

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THEIR OWN LIVES IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AOL-PwD). FROM THE SOURCES AND THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT TO THE DESIGN OF RESEARCH STAGES AND PROCEDURES

*Autores de sus propias vidas en personas
con discapacidad (AOL-PwD). De las fuentes
y el constructo teórico al diseño de etapas
y procedimientos de investigación*

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to present a theoretical basic and identify meaning contexts for *the authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept (AOL-PwD) as well as to provide preliminary methodological arrangements related to designing research stages and procedures. The article defines *the authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept (AOL-PwD) in terms of a multidimensional construct that identifies: (1) subjective experiences, (2) wellbeing, (3) independence, (4) satisfying performance of developmental tasks, and (5) efficient use of social support. The paradigmatic change regarding disability that took place in the first decade of the 21st century and a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective in the approach to people with disabilities were considered a basis for developing the AOL-PwD concept. The article

also refers to the methodological change relating to the occurrence of a participatory paradigm in research. A preliminary formulation of research tasks carried out in five stages is made. The article emphasizes that *the authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* is a humanistic concept of assessment and rehabilitation and forms part of the trend that creates a positive, causative image of people with disabilities in society.

KEY WORDS: authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities; phenomenon of disability; subjectivity; independence; wellbeing; developmental tasks; support; participatory paradigm.

RESUMEN: El propósito de este artículo es presentar la base teórica e identificar los contextos significativos para el concepto de “Autores de sus propias vidas” en personas con discapacidad (AOL-PwD), además de proporcionar aspectos metodológicos preliminares relacionados con los procedimientos y etapas del diseño de investigación en relación a este constructo. El artículo define “Autores de sus propias vidas” en personas con discapacidad como un constructo multidimensional que identifica: (1) experiencias subjetivas, (2) bienestar, (3) independencia, (4) desempeño exitoso de las tareas vinculadas al desarrollo y (5) uso eficiente del apoyo social. El cambio de paradigma en relación a la discapacidad que tuvo lugar en la primera década del siglo XXI y una perspectiva holística e interdisciplinar en el modo de considerar a las personas con discapacidades fueron considerados como el punto de partida para el desarrollo del constructo presentado. El artículo también alude al cambio metodológico en relación al surgimiento del paradigma de investigación participativa. Se presenta una formulación preliminar de las tareas de investigación incardinadas en cinco etapas clave para la investigación del constructo “Autores de sus propias vidas” en personas con discapacidad. El artículo enfatiza que este constructo es, ante todo, un concepto humanista de evaluación y rehabilitación que forma parte de las tendencias actuales que destacan la importancia de crear una imagen positiva y causal de las personas con discapacidad en la sociedad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: autores de sus propias vidas en personas con discapacidad; discapacidad; subjetividad; independencia; bienestar; tareas vinculadas al desarrollo; apoyos; investigación participativa.

1. Introduction

THERE EXIST SOCIAL LIFE AREAS OR PHENOMENA that easily give in to set patterns of thinking, stereotypes or prejudice. Disability is one of them. Without referring to very distant times, it is reasonable to state that throughout most of the 20th century, disability was equated mainly with disorders, impairments, and body or mind defects. Following the above approach, disability was perceived as an individual problem of the person affected by it. That came down to considering disability in terms of a personal tragedy, but at the same time-in terms of a social burden. Rehabilitation interventions emphasized adapting people to their disabilities. That focus on adaptation too frequently resulted in ignoring the subjective experiences of people with disabilities and also in overlooking the contexts of their

lives in the social environment, their participation in culture, and their involvement in the economic sphere.

The 20th century and the beginning of the new century is the period when important changes took place both in legal and social provisions for people with disabilities, and in shaping social consciousness of disability. At the same time, disability became the subject of detailed scientific research. And for at least the last 30 years, the representatives of social sciences and the humanities have been becoming increasingly interested in the issues of disability examined in the light of: normalization, self-determination, quality of life, wellbeing, autonomy, self-realization as well as social integration and inclusion.

