, not just negative ones, events promoting the subjective – not just objective – changes, or events that are more difficult to see, less obvious, and did not only include the spectacular ones); attributed greater importance for their life to many significant events thanks to their cognitive and spiritual abilities (e.g. to reflect, draw conclusions, look at events from a broader perspective, and perceive the symbolic meaning in events and situations); spoke about many significant people – not only from the closest family, but also strangers; coped with difficult / tragic life events better, due to cognitive and spiritual abilities; revealed in their narratives more goals, including long-term ones, pursued not only individually but also collectively, while their needs, goals, and values were more spiritual than material in nature; mentioned more commitments (related to work, family, social activities, and hobbies), and took additional actions focused on other people or ideas, in contrast to seniors from Group 2, who were more focused on themselves and their immediate surroundings; and had a coherent, structured and conscious philosophy of life. The subjects of both groups, distinguished based on the scores obtained in the SSI, clearly differed in the way they perceived their life, in how they lived it, and talked about it. In the narrative content and form, the seniors assigned to Group 1 revealed the categories associated with spiritual sensitivity and its components to a greater extent.

Another conclusion from this study's qualitative part is that highly developed spiritual resources favor how older people adapt towards the modern stressful, fluid, and unpredictable reality. Thanks to spiritual sensitivity, seniors gained a "protective umbrella" shielding them from harmful contemporary phenomena. Again – this does not mean that they escape this influence, but that they interpreted reality in a more positive way (i.e. accepting it wisely rather than in a mindless and uncritical fashion) and stayed

“internally free” from it. In contrast, seniors with low spiritual sensitivity levels showed more criticism and anxiety in perceiving, interpreting and talking about their lives, relations, and their own place in the modern world. It can be concluded that a high spiritual sensitivity level corresponds with the overall style of seniors’ functioning – Adapted active and Adapted passive, and a low spiritual sensitivity level is accompanied by symptoms of Adapted defensive and Misfit styles (Reichard, Livson, & Petersen, 1962; Neugarten, Tobin, & Havighurst, 1968; Stuart-Hamilton, 2006, after Straś-Romanowska, 2011).

Finally, although further studies are required to confirm these observations, analyzing the seniors’ interviews showed the key role played by subjectivity, which is particularly important in the fuzzy contemporary world. As Tyszka (2007) wrote, in the modern world, the system – comprising technology, economics, politics, mass media, and the entertainment industry – determines not only the necessary skills and attitudes of individuals, but it also “determines (...) individual needs and aspirations (...) meaning of life, creates (...) values. Human identity and existence are determined here by the standards of production and consumption (...). It is one of the most drastic attempts to restrict human subjectivity, and hence, his/her identity” (Tyszka, 2007, p. 172).

Is subjectivity really so important? Psychologists have no doubt that defining oneself as a conscious being who exists, experiences, and operates in an autonomous, intentional, and purposeful way is one of the fundamental aspirations of human beings: the main motive, which plays a regulatory and meaning-creating role in human life (Korzeniowski, 1983; Kořta, 1989; Straś-Romanowska, 1992; Sotwin, 2003). Uchnast (2002, p. 85- 86) writing about „the person” and personal experience, suggests an important role in the differentiation between experiencing oneself as the subject and as the object. This is connected paradoxically with increasing internal consistency. The full experience of one’s own existence (*sense of being*) expresses itself through the experience: “I am the one who can, among other things, experience myself as the subject and as the object of what happens”. Similarly, Karol Wojtyła wrote that the person is - both – subject and object of cognition and action for oneself, and one’s existence functions in two ways: by opening on the inside and opening to the outside (the experience: “*I am acting*” and “*Something is happening in me*”) (Wojtyła, 1985 after: Harciarek, 2008). The contemporary, modern world gives people a whole range of opportunities – for self-creation and self-realization. Advances in technology and knowledge allow people to live longer lives, but in the offer presented by the present day there is no guarantee of being a subject. Especially among older people, it is important not only to focus on the undisputed value of human existence and life expectancy (medicine and technology today can do a lot in this field), but also to focus on subjective life quality. Perhaps (it is worth checking this hypothesis in future studies), spiritual sensitivity helps older people to maintain

a subjective sense in the contemporary world, and also prevents them from objectifying others. In addition, this spiritual resource can, in both the micro (i.e. interpersonal) and macro dimensions, create a meta-level: common ground between culturally and religiously diverse communities, and – using the language of philosophic dialogue – to create the “reality of meeting” (Buber, 1992; Levinas, 2002). Meetings, which are so easy to arrange in the modern era because of technology (communication, the Internet) and the possibility of fast movement. But also the true meeting – where two people, despite individual differences, co-create a new reality and enrich each other. I will end the Conclusions part with a quote, which can serve to summarize the study presented here:

