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## THE URBAN QUALITY OF LIFE ASSESSMENT ALONG THE SECTION: CRACOW CITY-CENTRE – TOWN OF SKAŁA

*Abstract:* The study looks at the variations in the quality of life in a defined section of the city of Cracow metropolitan area. The study takes into account aspects of personal life, health, interpersonal relations, local neighbourhood, social status and spare time, as well as mutual relationships of these. A poll method was used to collect the source data

*Keywords:* quality of life, functional metropolitan region.

The subjective nature of the quality of life makes it very difficult to measure and compare. Otok (1987), mentions those issues and names the collection of data, as the main problem area, because many of the characteristics describing quality of life are immeasurable. W. Zapf (1977), highlights the importance of poll measurement of social satisfaction. Polish literature defines the quality of life as a measure combining aspects of human life reflecting existence, awareness of emotional moods caused by satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life, etc. (Zborowski 1996).

The study area is located in the southern Polish Małopolskie Province. It covers selected spatial units within the City of Cracow and villages in the Zielonki and Skała gminas (*gmina* is the smallest unity of the administrative division of Poland comprising also the larger *powiat* and the largest province). In this way the quality of life assessment covered both the city-centre and rural areas. A number of interviews were carried out with residents along a section spanning the Cracow city-centre and the town of Skała. The research was conducted in 20 units allocated to seven zones within the Cracow Metropolitan Region following the method proposed by A. Zborowski (1996, 2000). The following city boroughs were covered: Stare Miasto (Zone One – The centre); Kleparz and the southern part of the Krowodrza Górka housing estate (Zone Two – Outer City-Centre); northern part of the Krowodrza Górka housing estate and Prądnik Biały (Zone Three – High-Rise Residential). Beyond the city, the gmina of Tonie was broken down into two parts, whereby the southern part was named the Cracow suburbs (Zone Five), while the northern part, including also two villages belonging to the gmina of Zielonki

(Zielonki and Trojanowice), as part of the outskirts zone (Zone Six). The remaining villages of gmina Zielonki (Januszowice, Garlica Duchowna, Przybysławice, Korzkiew, Grębyńnice, Owczary, Brzozówka) and of gmina Skała (Cianowice Małe, Cianowice Duże, Smardzowice) were included in the rural commuter zone. The town of Skała formed the last urban commuter Zone Seven.

The total of 528 poll questionnaires were collected. They were mostly carried out in 1998, but some additional material was gathered in 2000 in villages originally not covered with the research (Brzozówka, Korzkiew, Grębyńnice, Garlica Duchowna), to provide a better picture of the study area. The average age of the interviewers was ca. 45; there was an equal gender balance and the dominance of secondary or higher education.

This study assessed the level of satisfaction in a variety of areas of life regarded as essential dimensions of community life: having children, personal life, health, mental well-being, friends, neighbours, work, material status, quality of the local neighbourhood, care of house, living conditions, education, social status, available spare time and preferred leisure activities. The respondents were asked to choose out of five available responses:

- 1 – not satisfied,
- 2 – mildly dissatisfied,
- 3 – hard to tell,
- 4 – mildly satisfied,
- 5 – satisfied.

## 1. Assessment of the quality of life. Personal life and health

Throughout the section, the highest scores were given in the children satisfaction aspect (4.74). The high score can be explained by the fact that parents tend to be happy even with small successes of their children, but avoid talking about failures. The highest score for children was recorded in the town of Skała (4.97) and the rest of the rural commuter zone, while suburbans were the least satisfied (4.3). This might have been due to the suburban parents being so engrossed in their professional life as to lack sufficient time for frequent contacts with their children. The potentially resulting distorted parent-children relationships could in turn affect the assessment. In the other zones, the values were rather high and ranged from 4.65 to 4.83. Only parental responses were taken into account here.

Personal life satisfaction levels were rather stable along the section, ranging from 4.12 to 4.6. Suburban respondents stood out as an exception with the assessment of their personal life at 4.83 (Fig.1). The most health-concerned respondents came from the rural commuter zone and from the outskirts zone scoring their health at 3.31 and 3.32. The community most satisfied with their health condition lived in the suburbs, an effect partly attributable to their relatively lowest age along the section. The city-centre and peripheral dwellers rated their health at 3.98 and 3.91. Slightly higher ratings came from residents of high-rise apartment blocks and from the urban commuter zone (Fig. 1).