The interpenetration of these ideas and research concepts became the source of a new conceptual category (i.e. *the authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities*; hereafter AOL-PwD) (Głodkowska, 2014a, 2014d). Bringing authorship dimensions to one's life acquires a special character and significance in the case of various limitations, including disabilities as well. The concept was also largely inspired by the creation of a new research and teaching unit in The Maria Grzegorzewska University in 2016 (i.e. the Department of Interdisciplinary Disability Studies). It embraces researchers who explore the issue of disability in the light of humanistic ideas that draw on the field of Disability Studies. Extending the university's educational offer with interdisciplinary disability studies opened in 2016 as the first such course in Poland was a special educational fact in the creation of *the AOL-PwD* concept. Both scientific and educational events from recent years resulted in review studies on the phenomenon of disability in the light of Disability Studies (Głodkowska, Pałowska and Gasik, 2016; Głodkowska and Pałowska, 2017a; Głodkowska and Gasik, 2017b). It is very important to note here that international cooperation of researchers from 10 countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Russia, Spain, Taiwan, Ukraine, Ireland, Jamaica, United States and Poland) brought about a monograph entitled *Studies on Disability-International Theoretical, Empirical, and Didactic Experiences* (Głodkowska, Gasik and Pałowska, 2017). It includes papers by researchers in the field of Disability Studies on both research and teaching. It discusses important issues, such as: historical and contemporary approaches toward disability, general current trends-paradigm formulation, Disability Studies as a scientific discipline, Disability Studies as a field of study, interdisciplinary empirical analysis of the phenomenon of disability, research analysis in the positivist orientation, research analysis in the humanistic orientation, selected concepts of recognition of the phenomenon of disability, perspective of the normalization of life of people with disabilities, and academic training preparing for working with people with disabilities. The development of AOL-PwD concept fits in with all the research and teaching activities and events listed as well as with the theoretical and empirical analyses performed to date (Głodkowska, 2014a, 2014d, 2015). This article's purpose is to present a theoretical basis and identify meaning contexts for AOL-PwD concept as well as to frame methodological arrangements related to designing research stages.

2. Sources, theoretical basis, definition, and some implications

The AOL-PwD concept draws on many years of multi-layered analyses exploring the phenomenon of disability from the point of view of assessment, education, rehabilitation, and therapy. Our studies on disability have focused on, among others: (1) phenomenon, process, and social movement relating to the normalization of the lives of people with disabilities; (2) contemporary model of rehabilitation and subjective paradigm of support; (3) conditions for enabling people with disabilities to have independent life; (4) positive image of people with disabilities; (5) personalistic approach to disability; and (6) idea of wellbeing corresponding to the phenomenon of disability (e.g. Głodkowska, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2015, 2017).

The renewed interpretation of the idea of normalization in the light of positive psychology and vitalism made it possible to focus on aspects that promote the development of human wellbeing and give human life a fundamental meaning (Głodkowska, 2014a). Those studies concluded with observation that the normalization of life does not mean being normal, but creates an opportunity for unconditional belonging to society for people with disabilities. It is also an efficient tool to develop the personal and social identity of people with disabilities that is free from stigma. It should be emphasized at the same time that the axiology of the current rehabilitation model aims to prepare people with disabilities for empowered existence. The idea of lending authorship values to one's life is also expressed in this axiology. It is important to note that the current paradigm of support – as compared to traditional systems of services – is a project aimed at creating subjective living conditions for people with disabilities, and, in particular, at developing their sense of their own identity, self-determination, wellbeing, agency, independence, and autonomy – that is at developing different aspects of the authorship of one's life (Głodkowska, 2012, 2013, 2014d).