The road to unification [in the modern world] – the real way, the primary way, runs through every human being, through the definition, recognition and respect for the inalienable rights of individuals, societies and nations (...). Respect for the dignity of every human being is therefore a prerequisite for global fairness. (John Paul II, Message for the UN, after: Czachorowski, 2002)

Limitations and suggestions for future investigation

In general, the suggestion for future research is to further explore the relationship between the studied phenomena, the forms for manifesting spiritual sensitivity in how individuals live their lives, and the manner in which their lives are perceived and narrated. There is no denying that data from the interviews, including recurring themes, frequent threads, and respondents’ emphasizing different events, behavior, and values, all provide many new aspects of knowledge about spiritual sensitivity and quality of life.

The procedure’s disadvantage was that a relatively small number of interviews were conducted. I used a mixed analysis technique: 522 seniors were tested with respect to quality of life and spiritual sensitivity, and then used quantitative analysis on the subjects that showed extreme results – that is, low or high quality of life and spiritual sensitivity – and studied their cases qualitatively. This partly explains the relatively small sample in the narrative phase. In the future, researchers would be encouraged to use cross-selection. There was no such possibility in my study, because the respondents’ results with high quality of life were at least average on the spiritual sensitivity scale (although this situation was less common than the co-occurrence of either high or low outcomes on both the variables at the same time), but never low, and *vice versa*.

Also, the results show an interesting relationship between spiritual sensitivity and the seniors’ general activity (Reichard, Livson, & Petersen, 1962; Neugarten Tobin & Havighurst, 1968; after: Straś-Romanowska, 2011) they choose while living under modern world conditions. It can be interesting to explore in future studies – by using struc-

tured methods, such as the World-I Questionnaire (Senejko & Łoś, 2011) – how the spiritual sensitivity level corresponds with seniors' attitudes toward globalization.

In sum, the results obtained call for further empirical verification, although the developed method for measuring spiritual sensitivity (SSI) has good statistical parameters and the study brings answers to its research questions. Knowledge about the mutual relation between life quality and spiritual sensitivity provides a reply to part of the current and increasingly pressing questions about the place that values and spirituality have in the life of seniors living in postmodern reality.

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Annex

Table 1. *Definitions of spiritual sensitivity components.*

Holism and harmony	Manifests itself in the feeling of belonging to a greater whole (the universe, the cosmos, humanity, creation, etc.), being its unique part, a sense of unity with the greater whole, and awareness of the interaction between this whole and the „self“. A person can draw a deep inner peace, joy, a sense of security and meaning in life from the feeling of unity.
Wisdom-Awareness-Meaning	Refers to fundamental life questions, to what is important in life, but often uncertain. It comes rather from personal experience than from theoretical knowledge. It refers to the knowledge and ability to make judgments about the course of human life, its changes, existential conditions, the context of their existence in a dynamic perspective, and the relationships between them (Baltes 1990). It manifests itself in need and the ensuing quest to understand the essence of things, in asking questions about the meaning of phenomena and events, like „Why?“, „For what reason?“, „With what purpose?“ and in the ability to understand oneself and understand deep intuitive existential questions. It is based on not only using logic, but also on insight and intuition, therefore it requires acceptance of irrationality, uncertainty, relativity, diversity and contradictions in life.
Religiosity and Faith	Kind of personal involvement, resulting from a person's deep inner need and will, allowing one to relate common and special life events to „higher senses“ – to ultimate concerns (Tillich). It results in striving for consistency in a professed religion, in the principles of faith. Religion essence and faith is the belief in the existence of God and His presence in human life, and the desire to build a personal relationship with Him. Religion and faith can manifest itself in the quest to learn the truths of faith, exploring sacred writings/religious knowledge, practicing private and organized spirituality, and participating in community life. Religion and faith can also be regarded as resources used to cope with difficult life events.
Moral Ethical Sensitivity (conscience)	Manifests itself in the possession of an organized, hierarchical value system to organize our experience, which allows a person to respond to life's problems in its many aspects – from everyday events to dramatic life decisions. Practically, it results in the ability to distinguish between good and evil, in sensitivity to values, their conscious choice and their pursuit in daily life. It leads to self improvement and personal development, and more generally – to life in accordance with our own conscience.
Openness to Other People	It is an attitude resulting from ethical sensitivity. In practice it manifests itself in understanding and showing respect for other people, skill in forgiveness, compassion and empathy, in perceiving others' needs, in taking action to assist and realize people's well-being, in showing responsibility for others, respect for the principles of social justice and disagreement to do harm to others.
Spiritual Commitment	Understood as a two-dimensional factor. It is expressed both quantitatively – in the amount of time spent on activities relating to implementing and developing our own spirituality, as well as qualitatively – in the intense feelings and sensations associated with operations serving to realize and develop spirituality. The result of spiritual commitment is effective interaction between the spiritual realm of higher values and everyday actions.
Aesthetic Sensitivity	It is expressed in possessing so-called good taste and a sense of beauty – seeing it around us, in needing to have beauty in the closest surroundings, in seeking the aesthetic. A person with this sensitivity is characterized by finesse and sophistication in meeting the needs from the lowest – biological, through mental, to the highest – spiritual (Socha, 2000).

