

Age as a Differential Factor of the Activity of Disabled People in the Rural Areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship

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Abstract

The authors present financial aspects of the lives of the disabled living in the Lubelskie Voivodship in the context of age. All the data included are a result of empirical studies conducted in the rural areas. From the presented findings it ensues that the younger the age category of the respondents, the stronger the sense of the material wealth and higher economic status. The above attitudes are a result of better adaptation of the youth to the realities of everyday life and diversified sources of income. Taking this into consideration, it needs to be said that despite major economic problems the rural disabled face, we can observe systematic change in the awareness of this social group.

Introduction

Attitudes of Polish society towards the disabled range widely, from those who draw no attention to existing defects which hinder normal functioning, to those who treat the disabled as completely unfit to do even the most basic activities (Rudek 2003, 74). The attitudes are the result of interactions in the social milieu in which the interaction takes place. Modeling of the attitudes has a complex structure and is determined by a number of factors.

An important aspect in forming the attitudes is the economic context, which has not yet been sufficiently penetrated scientifically. Only papers by Dykcik (2005), Kazanowski (1999), Otrębski (2001), or Sikorska (1996), allow us to settle the issue to some degree. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to present some material aspects of the life of the disabled in the context of an independent variable (i.e., the age of those studied). We think that assuming that plane of analysis will allow us to discover the specifics of the functioning of the disabled, using the measurable aspect of the financial situation. Focusing on the financial situation of the disabled is vital, because from the research to date it follows that the disabled much more seldom undertake gainful employment than fully fit people. The basic source of their income are still pensions or the material aid from their families. The analysis of the material status of the disabled in this context will allow us to make a diagnosis but also will serve as a prognostic element in the context of intergenerational transformations that take place in this environment. We assume that the younger the age category of the population studied, the higher the material status and the higher the sense of material wealth. We think that the assumption may be verified through an analysis of the following detailed issues:

- How do the disabled evaluate the material status of their families?
- Does the income allow the disabled to satisfy their needs?
- What is the basic source of their income?
- How have living conditions of those studied changed over the last years?

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A certain depiction of these issues can be presented through the current financial situation of the population studied and the civilizational conveniences in their homes (i.e., equipment and furnishings of all kind). We are of the opinion that defining these issues on the basis of the data collected from the field investigation in the rural areas will contribute to the discovery of certain relations between the material status of those studied and their age.

1 The data and methods of the study

The characteristics of the disabled coming from rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship¹ will be defined by the research data gathered in 2010, using the diagnostic survey method according to a questionnaire prepared by the author. The questionnaire was composed of closed and open questions. This tool consisted of 66 questions, which concerned various aspects how well disabled persons function. In this elaboration detailed dependencies have been shown using 10 questions from the questionnaire. 800 disabled people, aged 16–65 and inhabiting rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship were surveyed. The study was conducted using the questionnaire sent to the addresses provided by social services. Quota sampling of the study group has been made. It has been assumed that they will be the people representing communes distributed in various parts of the province, both men and women (there may have been a difference up to 10% between the two groups), at various ages, and with different degrees of disability. The pollsters were social workers or people knowing the specifics of the situations of people who are disabled (the disabled people themselves or those who look after them). The procedure enabled the pollster to have good contact with the survey sample and provided a basis to assume that the findings were truthful, honest and reliable (Tomczyszyn 2011, 31). The study comprised 24 communes of the Lubelskie Voivodship (i.e., Biała Podlaska, Biłgoraj, Bychawa, Dubienka, Goraj, Horodło, Janów Podlaski, Konstantynów, Łęczna, Łuków, Miączyn, Michów, Niedźwiada, Rokitno, Sitno, Telatyn, Trzebieszów, Trzydnik Duży, Turobin, Uchanie, Ulęż, Uścimów, Wisznice, Włodawa). The study group consisted of 55% men and 45% women.

Taking into consideration the age structure we have observed an even distribution among the sample. The highest number of the respondents was in the 46–55 age bracket — 29,25%,² and 26–35 age bracket — 23,75%. The lowest number was in the boundary brackets that is, 16–25 age bracket — 15,63%, and 56–65 age bracket — 12,25%. From the general data we can note that among the respondents 53,32% were moderately disabled, 27,66% — slightly and 19,02% — considerably disabled.