As a result of detailed and systematized analyses, the concept of the AOL-PwD in face of disability was built (Głodkowska, 2015). The consistently developed idea of the AOL-PwD was framed within the structure of concepts and theoretical references, and acquired an interdisciplinary character (Głodkowska, 2015). The concept results from the interpenetration of various human theories built on the basis of the humanities and social sciences – mainly psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and philosophy. Five aspects were made the fundamental elements of the AOL-PwD concept: (1) an eudaimonistic aspect, (2) a personalistic aspect, (3) a functional aspect, (4) a temporal aspect, and (5) an aid aspect. They became special horizons for explaining this concept. The detailed interpretation made possible to assume that the eudaimonistic aspect of the AOL-PwD is a source indication to recognize wellbeing, good life, and – in positive psychology terms – flourishing in a person with disability. The personalistic dimension of the AOL-PwD is presented from such points of view as, among others, human subjectivity and identity. Independence and resourcefulness are examined in terms of the functional aspect of the AOL-PwD. Fulfilling age-appropriate tasks is an expression of the

temporal dimension. The aid aspect of the AOL-PwD is examined in terms of social support. The interpretation of the individual aspects of the AOL-PwD was inspired by the theoretical basis of positive psychology, pedagogical personalism, optimal functioning theory, developmental task concept, and social support theory (Głodkowska, 2015). The analyses that have been performed so far allow the following definition of the concept: “The AOL-PwD is a multidimensional construct that identifies their (1) subjective experiences, (2) wellbeing, (3) independence, (4) satisfying performance of developmental tasks, and (5) efficient use of social support” (Głodkowska, 2015: 116).

It should be noted that the AOL-PwD is consistently becoming an increasingly universal concept. And thus it clearly fits in with further theoretical analyses, including the canons of early childhood development support (Głodkowska, 2017) and the axiological pillars of contemporary special education (Głodkowska, 2018). The canons of early childhood development support are generalizations, specific patterns and rules. The generalizing approach made it possible to give special weight to this most valuable period in human development – from birth through 6 years of age. At the same time, one may presume like Thomas Kuhn (2011: 13) that “the power of a science seems quite generally to increase with the number of symbolic generalizations its practitioners have at their disposal.” For generalizations activate scientific concentration and promote cognitive insight, and, in consequence, lead to empirical findings and inspiring interpretations. Based on the AOL-PwD concept, the following canons of early childhood development support were distinguished: (1) happy childhood canon, (2) subjective treatment canon, (3) safe environment canon, (4) developmental success canon, and (5) intervention professionalism canon. There is no doubt, however, that all these areas are interrelated and give a global picture of intervention in impaired early childhood development (Głodkowska, 2017). As mentioned earlier, the AOL-PwD concept was also a source of inspiration for developing the axiological pillars of contemporary special education. They are looked into as ideas that explain occurrences and trends in scientific approaches to crucial phenomena related to disability – they highlight the key areas of contemporary special education. As intended, the pillars have both cognitive and implicative meaning to be used in specific educational, rehabilitative, and therapeutic activities. As a result of the analyses performed, the following five axiological pillars of contemporary special education were distinguished: (1) self-determination pillar, (2) wellbeing pillar, (3) normalization pillar, (4) subjectivity pillar, and (5) scientific identity pillar. The self-determination pillar is explained, among others, in issues concerning the development of the Other’s identity and the Other’s social belonging that is free from stigma. The wellbeing pillar emphasizes the issues of quality of life and stimulation of developmental potential in people with disabilities. The normalization pillar is presented in terms of creating a social space that is integrative and inclusive. The subjectivity pillar stresses the triggering of the AOL-PwD. The scientific identity pillar focuses on special education as an area of scientific exploration, paradigm formulation, establishing canons and methodological specifics. It should be noted that a more detailed explanation of the pillars leads

to the finding that each of them comprises the idea of the AOL-PwD (to a smaller or larger extent). However, it is expressed most explicitly in the self-determination and subjectivity pillars. Gaining a sense of independence and the ability to make choices as well as developing the subject in oneself are directly related to important personality changes which trigger intentionality and agency. This way, a person gives his or her life authorship qualities, or becomes the author of his or her life. The occurrence of these processes in people with disabilities is of enormous value and it is invaluable if other people –at least in their closest social environment– become aware of these processes.