Source: own materials

Table 2. *Definitions of subjective quality of life.*

Psycho-physical sphere	It is widely understood as the human corporeality and biological urges sphere. It consists of genetic, congenital, independent-of-man factors: physical appearance, temperament, intellectual ability, vitality. The biological sphere concerns the survival of the individual (and species) – the preservation of life and health. Biological imbalances can be a disease.
Psycho-social sphere	The human world is always a social world. Man in the course of socialization is learning new social roles, and fulfilling environmental expectations. In return he obtains a sense of belonging, security/safety, social identity. Man's social adaptation helps him find his place in the community, promotes establishing and maintaining relationships with other people. It dismisses loneliness, and allows man to experience acceptance and self-esteem.
Subjective sphere	It expresses itself in emphasizing individuality and independence, in extracting oneself from the social background. Human subjectivity is associated with taking responsibility for one's own life and decisions. Man has free choice, he is aiming for self-realization and tries to be authentic (to live in harmony with himself). This is manifested in achieving personal goals, and in realizing one's interests and passions.
Metaphysical sphere	It is man's spirituality. It is associated with accepting and implementing universal, timeless values, such as goodness, love, truth, and beauty. It is identified with religious experiences and with searching for meaning in life. In spirituality man experiences his own existence as going beyond "here and now" and he feels a part of the universe. Developing the metaphysical sphere promotes moral responsibility and behavior which are in accordance with one's own conscience.

Own description based on Straś-Romanowska, Oleszkowicz, Frąckowiak(2004).

Table 3. *The everyday functioning styles of elderly people.*

Adapted active	the person remains independent, actively pursues their goals, maintains good, satisfactory relationships with others, successfully copes with the challenges of daily life
Adapted passive	the person is dependent, prefers peace and quiet, is concentrated on the inner experience, withdraws from active social life and career, but accepts the life situation;
Adapted defensive	the person copes with the stress of aging helped by replacement activities, and is sometimes hyperactive, rigorous, and rigidly adheres to standards. Such a person is not very reflective and self-sufficient, and avoids the help of others;
Misfit style	the person manifests aggression and open or overt rebellion against their senility. The person can direct the hostility toward others and the world around (also becoming suspicious, spiteful and bitter), or toward themselves (auto-agression).

Own description based on Straś-Romanowska [in:] Trempała (2011).

Table 4. *Correlations of the global sense of life quality and spiritual sensitivity*

Variable	Correlation	p
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	0.72 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	0.60 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	0.65 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	0.44 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	0.71 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	0.65 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	0.67 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.64 *	< 0.001

Table 5. *Correlations of life quality in the psycho-physical sphere and spiritual sensitivity*

Variable	Correlation	p
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	0.54 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	0.46 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	0.53 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	0.26 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	0.57 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	0.55 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	0.52 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.52 *	< 0.001

Table 6. *Correlations of life quality in the psycho-social sphere and spiritual sensitivity*

Variable	Correlation	p
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	0.67 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	0.59 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	0.59 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	0.40 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	0.66 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	0.63 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	0.63 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.63 *	< 0.001