An important feature of disability is its type. From the empirical data it ensues that the largest group were the respondents having motor system dysfunction (36,17%) and those suffering from chronic somatic illnesses (22,65%). Another 14,27% of the respondents featured nerve, emotional and mental disorders. Almost every tenth studied person had vision defects. Lowered intellectual ability was declared by 8,26% of the group, yet it should be noted that they were people slightly mentally impaired. A small group were people with auditory and speech disorders.

2 The results of the study

Many researchers studying the issues related to disability underscore the relationship that occurs between the disability and the economic status of the family. The families having a disabled person, as a general rule, are of lower economic status. Korzon (2004, 28) seeks the causes of the status quo in the political transformation started in Poland in 1989. The social and economic transformation — according to the author — threatened the existence of the social groups that require special care due to the decline in their income and lowering social status. Economic situation may not only

1. Voivodship — Polish administration region on the NUTS 2 level. Poland is divided into 16 voivodships.

2. [In the journal (in both Polish and English texts) European practice of number notation is followed — for example, 36 333,33 (European style) = 36 333.33 (Canadian style) = 36,333.33 (US and British style). Furthermore in the International System of Units (SI units), fixed spaces rather than commas are used to mark off groups of three digits, both to the left and to the right of the decimal point. — Ed.]

be a condition for a good start and growth for a person, but also a major factor in social segregation or rejection.

A variable of great social importance is the material situation of those studied. In figure 1 the feelings of studied regarding their material situation have been detailed. The assessment of material situation, as a general rule, is a typically subjective classification, yet the asymmetry between positive and negative appraisals makes us aware of the difficult material situation of the disabled living in the rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship. This may be caused by the fact that a low number of those studied are gainfully employed, which we shall see in further analysis. The remaining participants live off pensions, or other sources which are provided by the state.

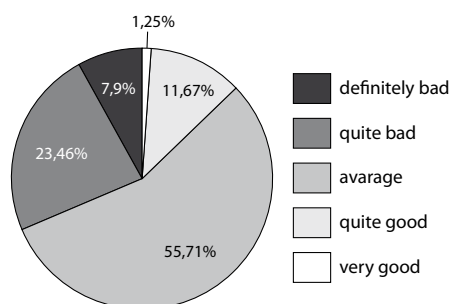


Fig. 1. The assessment of the material situation of the sample

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province”.

The statement in table 1 explicitly shows that the younger respondents assess their financial situation as better more often than the older people. In the category of age between 16 to 25 years, 22,4% of those studied declare their financial situation as very good or good and in the category of age between 56 to 65 years only 7,2% persons describe their financial situation as very good or good. Those aged 56–65 declare their financial situation as definitely bad (15,3%) and 12,9% persons aged 46–55 describe their financial situation in the same way. As the previous statements

Tab. 1. Age in the context of the financial situation of the families

Material-situation	16–25 years old		26–35 years old		36–45 years old		46–55 years old		56–65 years old	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very good	2	1,6	2	1,1	4	2,6	1	0,5	1	1,0
Quite good	26	20,8	35	18,5	16	10,5	10	4,3	6	6,2
Average	75	60,0	115	60,5	88	57,9	114	49,1	52	53,0
Quite bad	20	16,0	32	16,8	34	22,4	78	33,2	24	24,5
Definitely bad	2	1,6	6	3,1	11	6,6	31	12,9	15	15,3
Total	125	100,0	190	100,0	153	100,0	234	100,0	98	100,0

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

Tab. 2. Monthly net income (having deducted the tax in the month preceding the study) in the family per capita

Income (PLN)	n	%
Up to 399	341	42,7
400–599	271	33,9
600–999	159	19,8
1 000–1 500	28	3,5
Over 1 500	1	0,1

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

showed a fairly subjective assessment of the financial situation of the families having disabled people, the statement below informs us about real net income in the family per capita.

On the basis of the data presented in table 2, it can be stated that over three fourths of the studied group has less than PLN 600 in the family per capita, including 42,7% declaring a sum lower than PLN 300. Over PLN 1 000 of a monthly income in the family per capita has been declared by 3,5% of the respondents, and over PLN 1 500—0,13%. The remaining survey participants (19,82%) have a sum of PLN 600–999 in the family per capita.