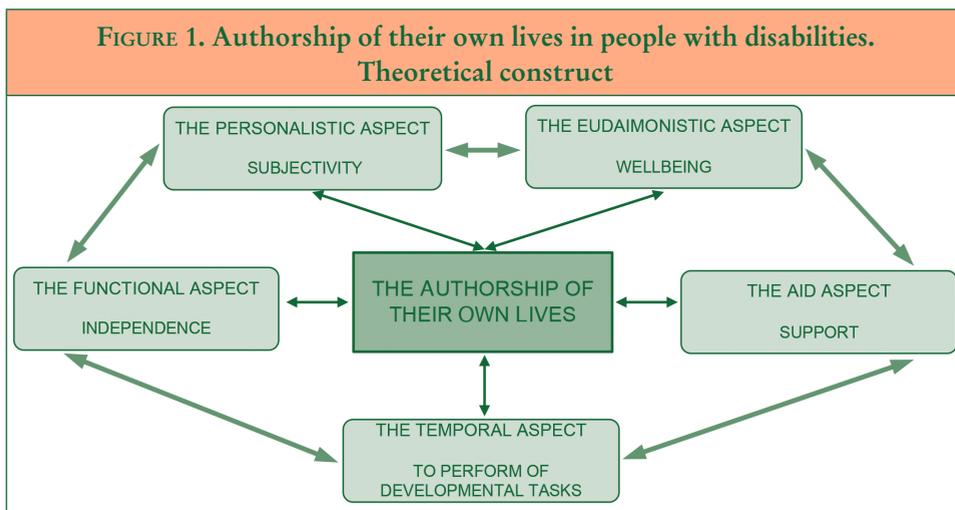
Changes taking place in a person with disability that lead to him or her gaining a sense of subjectivity, agency, and independence become a challenge for him or her and often a duty that is difficult to perform for all those present in his or her life. It is reasonable to say that if the life of a person with disability is provided with authorship dimensions, the person is not the object of rehabilitation, but –with others' aid and within his or her abilities– activates rehabilitative processes in self-rehabilitation (Kosakowski, 1997). To develop the AOL-PwD, such rehabilitation needs to be provided that will ensure autonomy, independence, experience of a sense of self-esteem, and opportunities for effective and causative actions.

3. *Authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities. Meaning contexts and a theoretical construct*

The question: ‘What does it mean to be the author of one’s own life?’ became the basis for formulating important premises that outline the contexts of the meaning of *the authorship of one’s own life* aspects. They make it possible to examine and interpret this issue in terms of five statements. The contexts result from previous theoretical analyses exploring the AOL-PwD concept (Głodkowska, 2015). They allow recognition that to author one’s own life means: (1) to have a sense of subjectivity; (2) to have a sense of wellbeing; (3) to be independent; (4) to perform developmental tasks with satisfaction; and (5) to know how to use social support. A detailed explanation of the theses formulated specifies the meanings of the five aspects of the AOL-PwD, which were identified in the conceptualization of the issue (Głodkowska, 2015).

The AOL-PwD and the meaning contexts adopted in this article became the basis for developing a theoretical construct (see Figure 1). The theoretical construct is a certain abstract structure that is composed of concepts situated within different connections, or cause and effect relationships that explain the AOL-PwD:

The theoretical construct includes five aspects of the AOL-PwD along with the explanation of their meaning contexts. The conceptualization of the concept (Głodkowska, 2015) as well as the AOL-PwD aspects and meaning contexts are interpreted in the light of appropriate theories. And so the personalistic aspect (in the meaning context: “to have a sense of subjectivity”) clearly arises from pedagogical personalism. The eudaimonistic aspect (“to have a sense of wellbeing”) is oriented



at the ideas of positive psychology. The functional aspect (“to be independent”) is presented from the point of view of optimal functioning theory. The temporal aspect (“to perform developmental tasks”) provides grounds for interpretation based on developmental task theory. The aid aspect (“to know how to use social support”) allows explanation of the AOL-PwD in the light of social support theory. These aspects and meaning contexts of the construct as well as the theoretical horizons for their interpretation outline and emphasize those dimensions of the functioning of people with disabilities that explain affirmative and positive aspects of their lives (Głodkowska, 2015).