Table 7. *Correlations of life quality in the subjective sphere and spiritual sensitivity*

Variable	Correlation	p
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	0.67 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	0.56 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	0.64 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	0.38 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	0.70 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	0.64 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	0.65 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.63 *	< 0.001

Table 8. *Correlations of life quality in the metaphysical sphere and spiritual sensitivity*

Variables	Correlation	p
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	0.79 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	0.62 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	0.68 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	0.67 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	0.72 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	0.60 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	0.69 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.66 *	< 0.001

Table 9. *Comparison of young adults (from previous research) and the early-old-age adults groups with respect to the examined variables*

Variables	Young adults		Early-old-age adults		test	p
	m	SD	m	SD		
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	145.54	17.68	145.36	20.35	1.88	0.06
Holism and Harmony	16.01	2.08	16.44	2.11	1.72 *	0.09
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	27.18	3.65	26.49	3.36	1.88	0.06
Religiosity and Faith	20.08	7.34	20.13	8.92	0.05	0.96
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	28.96	2.13	29.03	3.14	0.22	0.83
Openness to Other people	26.85	3.65	26.68	3.47	-0.93	0.35
Spiritual Commitment	11.21	1.09	11.24	1.49	0.17	0.86
Aesthetic Sensitivity	15.26	2.57	15.35	2.55	-0.19	0.85
Quality of life – Global	164.18	16.34	170.62	22.40	1.58	0.11
Psycho-physical sphere	42.49	5.04	42.70	6.62	-1.40	0.16
Psycho-social Sphere	40.28	4.66	42.52	6.22	3.55 *	< 0.001
Subjective sphere	40.28	4.48	42.80	5.91	3.92 *	< 0.001
Metaphysical sphere	41.14	4.07	42.60	5.41	0.80	0.43

Table 10. *Comparison of early-old-age adults, and middle-old-age and long-lived adults with respect to the examined variables*

Variables	early-old-age adults		middle-old-age and long-lived adults		test	p
	m	SD	m	SD		
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	145.36	20.35	164.42	22.03	-6.93 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	16.44	2.11	17.90	1.66	-6.20 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	26.49	3.36	29.43	4.31	-5.55 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	20.13	8.92	26.55	8.96	-5.90 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	29.03	3.14	31.69	4.32	-5.10 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	26.68	3.47	29.06	3.82	-5.19 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	11.24	1.49	12.47	1.79	-6.20 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	15.35	2.55	17.32	2.73	-5.67 *	< 0.001
Quality of life – Global	170.62	22.40	183.18	26.08	-4.29 *	< 0.001
Psycho-physical sphere	42.70	6.62	43.23	7.75	0.16	0.87
Psycho-social Sphere	42.52	6.22	46.74	6.32	-5.52 *	< 0.001
Subjective sphere	42.80	5.91	46.47	7.04	-4.71 *	< 0.001
Metaphysical sphere	42.60	5.41	46.74	6.41	-5.80 *	< 0.001

Table 11. *Comparison of young adults (from previous research) and middle-old-age and long-lived adults with respect to the examined variables*

Variables	Young adults		Middle-old-age and long-lived adults		test	p
	m	SD	m	SD		
Spiritual Sensitivity – overall result	145.54	17.68	164.42	22.03	−6.51 *	< 0.001
Holism and Harmony	16.01	2.08	17.90	1.66	−7.26 *	< 0.001
Wisdom, Awareness, and Meaning	27.18	3.65	29.43	4.31	−3.80 *	< 0.001
Religiosity and Faith	20.08	7.34	26.55	8.96	6.17 *	< 0.001
Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Conscience	28.96	2.13	31.69	4.32	−4.87 *	< 0.001
Openness to Other people	26.85	3.65	29.06	3.82	−3.98 *	< 0.001
Spiritual Commitment	11.21	1.09	12.47	1.79	6.66 *	< 0.001
Aesthetic Sensitivity	15.26	2.57	17.32	2.73	−5.39 *	< 0.001
Quality of life – Global	164.18	16.34	183.18	26.08	−4.14 *	< 0.001
Psycho-physical sphere	42.49	5.04	43.23	7.75	0.24	0.81
Psycho-social Sphere	40.28	4.66	46.74	6.32	−8.41 *	< 0.001
Subjective sphere	40.28	4.48	46.47	7.04	−6.26 *	< 0.001
Metaphysical sphere	41.14	4.07	46.74	6.41	−6.59 *	< 0.001