Mental well-being is a very important sphere of the personal life. One's approach has a significant impact on one's actions and the way one perceives events and other people. The overall average mental well-being scored 4.34. The lowest assessment

of mental well-being came from the rural commuter zone (3.7) and the best from the suburbs (4.83). Residents of the other zones were rather satisfied with their mental well-being indicating their perceived condition as ‘mildly satisfied’ and “satisfied” (Fig.1).

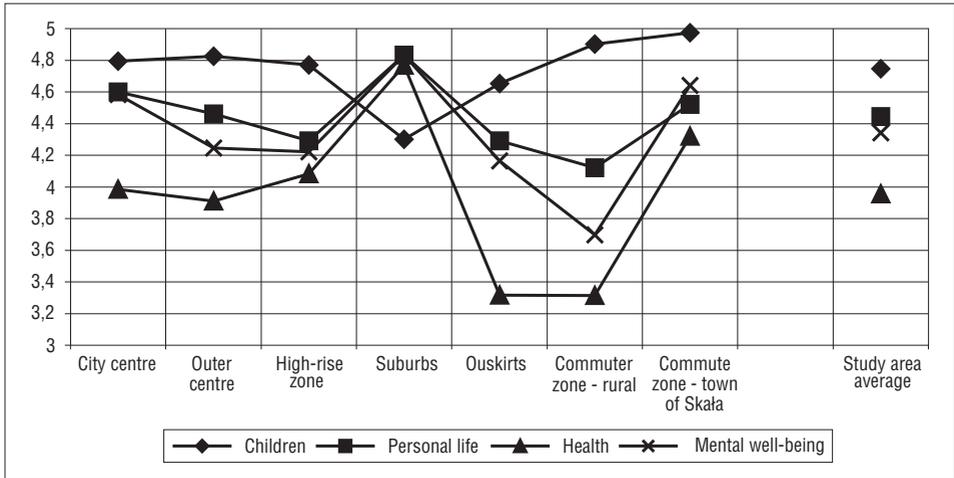


Fig. 1. Assessment of the quality of life. Personal life and health (score)

Ryc. 1. Ocena jakości życia – życie osobiste, zdrowie (w punktach)

Sources: Author's research.

## 2. Assessment of the quality of life. Work, interpersonal relationships

Respondents were asked to identify their satisfaction with their friends, neighbours, their job and their household material status.

The “friends” question was less about the satisfaction with the friends of the respondents’ (one chooses his or her friends; making friends with an unkind person is not an unavoidable duty), and more about whether the respondents had a circle of friends and if so whether it was sufficiently wide. The range of ratings was relatively narrow throughout the section; the highest scores came from suburbans (4.83) and the lowest from the rural commuter zone residents (4.48; Fig. 2).

The neighbours’ rating painted a similar picture, although the causes may have been different. Since it is rather difficult to choose your neighbours, residents of houses with even the tiniest plots of land, let alone vast properties, have it easier than the high-rise dwellers. This could have been one of the reason why the best satisfaction with the neighbours was displayed by suburbans (4.53). Another contributor could have been the “my house is my fortress” approach often taken by suburbans ensuring higher degree of anonymity, especially that most of them would be new to the area. In rural areas, on the other hand, local residents tended to have lived there for generations and knew

