



# A Pattern of Transition to Adulthood Indicated in Plans for the Future of Males with Intellectual Disabilities: Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis

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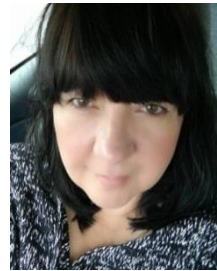
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## Abstract

*The paper examines the category of transition to adulthood of males with intellectual disabilities. It involved secondary analysis of qualitative data from three earlier research projects (Bsdurek 2010, Ćwirynkało 2010, Łysoniek 2014), whose participants were male students of special vocational schools for students with mild intellectual disabilities (MID) (IQ 70-55). The secondary analysis involves overall forty-six in-depth qualitative interviews conducted in Poland. The main research question of the secondary analysis is as follows: What is the pattern of transition to adulthood of the 46 males aged 18-21 with intellectual disabilities? Within the research question, three sub-problems established as detailed research questions were also investigated: What are the components of transition patterns to adulthood? What are the factors facilitating and hindering the process of transition? The results indicate that the main aim of transition to adulthood in the pattern of transition, which was generated from 46 interviews of young Polish males with mild intellectual disabilities, was autonomy. There are several internal components of transition to adulthood: health conditions, self-awareness including skills and limitations, competences, awareness of future educational, work and accommodation tracks etc. The results also show external components of the transition pattern to adulthood. Among them there are ties and social circles and the system of education and access to the labor market. The research results also indicated a variety of factors that facilitated and hindered transition to adulthood of 46 Polish males with mild intellectual disabilities.*

**Keywords :** Transition to adulthood, masculinity, intellectual disability, secondary qualitative data analysis

## Introduction

The goal for young people, including those with disabilities, as they leave high or vocational school, is that they will continue education (go to post-secondary school or university), find employment (preferably in the open market), and lead the life that would as independent as possible. A smooth and successful process of transition to adulthood requires both individual resources and support from family and community (Hoover 2016). Although the importance of such transition is emphasized in literature, there is still little research available on the process, particularly with a focus on intellectual disability and gender. The main purpose of the current report is to illustrate the results of secondary qualitative data analysis developed from 3 datasets and a total of 46 transcripts of interviews with 46 Polish males aged 18-21, with mild intellectual disabilities. The main and detailed research questions of the secondary data analysis were formulated as follows:

- What is the pattern of transition to adulthood of the 46 males aged 18-21 with intellectual disabilities?
- What are the components of transition pattern to adulthood?
- What are the factors facilitating and hindering the process of transition?

### *Review of Literature*

Transition to adulthood is a very important and crucial task for young people. This term is described as moving from dependent childhood to the independent and autonomous life of an adult person. In particular, it means moving from parents' home and living independently in the community, changing schools, vocational training or gaining employment, establishing new intimate relationships (Foley et al. 2012; Michaels, Lopez

2006). Transition to adulthood is more complicated in case of people with disability, especially intellectual disability. The process of transition is characterized by longer duration, wider scope, and attenuated experiences, which are due to personal limitations: lower cognitive and communication skills, and physical, emotional or social (dis)abilities.

The problem of transition of young people with a disability to adulthood has been studied from at least three perspectives, which include:

- parents' perspective (Broka 2015, McIntyne et al. 2004, Biggs, Carter 2016, Dyke et al. 2013, Lindstrom et al. 2007, Foley, Jacoby et al. 2012, Tarleton, Ward 2005, Davies, Beamishi 2009). This is a crucial perspective because parents are usually the first and main supporters in the transition to adulthood. Parental involvement in the transition process is seen as a predictor for a successful transition (Foley, Dyke et al. 2012);
- environmental perspective, e.g.: the one of school staff, supporters, and education professionals (Broka 2015, Lindstrom et al. 2007, Tarleton, Ward 2005, Haehne, Beyer 2009);
- young adults' perspective (Lindstrom et al. 2007, Tarleton, Ward 2005, Borowska-Beszta 2013).