Table 12. *Comparison of respondents' narratives in terms of structural characteristics*

Trait	Group 1	Group 2
Ease in reaching one's own feelings and experiences	Good	Poor
Level of biography length	High	Low
Temporal order	Lesser, but greater flexibility	Greater but inflexible
Liquidity in moving from the general to a detailed description of events	Great	Small
Current reflection on described facts	Present/Many	Absent/Few
Metaphors	Many	Few
Descriptions	Many	Few
Confronting the actual facts with one's inner world	Frequent	Rare
The problem of narrative potential	Absent	Frequent
Number of sequences	Greater	Smaller
Changes of framework	Frequent	Rare
„I" perspective	Rare	Almost exclusive
Demarcation of the narrative entity and the entity of events	Frequent	Rare
Argumentative and theoretical comments	Frequent	Rare
Structures in the background	Frequent	Rare
Overrides	Rare	Frequent
Biographical action schemes	Frequent	Rare
Institutional patterns	Rare	Frequent
Trajectories	Equally frequent	Equally frequent

Trait	Group 1	Group 2
Metamorphosis	Frequent	Rare
Coda	Frequent	Rare
<i>Dasein</i> fullness dimension <i>umwelt</i> , <i>mitwelt</i> and <i>eigenwelt</i>	Present	Absent

Table 13. *Comparison of the narratives provided by the respondents from both groups in terms of spiritual sensitivity indices*

Trait	Group 1	Group 2
Acceptance of one's own life	Full	Partial/absent
Ability to enjoy life's little things	Present	Absent
Inner peace, distance to life	Present	Absent
Finding meaning of life and events	Present	Absent
Self-awareness	Great	Small
Awareness of one's own spirituality	Present	Absent
Distinction between spirituality and religiosity	Present	Absent
Spiritual experiences	Present	Absent
Holistic feelings	Present	Absent
A sense of wonder	Present	Absent
Delight	Present	Absent
Aesthetic Sensitivity	Present	Absent
A general interest in the world	Great	Small
Actions	Scheduled, one's own long-term tasks	Flowing with the tide of events Short-term tasks imposed by others
Other interests /hobby	Many	Few
Commitment	Great	Small
Significant others	Many, people from family and strangers	Few, often limited to the closest relations
Focus on the self	Small	Big
Focus on others	Great	Small
Social Involvement	Great	Small
Forgiveness	Present	Absent
Conscience	Conscious	Unconscious
Hope	Present	Absent
Relating events to the horizon of universal values	Present	Absent
Use of previous experiences, conclusions	Present	Present to a smaller extent
Reflection	Great	Small
Questions about existential issues	Frequent	Rare
Coping with trauma	Good	Poor
Degree of internal integration	Great	Smaller

Tables 4-13 source: own materials

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SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY INVENTORY

Test data (fill in): __ / __ / ____	Birth data (fill in): __ / __ / ____	Age (fill in): _____
e-mail / phone/ mobile number (fill in): _____		Sex (check): K M
Educational level		Check:
(a) primary		
(b) secondary		
(c) higher (bachelor / engineer / Master)		
(d) more than higher		
(e) other (fill-in):		
Religion / creed		Check:
(a) atheism		
(b) no religious affiliation or non-practicing person		
(c) Catholic		
(d) Protestant		
(e) Orthodox		
(f) Judaism		
(g) Islam		
(h) Buddhism		
(i) Hinduism or Hare-Kriszna		
(j) Other (fill in):		

Please carefully fill in all the boxes above, then read the instruction, which are on the next page...

INSTRUCTIONS:

The tool you have in front of you is the Spiritual Sensitivity Inventory. It contains 56 numbered statements which relate to your attitude to yourself, to other people, to life, and to values. Read all the claims and determine how much each of them applies accurately to you.

The survey is completely anonymous; it is used only for research/scientific purposes. There are no bad or good answers, and it is important that your answers were consistent with what you feel while reading the inventory claims. Please respond in accordance with your ordinary (not: unique) behavior.

For each statement, you should respond by selecting one of four possible answers:

1 – strongly disagree

2 – somewhat disagree

3 – somewhat agree

4 – strongly agree

The time for answering is unlimited. Consider each answer, and after finishing filling in the Inventory, make sure that no claim was missed.