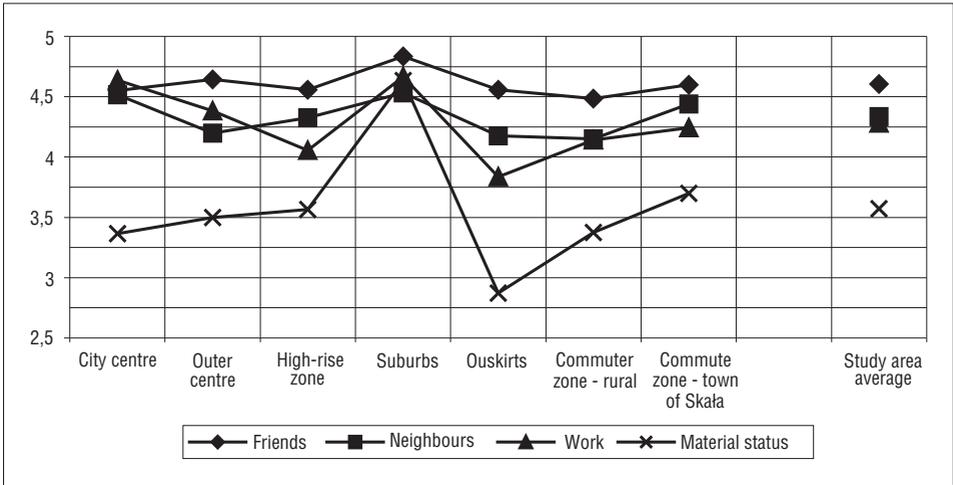


Fig. 2. Assessment of the quality of life. Work, interpersonal relationships (score)

Ryc. 2. Ocena jakości życia – praca, relacje międzyludzkie (w punktach)

Sources: Author's research.

each other very well. This may lead to protracted conflicts and hence the lowest scores for the neighbour satisfaction were recorded in the rural commuter zone and the outskirts zone (4.16 and 4.18; Fig. 2).

Responses on job satisfaction excluded respondents out of work. Again, the most satisfied were the suburbans (4.67). The least satisfied were the dwellers of the outskirts zone. Typically, work satisfaction is closely related with the position occupied at work and so professionally successful people tend to be higher up in their hierarchy and therefore more satisfied with their jobs (Fig. 2).

The overall satisfaction with the material status was low. The minimum value was recorded in the outskirts area (2.87). Suburbans scored the higher (4.63) while other zones did not exceed 3.7.

### 3. Assessment of the quality of life. Local neighbourhood

There are a number of factors contributing to the satisfaction with the local neighbourhood, such as: accessibility, distance to services, neighbourhood and a landscape appeal or polluted environment. The average satisfaction score across the section stood at 4.38. the high-rise dwellers gave their local neighbourhood the lowest score (4.03), while the suburbans, not surprisingly, were the most satisfied with theirs (4.87). A relatively low satisfaction score was recorded in the city-centre. Indeed, the centrally located area is very attractive, but its residents would typically complain at the noise and buzz from the Main Square and adjacent streets. These could become particularly acute during summertime when the area attracts crowd of tourists who tend to stay long into the night

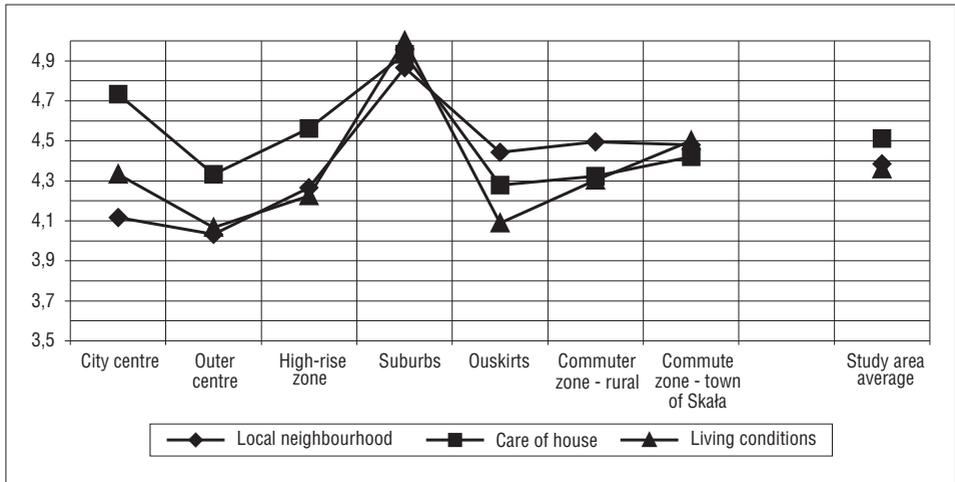


Fig. 3. Assessment of the quality of life. Local neighbourhood (score)

Ryc. 3. Ocena jakości życia – miejsce zamieszkania (w punktach)

Sources: Author's research.

in the café gardens. Also, because of the very central location the area attracts various types of events (mostly during the summertime) generating excessive noise (Fig. 3).