We want to underline that the development of the AOL-PwD theoretical construct was inspired by the paradigm shift suggested by Robert Schalock. He developed an emerging paradigm of disability that takes account of the positive image of people with disabilities, their personal resources, wellbeing, and functional strengths (Schalock, 2004). Numerous authors acknowledge with conviction that a paradigm change in the area of disability has taken place since 2004. The change was the spur for both scientific research and a practical development of more favorable living conditions for people with disabilities (e.g. Dagnan and Sandhu, 1999; Dykens, 2006; Keith and Schalock, 2000; Lachapelle *et al.*, 2005; Miller and Chan, 2008; Morisse, Vandemaele, Claes, Claes and Vandeveldel, 2013; Nota, Ferrari, Soresi and Wehmeyer, 2007; Niemiec, 2017; Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Schalock, Verdugo, Bonham, Fantova and van Loon, 2008; Shogren, Wehmeyer, Buchanan and López 2006; Verdugo, Gómez, Arias and Schalock, 2011; Wehmeyer, 2005; Wehmeyer, Abery, Mithaug and Stancliffe, 2003; Wehmeyer and Garner, 2003; Wehmeyer, Shogren, Little and López, 2017; Zekovic and Renwick, 2003).

The paradigm change mentioned above was fundamental for the development of the theoretical construct of the AOL-PwD. It should be noted that the individual aspects

of the AOL-PwD theoretical construct can be interpreted from the point of view of the disability paradigm. And so personal wellbeing included in the paradigm can be examined in the AOL-PwD eudaimonistic aspect as well as individualized supports (the AOL-PwD aid aspect), personal competence, and adaptation (the AOL-PwD functional aspect and the AOL-PwD temporal aspect). At the same time, a detailed analysis of the AOL-PwD aspects allows recognition that they are interrelated, which gives important reasons to look into disability in the light of the paradigm shift and a holistic perspective of positive psychology, pedagogical personalism, optimal functioning theory, developmental task concept, and social support theory.

4. *Authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities. Designing research stages*

We shall start the presentation of research stages for the AOL-PwD concept by outlining a unique conception of research in this area. For this purpose, we think that the examination of the AOL-PwD requires a particular orientation of research thinking and awareness of this special fact: studies on the authorship of one's life are not reliable if they leave out their main subject (also as an author) – a person with disability. This fact requires a different methodological approach (i.e. one that includes the participant in the assessment process). Such a methodological approach was expressed in Poland in humanistic sociology by Florian Znaniecki (1922, 1988) at the beginning of the last century. The author formulated the principle of the humanistic coefficient, which shows that in order to approach the world of subjects and to understand and explain it accurately, the researcher needs to take into consideration the experiences and interpretations of the subjects themselves in the research process. To probe into the world of another person's meanings, specific skills are necessary as well as methods that will allow studying that world as diligently as possible. We recognize that in research on the AOL-PwD, it is reasonable to adopt the idea of the humanistic coefficient to design a comprehensive research procedure.

We would like to refer here to a clear methodological change relating to the occurrence of a participatory paradigm in research by Norman Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2009). The beginning of participatory research is associated with Kurt Lewin's works (1946); however, it has been particularly developed over the last decades. Research in the participatory paradigm is not a method but a more general research approach, a unique conception of designing and doing research with the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003). Recently, participatory research has been clearly applied to the exploration of the phenomenon of disability. And so reference can be made to *inclusive research with people with intellectual disabilities*, also called *co-researching*. According to researchers, it is becoming increasingly important (Bigby, Frawley and Ramcharan, 2014; French and Swain, 1997; Kiernan, 1999; Fullana, Pallisera, Català and Puyalto, 2017; O'Brien, McConkey and García-Iriarte, 2014; Puyalto, Pallisera, Fullana and Vilà, 2016). However, as O'Brien, McConkey and García-Iriarte (2014) point out, few researchers

