

Operating from within a family positions a developing person to achieve independence and move on to start a family of their own. However, some people with disabilities never reach the stage of full autonomy, remaining dependent on others to varying degrees for the rest of their lives. They are largely bound to permanently stay with generational families. There are some disabilities that particularly predispose to this form of subsistence. Reliance on parents (siblings) is particularly evident and common for people with intellectual disabilities. In view of this, the proposed study will provide an opportunity to examine the situation of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, in particular: how these people can bring out their potential by assuming social roles as adults, what are the problems faced by families of people with disabilities and how they cope with the difficulties, limitations and doubts that arise as children with disabilities reach adulthood. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to analyze the processual nature of transitions occurring in generational families as children with intellectual disabilities (ID) come of age. In compliance with the thesis posited, it is assumed that these changes will show up at the level of the ties existing between individual family members, and will also be reflected in the identities of individuals with intellectual disabilities as well as other members of their families.

The project is set on exploring a subject insufficiently researched in Poland, namely, issues concerning families with adolescent children with intellectual disabilities seem to be still insufficient (especially in the field of social qualitative research referring to the interpretative paradigm). The depiction of the situation of families with children with disabilities in the literature generally focuses on parental attitudes, values of marital life, the ambience of coexistence in the family, the social structure of the family, and sometimes the personality traits of the parents, assuming that the greater the disturbances in these aspects of family environment, the more disrupted is the process of raising and caring for children with disabilities. Such a model for analyzing family performance does not do justice to the full extent of the complexity of family circumstances. Hence, we propose to adopt a composite attitude for the purpose of our research: an interactional approach in which various properties of a developing child with disabilities are treated as derivatives of the processes of his/her interaction with the environment, and a systemic approach based on the assumption that there are interdependencies between the behaviors of family members. The latter may be understood as purporting that changes in the behavior of one person in the family influences the behavior of all other family members and thus impacts the performance of the family system as a coherent whole.

The prospective research seeks to build on and add to the existing body of scholarly knowledge regarding the life circumstances of adolescents with intellectual disabilities and their families. The subject raised straddles multiple disciplines as it is at the junction of the interests of representatives of various scientific disciplines, such as sociology, pedagogy, psychology, and psychiatry. It addresses issues that have potential to significantly contribute to the development of these disciplines. The findings shall advance theoretical knowledge concerning persons with disabilities as well as methodological knowledge concerning the application of specialized software to support the analysis of qualitative data. The research project will be supported by the CAQDAS software at every stage of the research project. The research project provides an opportunity to assess the usefulness of selected programs for use in other research conducted in accordance with qualitative methodology in the social sciences broadly construed.