The local neighbourhood satisfaction is somewhat linked to the satisfaction with the living conditions. The latter includes such components, as the number of rooms and the size of the apartment/house. In this department, the most satisfied were the suburbans who scored their dwellings at 5.0 points on average. No other zone came with a comparable result. The high-rise and commuter zones gave their apartments the lowest points at 4.07 and 4.09, respectively. Elsewhere the result remained within 4.5 (town of Skała – Fig. 3).

The level of care of the house was rated the highest by the suburbans (4.93) and the city-centre dwellers (4.73). The least satisfied were respondents from the zone directly adjacent to the suburbs – the outskirts zone (4.28). Across the section, the average score was 4.51. Elsewhere, there was a relatively consistent level of satisfaction ranging from 4.32 in the rural commuter zone to 4.56 in the high-rise zone (Fig. 3).

#### 4. Assessment of the quality of life. Social status, spare time

The level of education tends to be a very important factor influencing not only the way one perceives of the world around, but also one's knowledge and skills that are directly responsible for the professional options and, consequently, the level of income. Residents of the first four zones (city-centre, outer city-centre, high-rise and the suburbans) were rather satisfied with their level of education giving scores above four points. The suburbans scored their education the highest at 4.6. Outwards beyond the suburbans,

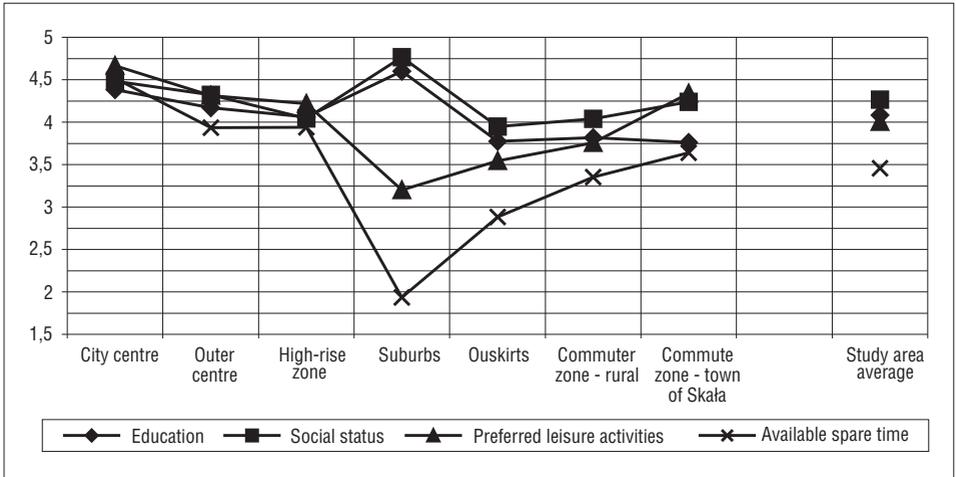


Fig. 4. Assessment of the quality of life. Social status, spare time (score)

Ryc. 4. Ocena jakości życia – status społeczny, czas wolny (w punktach)

Sources: Author's research.

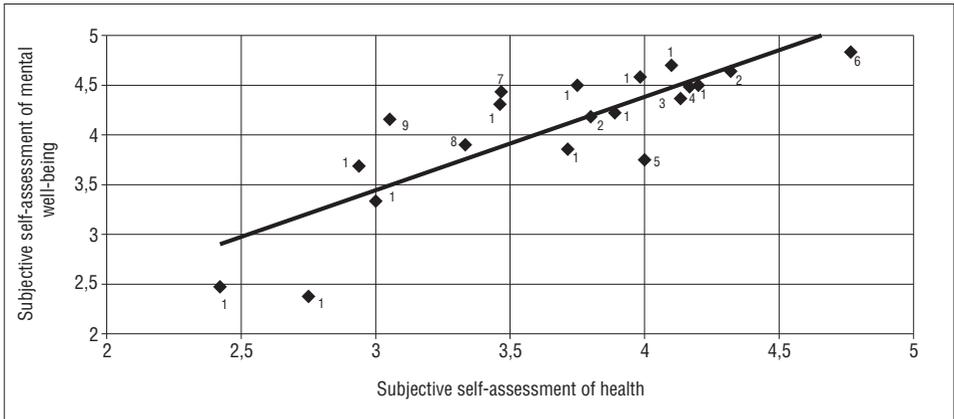


Fig. 5. Subjective self-assessment of the mental well-being and the subjective self-assessment of health (score)

Ryc. 5. Subiektywna ocena samopoczucia psychicznego a subiektywna ocena zdrowia (w punktach)

Sources: Author's research.

this satisfaction dropped dramatically to 3.77 in the outskirts zone and 3.76 (the lowest score overall), in the town of Skala (Fig. 4).