use it and check its feasibility. The study presented by O'Brien and colleagues showed it was possible to create a *community of researchers* engaged in co-researching. The community involved both university researchers, who shared their research skills, and people with intellectual disability, who shared what it was like living with a disability (García-Iriarte, O'Brien and Chadwick, 2014; O'Brien, McConkey and García-Iriarte, 2014). Information on other attempts to use inclusive research can also be quoted here whose authors developed research strategies in detail and identified the advisory nature, study course and control over all stages as well as involvement of participants-academic researchers and researchers with intellectual disability (Bigby, Frawley and Ramcharan, 2014; Strnadová *et al.*, 2014). It should be noted that including people with disabilities in research changes the role of the participants in particular – they become, in a way, authors exploring themselves and their lives. That is why to understand people with disabilities, also by assessing the authorship of their own lives-according to the principles of co-researching, an active, partnership-based research relationship needs to be used and the hegemonic, authoritarian role of the researcher as an expert needs to be rejected. As Debbie Pushor states (2008), research should be conducted with people rather than on people. The research process is at the same time a dialogical process, in which both the researcher and the participant contribute their knowledge and skills, and the research finding is the result of their cooperation.

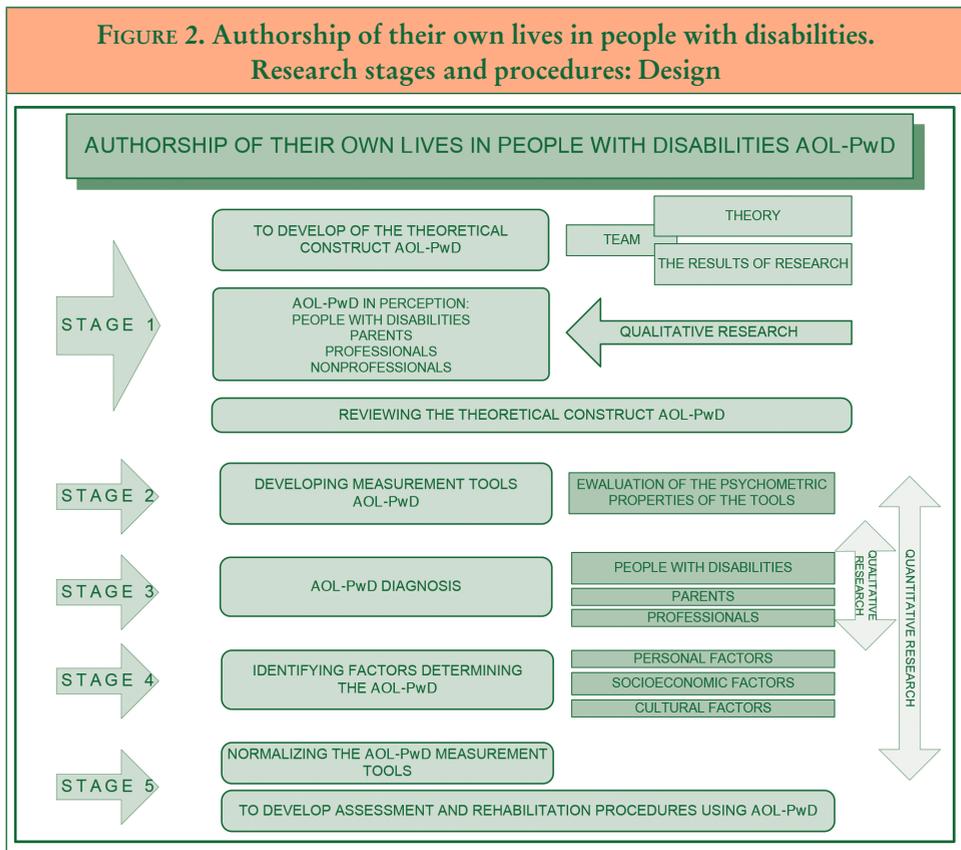
We recognize that the participatory paradigm principles will be adopted as one of the perspectives for the development of a research conception for the AOL-PwD. In research on the AOL-PwD, it is crucial how the authorship of their own lives is assessed both by the participants and the people in their closest social environment. It is important to stress that according to the participatory paradigm principles, to probe into the world of another person's meanings (person with disability), appropriate methods need to be employed that will allow studying that world as diligently as possible. Following the participatory paradigm and dialogical principles of inclusive research with people with disabilities, it can be assumed that it is possible to thoroughly explore the world of the meanings of the phenomenon of the AOL-PwD. That is why also the principles of the participatory paradigm will be taken into consideration in a part of this research – in accordance with general research principles.