The research on the transition patterns to adulthood is often focused on factors which affect this process. The factors can act either as barriers or facilitators, some of them refer to personal features and others to environmental structure. It is also worth noting that some studies that described the process of transition to adulthood of people with intellectual disabilities used ICF (International Classification of Functioning) as methodology framework. It contains: body functions and structures, activity, participation, environmental and personal features (Foley, Dyke et al. 2012, Dyke 2013).

The results of the research focused on the transition suggest that facilitators of the process include: self-determination, self-advocacy during transition, active engagement (Lam 2016, Palmer 2010, Kim, Turnbull 2004, Foley, Dyke et al. 2012), self-awareness (Kim, Turnbull 2004), social support which decreases anxiety, stress and increases resilience (Forte, Johda, Dagnan 2011, (van Heumen, Schippers 2016)), effective coping strategies, goal setting and planning process of transition (Foley, Dyke et al. 2012, van Heumen, Schippers 2016), interpersonal and social skills (Foley, Dyke et al. 2012).

On the other hand, as the results of the studies indicate, there are also some barriers in the transition to adulthood that people with disabilities encounter, e.g.: lack of knowledge and poor cooperation among parents, young people with intellectual disability and supporters (Hitchings et al. 2001), discrimination (Janus 2009), being dependent, lack of post-school options (Davies, Beamish 2009), unawareness of their own disability (Hitchings et al. 2001), and parents' low expectations about the future of their children with disabilities (Chambers, Hughes, Carter 2004).

Traditional outcomes of transition to adulthood of people with intellectual disabilities contain employment, independent life, moving from family home, and making partnership. For example, a research project of Kaehne and Beyer (2009) shows that preparing young people for life after education and employment is perceived as the main aim of the transition by supporters and education professionals. Nowadays, this research field focuses also on high quality of life as the main outcome of transition (Scott et al. 2014; McIntyne et al. 2004; Biggs, Carter 2016; Foley, Dyke et al. 2012). From mothers' perspective This quality of life of young adults with intellectual disabilities – according to their mothers – includes such



components as: recreation, hobbies, activities, and belonging to a social network (McIntyne et al. 2004). Unfortunately, as Biggs' and Carter's (2016) quantitative research (n=389) shows, a relatively high percentage of parents of people with intellectual disabilities indicated that their children never or rarely spent time and had fun with or received help from their friends.

### *Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis Design*

#### *Theoretical Assumptions*

The secondary data analysis performed in social sciences has scientific evidence and contribution in works of such scientists as Glaser & Strauss (1963), Corti Foster & Thompson (1995), Long-Suthehall, Sque & Addington-Hall (2010), Irvin & Winterton (2011), Johnston (2014) et al. According to Irvin and Winterton (2011) 'secondary analysis is an established practice within quantitative research and there is a drive towards extending qualitative data re-use and analysis' (Irvin & Winterton, 2011, p. 3). Johnston (2014) provides an interesting synthesis and claims that secondary data analysis is type of analytical procedure performed on the data collected by someone else, having another primary research goal and assumptions. The author continues that secondary analysis can also become an empirical and methodological exercise (Johnston, 2014, Doolan & Froelicher 2009). Glaser & Straus (1963) depicted interesting key features of secondary data analysis pointing out to the possibility of lending new 'strength to the body of fundamental social knowledge' (see Long-Suthehall, Sque & Addington-Hall 2010, p. 336). Additionally, Johnston (2014), referring to Doolan & Froelicher (2009), states that secondary data analysis can be performed in various ways and as an analytical technique is perceived as a flexible approach.