Social status is an inherent component of a society. It expresses how a person is appreciated by others and the level of respect or lack of it he or she enjoys. It has a strong impact on the general self-assessment. Suburbans turned out again to be the best satisfied with their social status (4.77). This may be attributable to their high material status, positions at work, which could translate into a sense of “superiority”. The most self-critical were respondents from the zone just past the suburbs – the outskirts zone (3.95). All the other zones scored no less than four and ranged from 4.04 in the rural commuter zone and the high-rise zone to 4.48 in the city-centre (Fig. 4).

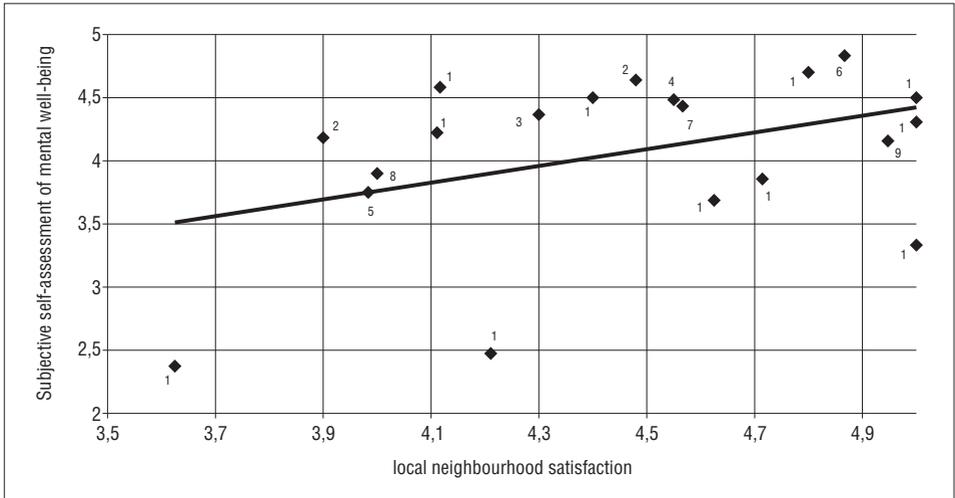
The amount of spare time and preferred leisure activities are closely linked. Respondents who complained at the scarcity of spare time tended to be unsatisfied with their spare time activities. This was particularly true of the suburban respondents (score of 3.2 for the spare time activities and just 1.93 for the spare time available), who, as a more affluent community, were also more demanding with respect to the type of leisure activities. The Cracow city-centre dwellers were the most satisfied group of respondent in both categories (4.67 and 4.52, respectively). They were typically senior citizens, mostly non-working (67%; including 36.6% retired), which made them less demanding vis-à-vis their leisure activity expectations, as compared to the residents of other zones. Also, the outskirts zone and the rural commuter zone residents complained at their available spare time (2.88 and 3.35, respectively). In this category, only the city-centre score was higher than four. Overall, the leisure activity satisfaction was higher, with the respondents from Skala scoring at 4.34, centre-periphery at 4.31 and the high-rise zone at 4.33. Elsewhere, the score was no more than 4 (Fig. 4).

## 5. Selected category cross-relationships

Based on the result of the poll, the author attempted to identify any relationships between selected categories of the quality of life. The Pearson correlation and regression analysis method was used to separate-out any mutually dependent components. The correlation was carried out for 20 localities along the section and broken down into seven zones. The strongest correlation was displayed by the health and mental self-assessment. Both characteristics are subjective. The  $r = 0.829$  value of the correlation index was statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . The regression curve also pointed to the existence of a positive relationship between the two variables (Fig. 5). This means that the better was the health of respondents the better they rated their mental well-being. Along the whole section, this was a general rule with just a small deviation by the village of Smardzowice (No. 17 on Fig.5), with a relatively low rating of mental well-being in comparison to the overall physical health condition.