Analyses of the theoretical construct and the adoption of a “unique conception” of designing AOL-PwD research resulted in determining research stages along with research procedures (research tasks, areas, groups, and empirical procedure orientation) (Figure 2).

The direction of comprehensive research on the AOL-PwD is set by research tasks that are carried out in five stages: (1) reviewing the theoretical construct and the research model, (2) developing measurement tools, (3) diagnosis, (4) identifying determinants, and (5) normalizing measurement tools.

The first stage (reviewing the theoretical construct and the research model) includes the following tasks:

- To develop an AOL-PwD research model (subjective AOL-PwD assessment, objective AOL-PwD assessment, assessment of AOL-PwD determinants);



- To identify understanding of the AOL-PwD concept in people with different disabilities (visual, hearing, motor, and intellectual disabilities);
- To identify understanding of the AOL-PwD concept in parents of people with disabilities, in people working with individuals with disabilities (professionals) as well as in people without direct contact with them (nonprofessionals);
- To identify factors determining the AOL-PwD following a review of previous research findings;
- To review the AOL-PwD theoretical construct and research model by supplying information from qualitative exploration and identification of factors determining the AOL-PwD.

The second stage (developing measurement tools) includes the following tasks:

- To develop a battery of AOL-PwD measurement tools: (a) subjective AOL-PwD assessment, (b) objective AOL-PwD assessment, and (c) assessment of AOL-PwD determinants;

- To standardize the abovementioned AOL-PwD measurement tools (a, b, c) by adapting them to people with disabilities of various types and severity;
- To evaluate the psychometric properties of the battery of the AOL-PwD measurement tools (a, b, c);
- To introduce modifications as a result of the measurement tools' reliability and validity assessment.

The third stage (AOL-PwD diagnosis) includes the following tasks:

- To assess subjective AOL-PwD provided in qualitative research by people with disabilities and in quantitative research with the use of the subjective measurement tool;
- To assess objective AOL-PwD based on the assessment of parents of people with disabilities and professionals with the use of the objective quantitative measurement tool;
- To assess conditions enabling the development of the AOL-PwD with the use of the determinants assessment quantitative measurement tool.

The fourth stage (identifying factors determining the AOL-PwD) includes the following tasks:

- To identify multidimensional AOL-PwD determinants and connections with personal factors resulting from the assessment of people with disabilities and their parents as well as professionals involved in their education, rehabilitation, and therapy;
- To identify multidimensional AOL-PwD determinants and connections with socioeconomic and cultural factors resulting from the assessment of people with disabilities and their parents as well as professionals;
- To identify multidimensional AOL-PwD determinants and connections with cultural factors resulting from international research.

The fifth stage (normalizing the AOL-PwD measurement tools) includes the following research tasks:

- To conduct research in order to normalize the (a) and (b) AOL-PwD measurement tools;
- To develop assessment and rehabilitation procedures using AOL-PwD profiles so that individualized programs supporting authorship dimensions in the lives of people with disabilities can be devised.