Tab. 3. The results of the analysis of the variation for income assessment

	SS Effect	df Effect	MS Effect	SS Error	df Error	MS Error	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	2,287	4	0,571	597,790	792	0,755	0,758	0,553

Note: Statistically significant when $p < 0,05$

As a result of applying the variation analysis it has been ascertained that there is not a statistically relevant difference between the income and the age of the disabled.

Detailed analyses of income, taking into consideration particular age categories do not show considerable differences. One should reflect upon why the opinions on the financial situation expressed by those studied are so divergent. On the basis of the gathered material we can only surmise that older people more frequently than younger run a household, because the latter more frequently live with their parents. The above hypothesis is worth verifying with detailed statistical tests in further research concerning the disabled.

Tab. 4. Age and monthly net income in the family per capita

Income (PLN)	Age									
	16–25 years old		26–35 years old		36–45 years old		46–55 years old		56–65 years old	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Up to 399	47	37,1	84	43,9	64	41,8	110	46,8	38	38,8
400–599	51	41,1	60	31,2	45	29,4	77	33,1	38	38,8
600–999	24	19,3	41	22,2	36	23,5	37	15,9	19	19,4
1000–1500	3	2,4	5	2,7	7	4,6	10	4,2	3	3,1
Over 1500	0	0	0	0	1	0,6	0	0	0	0
Total	125	100,0	190	100,0	153	100,0	234	100,0	98	100,0

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

An important aspect in the functioning of the disabled and their families is their economic situation. The issue was raised by Tomczyszyn (2011, 184), who underscored the stereotypical social opinions, which state that a person afflicted by disability has a great deal of benefits and concessions. In fact the families’ incomes are very low, and the parents’ education and occupation placed them in the underclass. Some parents dream of going on vacation with their children but they cannot afford it.

From the report by Kirenko and Sarzyńska (2010, 19), for which the authors used the data from the statements of the Poviát Labor Offices and from the elaborations of the Department of Research and Analysis of the Province Labor Office in Lublin, it follows that on 31st December 2009 in the district labor offices of the Lubelskie Voivodship 5 460 disabled persons were registered (42,9% women and 57,1% men). The number comprised 4 021 unemployed persons and 1 439 persons seeking employment. Only 10,1% of the disabled unemployed people had the right to receive the unemployment assistance funds.

In the Lubelskie Voivodship, in the entire year of 2009, 6 743 disabled persons were registered (44,5% women and 55,5% men), including 5 245 (77,8%) unemployed and 1 498 (22,2%) persons seeking work and not having employment. It is worth noticing that the statistics of the offices only consider the persons officially registered as unemployed or seeking employment. The dimension of

the phenomenon of unemployment among the disabled is by far larger than what we can read in official statistics.

From the report “Determinants of professional activity...” it turns out that among the 800 studied persons as many as 72,6% do not work anywhere and live off pensions or allowances, 15% work outside agriculture, 4,7% in agriculture, 3,2% combine work in and outside agriculture, and 4,4% have other sources of income.

The next question was addressed to the respondents who are professionally active (27,4%). They were asked about the source of their income.

Tab. 5. The results of the variation analysis for income assessment

	SS Effect	df Effect	MS Effect	SS Error	df Error	MS Error	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	2,287	4	0,571	597,790	792	0,755	0,758	0,553

Note: Statistically significant when $p < 0,05$

Tab. 6. Age in the context of sources of income

Source of income	Age									
	16–25 years old		26–35 years old		36–45 years old		46–55 years old		56–65 years old	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Work out of agriculture	13	10,4	40	21,2	29	18,9	31	13,2	7	7,2
Work in and out of agriculture	10	8,0	4	2,1	3	2,0	6	2,6	3	3,1
Work in agriculture	9	7,2	9	4,8	9	5,9	10	4,3	1	1,0
Non-profit source	85	68,0	125	66,1	107	69,7	182	77,8	81	82,6
Other	8	6,4	12	5,8	5	3,3	5	2,1	6	6,1
Total	125	100,0	190	100,0	153	100,0	234	100,0	98	100,0

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

As a result of applying the variation analysis it has been ascertained that there is not a statistically relevant difference between the income and the age of the disabled.