The rating of the local neighbourhood satisfaction has an impact on the rating of mental well-being. Indeed, the two characteristics correlated at  $r = 0.4071$  (statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.1$ ). This means that the greater the satisfaction with the local neighbourhood the higher the mental well-being rating in respondents. The two exceptions to this rule were the villages of Smardzowice and Cianowice Duże.

The former displayed low ratings of both of the characteristics, while in the latter respondents rated their mental well-being relatively low, as compared to their rather high rating of the local neighbourhood. It is interesting to note that the highest local neighbourhood ratings, as well as good mental well-being results were recorded in localities within the rural commuter zone (Fig. 6).



- |                      |                  |                   |                     |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Stare Miasto      | 6. Tonie (south) | 11. Garlica Duch. | 16. Brzozówka Korz. |
| 2. Kleparz           | 7. Tonie (north) | 12. Przybysławice | 17. Smardzowice     |
| 3. Krowdrza Pd.      | 8. Zielonki      | 13. Korzkiew      | 18. Cianowice Małe  |
| 4. Krowdrza Pn.      | 9. Trojanowice   | 14. Grębynice     | 19. Cianowice Duże  |
| 5. Prądnik Biały Pd. | 10. Januszowice  | 15. Owczary       | 20. Skała (town)    |

Fig. 6. Subjective self-assessment of the mental well-being and the Subjective self-assessment of the local neighbourhood (score)

Ryc. 6. Subiektywna ocena samopoczucia psychicznego a zadowolenie z miejsca zamieszkania (w punktach)

Sources: Author's research.

Other investigated relationship included that between the respondents' mental well-being and their available spare time satisfaction levels, as well as material status and education level. The two pairs displayed relatively low correlation values at  $r = 0.1447$  and  $r = 0.3122$ , respectively. In both cases, the statistical significance of  $\alpha = 0.05$  was negligible, suggesting that there was no strong linkage between the mental well-being and the satisfaction with the available spare time, and that the material status had no significant impact on the satisfaction with the level of education.

Certain quality of life characteristics displayed a spatial pattern. The material status satisfaction scores, for example, grew from the city-centre towards the suburb zone to suffer a dramatic fall in the outskirts and return to the previous growth pattern further afield. Interestingly, the one characteristic that displayed very little spatial variability was the children satisfaction. There was just the considerable drop in the suburbs, but otherwise the scores were consistent.

A clear quality of life zonality was identified along the section from the Cracow city-centre and the town of Skąła. The highest overall quality of life was declared by the suburbans with 12 out of 15 respondents giving this zone the best scores. The zone, however, had the lowest scores out of all zones in three other characteristics: children, available spare time and preferred leisure activities. The lowest overall quality of life scores were recorded in the outskirts zone and in the rural commuter zone. In the outskirts zone, the lowest scores were linked with the material status, and included work, material status and social status. In the rural commuter zone, respondents scored the lowest their personal life, mental well-being (also health) and interpersonal relationships (satisfaction with friends and neighbours).

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## Ocena jakości życia w profilu miejskim centrum Krakowa-Skąła

### Streszczenie

W niniejszym opracowaniu ocenie poddano poziom zadowolenia z różnych dziedzin życia, takich jak: posiadanie dzieci, życie osobiste, zdrowie, samopoczucie psychiczne, przyjaciele, sąsiedzi, praca, sytuacja materialna, miejsce zamieszkania, dbanie o dom, warunki mieszkaniowe, wykształcenie, pozycja społeczna oraz ilość wolnego czasu i sposób jego spędzania. Badaniem metodą kwestionariusza wywiadu objęto jednostki przestrzenne Krakowa oraz wsie położone na terenie gmin Zielonki i Skąła, przyporządkowane do siedmiu stref regionu miejskiego Krakowa. Na podstawie odpowiedzi respondentów stwierdzono istnienie wyraźnej strefowości w zróżnicowaniu

jakości życia respondentów. Najwyższą jakość życia zanotowano w strefie suburbium, natomiast najmniej zadowoleni byli respondenci zamieszkujący strefę podmiejską oraz strefę dojazdów do pracy do Krakowa. Zbadano również stopień zależności występujących pomiędzy wybranymi dziedzinami jakości życia za pomocą analizy korelacji i regresji Pearsona. Wśród badanych związków najsilniejszą korelację wykazują cechy: ocena zdrowia i ocena samopoczucia psychicznego.

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