There are various research reasons for applying secondary data analysis. According to Long-Suthehall, Sque, Addington-Hall (2010), Hinds et al., (1997), such a type of analysis emphasizes particular moments and phenomena as exploring issues distinct from the ones that were undertaken in primary research. Moreover, the authors mention that secondary analysis is appropriate if researchers want to lead continuous analysis of the primary dataset or such an analysis that will highlight details of subset of primary dataset. Heaton (1998) gives another cause to apply secondary data analysis which is searching a new perspective, different from the one in primary analysis. Corti, Foster and Thompson (1995) mention that secondary data analysis is useful when researchers' intention is to describe phenomena of current and historical attributes, behavior or societies and organizations as well. Johnston (2014) refers to Corti & Thompson (1998) which allows her to state that secondary data analysis can become a case material used for the purpose of teaching methodological issues. Interesting reason for performing secondary data analysis is mentioned by (Boslaugh, 2007) who writes about time as an analytical category related to historical aspects and time being analyzed while using older data of primary research for secondary data analysis. The author writes that the raw material 'may be several years old before it is released and available for use by others' (Boslaugh, 2007, in: Johnston 2014, p. 623).

#### *Steps in Secondary Data Analysis*

Johnston (2014), referring to Stewart & Kamins (1993), describes the entire process and steps in qualitative secondary data analysis in the following way: development of research questions, identifying the proper dataset, and evaluating the dataset. Generally, the steps of secondary data analysis described in the synthesis by Stewart & Kamins (1993), Johnston (2014), include addressing the evaluation of primary dataset and such issues as:

- The name of an author who collected primary data
- The description of the type and details of data that was actually collected with the research goals and questions of primary research

- The time when the data was gathered, i.e. the year of primary data collection
- Methodology that was employed in obtaining the data
- Management of the primary data, which is a brief description related e.g. to access to raw data, transcripts, protocols which will be analyzed in secondary data analytical procedures
- The discussion and description of general consistency obtained from various sources (Stewart & Kamins 1993, Johnston 2014, p. 622).

## Method

This paper draws on data from three earlier Polish qualitative or mixed method research projects that have been undertaken in the years 2010-2014. Each of them examined the concepts of lives of special secondary school students with intellectual disabilities, including male students with mild intellectual disabilities who attend vocational schools and are at the age of 18-21, which means that at the moment of data collecting they were able to describe their process, plans and ambitions connected with their transition to adulthood. The three primary research projects are described below. The qualitative secondary data analysis was based on transcribed qualitative primary data from interviews with male Polish informants with mild intellectual disabilities. The research and verbal data collection were performed by Ćwirynkało (2010) as 30 interviews, Bsdurek (2010) as 6 interviews, Łysoniek (2014) as 10 interviews. Totally, the research project team analyzed transcripts from 46 interviews with 46 males with mild intellectual disabilities aged 18-21.

### *Dataset Evaluation Process*

Each dataset (1, 2, 3) chosen to secondary data analysis include interview transcripts, which were anonymized, transcribed and encoded. The transcribed data was designed by primary research authors from direct interviews with male participants with mild intellectual disabilities. The researchers of secondary data analysis had no access to the audio recordings of the interviews but full access to 46 transcripts.

### *Primary Research Project: Dataset 1*

A mixed method of quantitative-qualitative research of students with intellectual disabilities, their parents and teachers was undertaken in 2010 by Ćwirynkało (2010) whose aim was to describe the social functioning of special school students with mild intellectual disabilities in the context of their autonomy and plans from three perspectives: students', parents' and teachers'. As for the first perspective (students'), a total of 180 children and youth (90 males and 90 females) took part in the research, of whom 60 attended the three upper grades of primary school, 60 – junior high school and 60 – vocational school. The author combined quantitative and qualitative methods meant as a sequence approach (Creswell 2013, Miles, Huberman 2000). Out of all the data analyzed in the primary research, in the current study we took into account the qualitative interviews with purposive sample of 30 male vocational school students with mild intellectual disabilities age of 18-21.

### *Primary Research Project: Dataset 2*

A study on aspirations of young people with mild intellectual disabilities that used a qualitative approach to provide the participants' views on their future and plans by Bsdurek (2010) was undertaken in 2010 and supervised by Ćwirynkało. The aim of the BA research was to find out what sort of aspirations young students with mild intellectual disabilities have as far as their further education, professional career, living conditions and family life are concerned. A purposive sample consisted of 10 students of special vocational students aged

19-21, of whom 6 were males and 4 females. Only the interviews with 6 male participants were analyzed in the present study.