1	I strive for spiritual development.	1 2 3 4
2	I'm moved by and admire works of art.	1 2 3 4
3	I often wonder about the meaning of different events.	1 2 3 4
4	I'm often moved by someone else's hard luck.	1 2 3 4
5	Religious orders are guideposts which I try to follow in my life.	1 2 3 4
6	My life is a whole spiritual unity with other people.	1 2 3 4
7	My daily activities are accompanied by a sense of realization of universal values (truth, goodness, beauty, etc.)	1 2 3 4
8	There is a person representing moral authority to me.	1 2 3 4
9	I believe that the beauty of the world reveals the Divine.	1 2 3 4
10	I have a sense of community and responsibility towards fellow believers.	1 2 3 4
11	When I think about my life and the world, I feel that I am in the right place.	1 2 3 4
12	I'm certain that nothing happens by accident in my life.	1 2 3 4
13	I feel responsible for others.	1 2 3 4
14	Thanks to faith I see the meaning of what happens to me in my life.	1 2 3 4
15	I try to organize my time so that I can find a moment to realize spiritual needs on every day basis.	1 2 3 4
16	The most important in my life is to be in accordance with my conscience.	1 2 3 4

17	I get involved in activities for the sake of others.	1 2 3 4
18	I'm impressed by the beauty and harmony of the world.	1 2 3 4
19	I believe in the existence of the Supreme Being who is the ultimate ruler of the universe.	1 2 3 4
20	I try to find something positive in every aspect of my life.	1 2 3 4
21	There are times when I have a sense of unity with other people and the world.	1 2 3 4
22	I try to deepen the knowledge concerning my faith/religion.	1 2 3 4
23	I accept that not everything in life is certain, predictable and rational.	1 2 3 4
24	I feel uncomfortable when, for some reason, I have to stay in unaesthetic (ugly, discordant) environment.	1 2 3 4
25	I try to live in harmony with the values I hold.	1 2 3 4
26	Despite difficulties and adversities, I feel grateful to fate, when I think about my life.	1 2 3 4
27	I realize myself in the love for another human being.	1 2 3 4
28	I believe that the Supreme Being is the cause of order and harmony.	1 2 3 4
29	I have a strong need to understand the meaning of what happens to me in my life.	1 2 3 4
30	I think that regardless of the circumstances we should be guided by the highest values.	1 2 3 4
31	I can see the inner beauty in other people.	1 2 3 4
32	I am aware that I multiply the good by helping others.	1 2 3 4
33	Despite various obstacles I consider myself a lucky man.	1 2 3 4
34	I think the feelings and intuition are an important complement to reason.	1 2 3 4
35	I'm guided by moral ethical principles in decision making.	1 2 3 4
36	I'm certain that doing good pays off.	1 2 3 4
37	Thanks to faith I can distance myself from what is going on in my life.	1 2 3 4
38	I believe that the spiritual path I had chosen will lead me to realise my goals.	1 2 3 4

1 – strongly disagree

2 – somewhat disagree

3 – somewhat agree

4 – strongly agree

39	My philosophy of life helps me deal with external influences.	1 2 3 4
40	I try to understand the motives of the people, even when in my opinion they do wrong.	1 2 3 4
41	Everything what I get involved in I take seriously and with due consideration.	1 2 3 4
42	I try to deeply understand of myself, people and world.	1 2 3 4
43	I think people are not inherently evil, even though they may sometimes err.	1 2 3 4
44	I experience the closeness of God every day.	1 2 3 4
45	The values I hold guided all my life.	1 2 3 4
46	What I see around me makes me sometimes feel disappointed but also encourages to do good.	1 2 3 4
47	I try to ensure agreement in my surroundings.	1 2 3 4
48	I am reconciled with what happened to me in my life.	1 2 3 4
49	I try to forgive those who hurt me, although it is sometimes difficult.	1 2 3 4
50	Prayer (meditation) resulting from internal needs is something important for me.	1 2 3 4
51	Moral principles facilitate and organize my life.	1 2 3 4
52	I'm often moved by listening to music.	1 2 3 4
53	I look for answers to questions about my life, my place in the world and the goals I want to (I should) achieve.	1 2 3 4
54	I feel compassion for the weak and suffering.	1 2 3 4
55	I actively participate in the life of the church/community to which I belong.	1 2 3 4
56	The values I hold and realise make me who I am.	1 2 3 4

1 – strongly disagree

2 – somewhat disagree

3 – somewhat agree

4 – strongly agree

Now check again that no claim has been left out... Thank You!