Table 6 shows that 82,6% of those studied do not work (age category: 56–65) and among the age category of 46–55, 77,8% do not work. You can say that the younger generation of the disabled seeks employment in various sectors of the economy, which confirms the general tendency that living in the country does not mean working only on the farm. We think that the transformation occurring in Polish society in the context of sectors of employment are identical with the changes that concern the disabled, which points at system changes occurring in the environment. The tendencies in the structure of employment and income more often affect the younger generation, because 6,4% of persons aged 16–25 and 5,8% persons aged 26–35 declared other sources of income. It is mainly their own economic and service activities. This tendency is notable because it is evidence of assuming an active attitude on a difficult labor market, yet in the long run it results in an increase of employment and the level of the wealth of the disabled.

A vital element which affects the standard of living is one's home (tab. 5). It is a space where family life goes on. The physical features of a dwelling, its location and the character of the milieu, its shape and lay-out, the material used to build it, air-conditioning and lighting, its furnishings, the technical state and the maintenance mostly affect the hygienic conditions, as well as the physical and mental health of those who live there. Generally speaking, there are two types of dwellings (i.e., a house and an apartment). We also singled out two others (i.e., a social welfare home and a hired flat).

Tab. 7. Dwelling place in the context of age

Dwelling place	Age									
	16–25 years old		26–35 years old		36–45 years old		46–55 years old		56–65 years old	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
House	108	86,4	160	84,2	117	76,2	184	78,2	79	80,6
Apartament	16	12,8	22	11,6	34	22,5	44	18,8	17	17,4
Rented flat	1	0,8	7	3,7	2	1,3	6	3,0	2	2,0
Welfare home	0	0,0	1	3,7	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Total	125	100,0	190	100,0	153	100,0	234	100,0	98	100,0

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

The above statement does not significantly differentiate the sample in the context of age, though it is clear that the majority of the 16–25 age category live in a house. Practically over 95% of those studied live in a house or a block apartment. Only a small percentage of them live in social welfare homes or rent a flat. There is no doubt that living in house or an apartment has many advantages. In such conditions it is easier to adjust the place to the needs of a disabled person.

Tab. 8. The standard of living in the context of age

Standard of living	Age									
	16–25 years old		26–35 years old		36–45 years old		46–55 years old		56–65 years old	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Running water	113	91,1	180	95,2	139	90,8	209	89,3	81	82,6
Hot running water	90	72,6	129	68,6	91	60,3	137	58,8	48	48,9
Central heating	90	72,6	142	75,1	103	67,3	156	66,7	55	56,1
Plumbing	78	62,9	105	56,2	77	51,7	136	41,1	44	55,1

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

The standard of living is determined by having hot and cold running water, central heating and plumbing (tab. 8). In the studied environment over 90% of the respondents declared they have running water at home. Having hot water and central heating was declared by a lower number of those studied (approx. 62% and 68%), whereas the lowest percentage (55%) said they have plumbing in their homes. What is characteristic in this statement is the fact that the possession of the above facilities is more frequent in the younger people. However, when comparing this statement with the findings from the research conducted by Kazanowski (1999) in 1995 in an urban environment, we still can see differences. Generally, the access to hot and cold running water and central heating in the families with disabled people in the urban environment is higher than in the families living in the rural areas.

Similar tendencies in the context of age can be observed in the case of home appliances and equipment. It needs to be mentioned that all those studied had a refrigerator, a cooker (gas or electric), whereas 66,8% had an automatic washing machine, 64,3% — a freezer, 52% — a computer, and 34,2% — a car. The most luxurious object in the home was a dishwasher, which was possessed by only 6,4% of the respondents.

Bearing in mind the described standard of dwellings and their equipment, the respondents were asked to tell how their standard of living has changed over the last two years (tab. 9 and 10). As a result of applying the variation analysis it has been ascertained that there is not a statistically relevant difference between the income and the age of the disabled.