As declared above, selected aspects of both quantitative and qualitative research will be performed and the research stages listed will take into account the principles of the participatory paradigm relating to the participation of people with disabilities in research on a partnership research relationship basis.

A more detailed presentation of how the AOL-PwD theoretical construct translates into an AOL-PwD research model shall be given in a separate article. The article will present a diagnostic strategy and the research model.

5. Conclusion

Changes in social consciousness concerning disability take place spurred by various circumstances and individual experiences as well. They doubtless result also from ideas, concepts or visions developed in sciences dealing with disability that interpenetrate social consciousness. In order to break the stereotype of disability, new information has to be introduced to social consciousness – information that will be powerful, important, and valuable enough to build a new outlook and shape new views on these people's lives. Information that will also reinforce the belief that despite disabilities, these people have something important to offer to the world, and their lives cannot be reduced only to limitations, disorders or deficits. A years-long exploration of such issues prompted developing the AOL-PwD concept.

This article consistently develops the concept by pointing out its meaning contexts, preparing a theoretical construct, and pre-designing research stages and procedures. We believe that this work is a crucial stage toward further steps in methodological and empirical procedures in the assessment of the AOL-PwD.

The approach to people with disabilities from the point of view of the AOL-PwD is a comprehensive assessment and rehabilitation project which: (1) highlights potential above all and not deficits; (2) allows a multifaceted assessment of a person's functioning instead of a fragmentary assessment; (3) probes into complex contexts and connections between various determinants; (4) provides a basis for devising a comprehensive research model; (5) explores a person's real life as subjectively perceived by him or her; (6) creates a justified opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in research as equal research partners; and (7) provides important recommendations for designing support systems and rehabilitation programs.

The ultimate target in the area of the AOL-PwD is to develop an assessment and rehabilitation model that will aim to provide people with disabilities with optimal individual support determined by their subjectivity, independence and developmental satisfaction. Such a model will be made based on personal resources identified and with multifaceted determinants in mind. We think that the theoretical construct of the AOL-PwD relating to the paradigm change mentioned in the article can be regarded as a complement to and a reinterpretation of the disability paradigm (Schalock, 2004). It highlights positive aspects of human development in the various dimensions of human life, pointing to the meaning contexts—a sense of subjectivity, wellness, independence, developmental task performance, and social support use.

We expect that further methodological and empirical studies on the AOL-PwD will form a significant basis for recommendations for rehabilitation practice. Their findings might be useful both for diagnostics and rehabilitation. In particular, we perceive the value of this project in forming a theoretical and methodological basis for designing individual AOL-PwD profiles. We think that diagnostic information on which the profiles will be based will allow multi-layered analyses, interpretation, design and review of rehabilitation effectiveness from the point of view of the wellness and resources of people with disabilities. Profile diagnostics offers the chance to develop a rehabilitation and therapy program that is adapted to the individual needs

and potential of a person and his or her environment. At the same time we want to point out a special situation. In the assessment of the AOL-PwD for rehabilitation and therapy purposes, unique circumstances are created—a person with disability becomes not only a recipient and executor of a support program established for him or her, but really participates in its development, becoming a source of important diagnostic information and the author of activities planned for him or her.

The AOL-PwD as a humanistic concept of assessment and rehabilitation – forms part of the trend that creates a positive, causative image of people with disabilities in society. It is thus reasonable to think that promoting the idea of disability perception from the angle of life authorship creates an opportunity for people with disabilities to perceive themselves in a different way too. For it happens that sometimes (or maybe frequently) people perceive themselves from the point of view of others and their expectations. We hope that through this theoretical and empirical project, we contribute to some extent to creating a positive image of people with disabilities in social consciousness as people that want and can be authors of their lives. The AOL-PwD theoretical construct and the initially designed research stages and procedures proposed in the article set the direction for further methodological and empirical works. We have the conviction that the life authorship concept allows revision of perspectives from which the phenomenon of disability is perceived, clearly highlighting subjectivity, wellbeing, independence, developmental task performance, and social support use-essential personal aspects of authoring oneself and one's life.

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