The key:

Holism and Harmony – 6, 11, 21, 26, 33, 47

Wisdom, Awareness, Meaning – 3, 12, 20, 23, 29, 34, 38, 42, 48, 53

Religiosity and Faith – 5, 10, 14, 19, 22, 28, 37, 44, 50, 55

Moral Ethical Sensitivity/Consciousness – 1, 8, 16, 25, 30, 35, 39, 46, 51, 56

Openness to Other People – 4, 13, 17, 27, 32, 36, 40, 43, 49, 54

Spiritual Commitment – 7, 15, 41, 45

Aesthetic Sensitivity – 2, 9, 18, 24, 31, 52

Sphere	1 HH	2 MŚS	3 RW	4 EMS	5 OD	6 Z	7 WE
Score							
Global score							

Instytut Psychologii
Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego

Maria Straś-Romanowska, Anna Oleszkowicz, Tomasz Frąckowiak

KWESTIONARIUSZ POCZUCIA JAKOŚCI ŻYCIA

Imię i nazwisko (lub kod osobowy):	Płeć: K M
Data badania:	Wiek:

Poniżej znajdują się stwierdzenia dotyczące różnych aspektów ludzkiego życia. Przy każdym z nich znajdują się cztery możliwe odpowiedzi. Proszę przeczytać każde stwierdzenie i zaznaczyć odpowiedź, która najtrafniej odnosi się do Pana/Pani.

Do każdego stwierdzenia proszę ustosunkować się, zaznaczając tylko jedną z czterech możliwych odpowiedzi:

1 – zdecydowanie nie zgadzam się

2 – raczej nie zgadzam się

3 – raczej zgadzam się

4 – zdecydowanie zgadzam się

1	Dolegliwości fizyczne przeszkadzają mi w codziennym życiu.	1 2 3 4
2	Są osoby, z którymi łączą mnie głębokie więzi.	1 2 3 4
3	Nie mam zainteresowań, którym poświęcałbym/łabym wiele czasu	1 2 3 4
4	Godzę się z tym, że nie wszystko zależy ode mnie.	1 2 3 4
5	Na ogół jestem energiczny/a, pełen/na werwy.	1 2 3 4
6	W moim życiu jest więcej sukcesów niż porażek.	1 2 3 4
7	Dokonując ważnych wyborów kieruję się przede wszystkim tym, co mówią inni ludzie.	1 2 3 4
8	Są rzeczy, które zachwycają mnie swoim pięknem.	1 2 3 4
9	Mam dobry sen.	1 2 3 4

10	Pasuję do ludzi, którzy mnie otaczają.	1 2 3 4
11	Mam poczucie, że odnalazłem/am swoje miejsce w życiu.	1 2 3 4
12	Współczuję ludziom, których spotyka nieszczęście.	1 2 3 4
13	Wolno mobilizuję się do wysiłku, tracąc dużo czasu na zabranie się do pracy.	1 2 3 4
14	W spornych sprawach rzadko decyduję się na kompromis.	1 2 3 4
15	Nawet małe rzeczy są dla mnie powodem do radości.	1 2 3 4
16	Wierzę, że nad tym co robię, czuwa siła wyższa.	1 2 3 4
17	W wolnych chwilach łatwo się odprężam, potrafię odpoczywać.	1 2 3 4
18	Są osoby, dla których jestem ważny/a.	1 2 3 4
19	Lubię to, co robię.	1 2 3 4
20	W moim życiu nic nie dzieje się przypadkowo.	1 2 3 4
21	Mam dobrą kondycję fizyczną.	1 2 3 4
22	Moje życie rodzinne jest satysfakcjonujące.	1 2 3 4
23	Ponoszę odpowiedzialność za swoje czyny.	1 2 3 4
24	Istnieją wartości, dzięki którym nawet w trudnych chwilach zachowuję nadzieję.	1 2 3 4
25	Nie mam problemów w życiu intymnym/seksualnym.	1 2 3 4
26	Ludzie mają szacunek dla tego, co robię na co dzień.	1 2 3 4
27	Mam w życiu do zrobienia coś ważnego.	1 2 3 4
28	Chciałbym/abym, aby zostało po mnie coś dobrego.	1 2 3 4
29	Na ogół czuję się zmęczony/a, wyczerpany/a, brak mi energii.	1 2 3 4
30	Często spotykam się z zyczliwością ze strony innych ludzi.	1 2 3 4
31	Moje życie w głównej mierze zależy ode mnie.	1 2 3 4