The presented findings in the context of age of the respondents show a similar tendency. Generally you can say that the younger generation are more positive about the improvement of the living conditions. The differences are significant, because in the 16–25 age category 21,6% of those studied

Tab. 9. The results of the variation analysis for income assessment

	SS Effect	df Effect	MS Effect	SS Error	df Error	MS Error	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	2,287	4	0,571	597,790	792	0,755	0,758	0,553

Note: Statistically significant when $p < 0,05$

Tab. 10. The changes in the standard of living in the context of age over the last two years

Change	Age									
	16–25 years old		26–35 years old		36–45 years old		46–55 years old		56–65 years old	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Improvement of living conditions	27	21,6	38	20,1	24	15,7	19	8,2	10	9,8
Deterioration of living conditions	13	10,4	17	9,0	21	13,7	43	18,3	20	20,5
No change	85	68,0	135	70,9	108	70,9	172	73,5	68	69,7
Total	125	100,0	190	100,0	153	100,0	234	100,0	98	100,0

Source: On the basis of the research conducted by the authors of the article within the framework of the project entitled “Determinants of professional activity of the disabled inhabiting the rural areas of the Lublin Province.”

say their standard of living has improved, 46–55—8,2%, and over 55—9,8%. The characteristic feature of the statement is the fact that in the youngest age category twice as many respondents say that their standard of living has improved and not deteriorated. The opposite opinion is expressed by the oldest respondents. About 70% of all those studied ascertained that over last two years their living conditions have not changed.

3 Summary and discussion

The analysis of the gathered research material allows us to present the following conclusions, summary and discussion:

- from the conducted study it appears that age differentiates the disabled in terms of their source of income and living conditions
- the analysis of the amount of the income of the disabled does not show any differentiation taking into consideration the age of the disabled

The disabled living in the rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship assess their financial situation as average. A characteristic feature of the community is the fact that the respondents aged 16–25 assess their financial situation as very good or good, whereas the people aged 50 or more have the opposite opinion. A similar tendency is maintained in the case of negative appraisals, because a definitely bad or rather bad situation is expressed by the respondents aged 16–25, while the people aged 50 or more find their situation bad. The above boundary data are evidence that younger people find their financial situation better than older ones. The real income in the family per capita does not have influence on opinion.

This state of social awareness may be influenced by the source of income. From the presented data it ensues that the basic source of the income of the youngest respondents is work in agriculture and outside of it. The variety of the sources of income may be a factor strengthening the sense of fulfillment and value on the labor market. This is evidence of better adaptation of the young people to the realities of everyday life.

The results of the opinion polls may be a signal telling us about the intergenerational transformation which differentiates the awareness of those studied. One should bear in mind that the older generation entered their adult lives in a different social-economic reality, where very often the disabled were treated instrumentally, which shaped passive attitudes. In the transformation period the citizens were more and more conscious of the need to create their lives themselves. From the talks with the disabled it follows that the younger disabled people do not expect from state agencies to receive financial help, but first of all to eliminate architectural barriers and change the

mentality of civil servants and the rest of the society. Of course the above suggestions need to be verified in further research, yet the statements to date, in all probability, display the changes in the awareness of the disabled people living in the rural areas.

The sense of financial stabilization is reinforced by the place in which one lives and possession of various civilizational conveniences. Having analyzed the detailed data we can conclude that the respondents up to 35 years old have homes which are better equipped and more frequently live in a house than the rest of those studied.

The presented findings make us conclude that the younger the age category the more positive appraisal of material wealth and higher economic status. Confirming the assumption it should be said that despite economic problems the disabled living in the rural areas face, we can observe a systematic process of changing the awareness in the social group. The younger better adjust to new rules determined by democracy and the social-economic situation of our country. The political transformation in this age group has released immense reserves of energy, which stimulate them to seek work in the sectors of the economy that so far have been dominated by fully fit persons. It considerably improves their chances of attaining higher positions on the social ladder.

Bearing in mind the fact that the disabled living in the rural areas have objective limitations as for the access to civilizational conveniences, we can see intergenerational changes that are taking place in the communities. It is particularly visible in the scope of activity and independence of the young respondents. In order to describe the changes we need a detailed analysis of systematic research. We are calling for conducting research not only in the rural environment but also in the urban, the research whose aim is to obtain a fuller picture of the changes occurring in Polish society.

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