1 – zdecydowanie nie zgadzam się

2 – raczej nie zgadzam się

3 – raczej zgadzam się

4 – zdecydowanie zgadzam się

32	Mimo że na świecie jest wiele zła, jest też dużo dobra.	1 2 3 4
33	Często przebywam w szpitalu (jestem hospitalizowany/a).	1 2 3 4
34	Wiele znaczę wśród ludzi, którzy mnie otaczają.	1 2 3 4
35	Nie mam sprecyzowanych planów na przyszłość.	1 2 3 4
36	Rzadko rezygnuję z przyjemności w imię wartości wyższych	1 2 3 4
37	Często dokucza mi ból.	1 2 3 4
38	W razie kłopotów mogę liczyć tylko na siebie.	1 2 3 4
39	Zdobywanie nowych doświadczeń sprawia mi dużo radości.	1 2 3 4
40	Warto dążyć do tego, aby być coraz lepszym człowiekiem.	1 2 3 4
41	Mam dobry apetyt.	1 2 3 4
42	Czuję się samotny/a.	1 2 3 4
43	Mam jasny cel życiowy, w którego realizację jestem zaangażowany/a.	1 2 3 4
44	Trudność sprawia mi wybaczenie innym ludziom.	1 2 3 4
45	Lubię swój wygląd fizyczny.	1 2 3 4
46	Czuję się potrzebny/a innym ludziom.	1 2 3 4
47	Prawie zawsze mówię to, co myślę.	1 2 3 4
48	Wierzę, że moje życie nie kończy się wraz ze śmiercią.	1 2 3 4
49	Cieszę się dobrym zdrowiem.	1 2 3 4
50	Często popadam w konflikty z innymi ludźmi.	1 2 3 4
51	Podążam wybraną przez siebie drogą życia.	1 2 3 4
52	Mimo przeciwności losu uważam, że moje życie ma głęboki sens.	1 2 3 4
53	Choroba nie pozwala mi spokojnie patrzeć w przyszłość.	1 2 3 4

1 – zdecydowanie nie zgadzam się

2 – raczej nie zgadzam się

3 – raczej zgadzam się

4 – zdecydowanie zgadzam się

54	W moich kontaktach z innymi ludźmi często obecna jest walka i rywalizacja.	1 2 3 4
55	Akceptuję siebie takim, jakim jestem.	1 2 3 4
56	Skłonność do refleksji pomaga mi żyć.	1 2 3 4
57	Jestem aktywny/a fizycznie (np. uprawiam sport, gimnastykuję się, spaceruję).	1 2 3 4
58	Jestem w związku uczuciowym z bliską mi osobą.	1 2 3 4
59	Często robię coś wbrew sobie i później źle się z tym czuję.	1 2 3 4
60	Moje życie jest wartościowe, nawet jeśli nie wszystko układa (układało) się po mojej myśli.	1 2 3 4

1 – zdecydowanie nie zgadzam się

2 – raczej nie zgadzam się

3 – raczej zgadzam się

4 – zdecydowanie zgadzam się

KLUCZ DLA SFER:

Jakość życia w sferze **psychofizycznej**: 5, 9, 17, 21, 25, 41, 45, 49, 57 (punktacja wprost); 1, 13, 29, 33, 37, 53 (punktacja odwrotna).

Jakość życia w sferze **psychospołecznej**: 2, 6, 10, 18, 22, 26, 30, 34, 46, 58 (punktacja wprost); 14, 38, 42, 50, 54 (punktacja odwrotna).

Jakość życia w sferze **podmiotowej**: 11, 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 39, 43, 47, 51, 55 (punktacja wprost); 3, 7, 35, 59 (punktacja odwrotna).

Jakość życia w sferze **metafizycznej**: 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28, 32, 40, 48, 52, 56, 60 (punktacja wprost); 36, 44, (punktacja odwrotna).

Sfera	Psychofizyczna	Psychospołeczna	Podmiotowa	Metafizyczna
Wynik				
Wynik globalny				