#### *Primary Research Project: Dataset 3*

The aim of the research project conducted by Łysoniek (2014) in 2014 and supervised by Borowska-Beszta, was to find out what life plans have males with mild intellectual disabilities (IQ 55-70). The author interviewed purposive sample of 10 male students of a special vocational school in Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodeship in Poland. The main research question was: What are the life plans of 10 males with mild intellectual disabilities, students of a special vocational school? The author used an ethnographic strategy by Spradley (1979), Borowska-Beszta (2005), Angrosino (2010), Flick (2010), Gibbs (2011), Jamielniak (2012). The participating students were in their early adulthood (18-21 years of age).

#### *Ethics of Data Collection: Primary Dataset*

In case of each of the above mentioned research described (Bsdurek 2010, Ćwirynkało 2010, Łysoniek 2014), the participants were informed about the aim of the research and completed a written form of consent to take part in the research (individual, anonymous, gratuitous interview), to record, transcribe the interviews, code and store the data and, finally, use it in the theses. In the first two studies (Bsdurek 2010, Ćwirynkało 2010) the authors used the written consent forms of their own construction, in the latter one the form proposed by Rapley (2010) was used.

#### *Secondary Data Analysis*

##### *Steps*

The following steps were undertaken in the current study:

- Establishing access to the raw data
- Sorting the primary 3 datasets and 46 transcripts and extracting appropriate transcripts to carry out secondary analysis on the pattern of transition to adulthood of males with intellectual disabilities who were 18-21 years of age.
- The rejection of transcriptions that are not related to the needs of secondary research analysis. We rejected 4 transcripts of interviews with females from the study by Bsdurek (2010).
- The analysis of data from 46 transcriptions and generating the categories corresponding to the secondary research questions.
- Answering three research questions posed in the draft of secondary qualitative data analysis
- Discussion and final conclusions

##### *Sorting the Data*

Table 1. *The Final Dataset for Secondary Data Analysis*

| Dataset                      | Primary interviews with males with mild intellectual disabilities |
|------------------------------|---|
| Dataset 1: Ćwirynkało (2010) | 30  |
| Dataset 2: Bsdurek (2010)    | 6   |
| Dataset 3: Łysoniek (2014)   | 10  |

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|        |                |    |
|--------|----------------|----|
| Total: | Three Datasets | 46 |
|--------|----------------|----|

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Source: Inspired by Long-Sutehall, T., Sque, M., Addington-Hall, J., (2010). Secondary analysis of qualitative data: a valuable method for exploring sensitive issues with an elusive population? *Journal of Research in Nursing* 16(4) 335–344

### *Coding and Categorization Analysis*

The analysis was performed using coding and categorization proposed by Saldaña, (2009), Flick (2010), Kvale (2010), Gibbs (2011). The total amount of analyzed raw data and transcripts with males with mild intellectual disabilities was 46. The researchers generated 4 categories related to the research questions: transitions pattern called *autonomy*, transition pattern components (*internal* and *external*), factors facilitating the transition (*internal* and *external*) and factors hindering the transition (*internal* and *external*). The steps of the analysis involved:

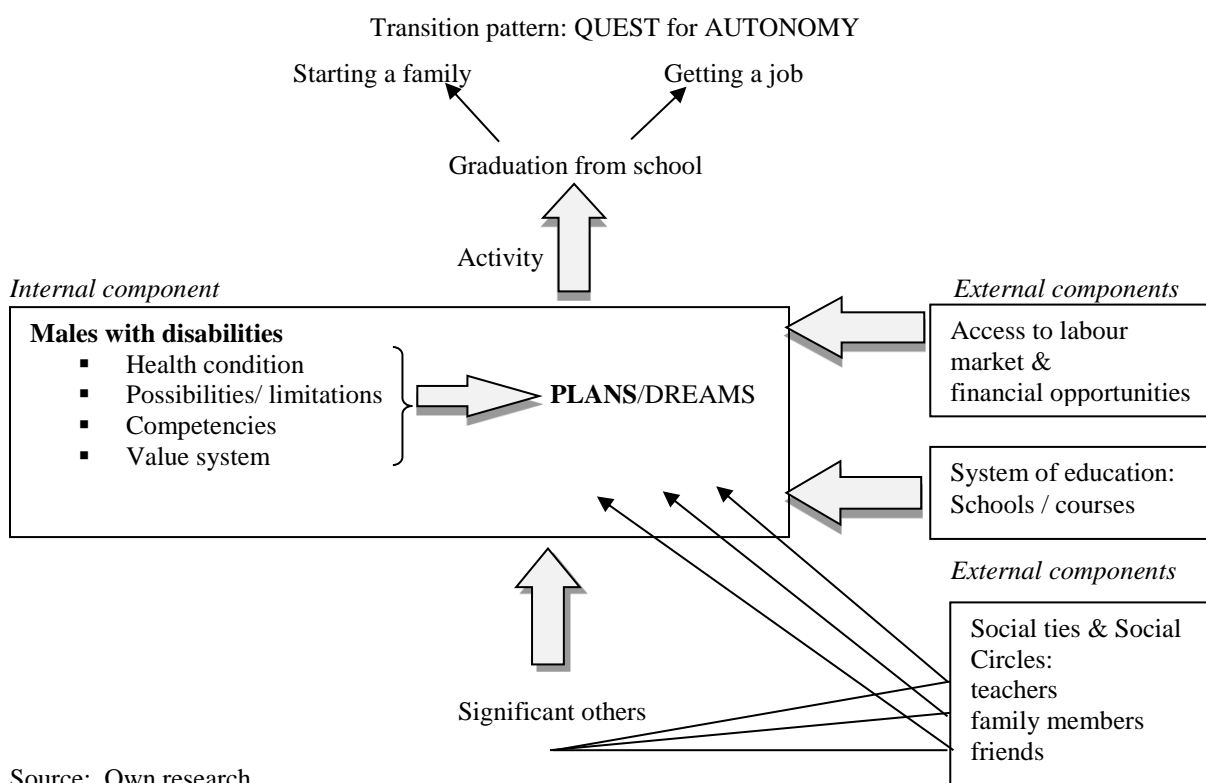
- Coding of words generated from verbatim data of 46 transcriptions from 3 datasets
- Categorization as a process grouping generated codes from verbatim data into broader textual categories
- Constant comparison of categories and examination of their relations to the main and detailed research questions
- Categorization as segmentation the verbatim data from transcripts of 3 datasets according to research questions
- Presenting the results in diagram, tables and texts (Kvale, 2010, Ćwirynkało, Borowska-Beszta & Bartnikowska 2016).

### **Results**

The diagram 1 presented below shows the answer to the main research question. We searched for the main transition pattern of 46 males with mild intellectual disabilities, aged 18-21 and living in Poland. The research results indicated that the main aim in the transition pattern of the purposive sample of males, generated after secondary data analysis, was *quest for autonomy*.

As indicated in the diagram 1., the participants of the three studies had both short-term and long-term goals in their lives. For all of them the main short-term objective was graduation from school. It was perceived as a crucial phase of the process of transition to adulthood and in many cases also as a necessary condition to fulfill adult roles (in the area of employment and starting their own families) that would give a sense of autonomy. The chances to accomplish this task and become an autonomous person are dependent, according to the interviewees on several internal and external factors that can either facilitate or hinder the process. They are described below as categories 2, 3, and 4.

*Category 1: Transition Pattern: Autonomy (diagram 1.)*



*Category 2: Transition Pattern Components*

Factors that affect the transition of young males with intellectual disabilities into adulthood can be divided into two main categories: internal (connected with personal characteristics of a person with a disability) and external (independent of the person).

*The internal components include:*

- health condition (physical, intellectual, other). Sebastian: *I had an accident. A car hit me at the crossing (...) I was rehabilitated at home – the accident modifies certain plans or the forms of self-realization.*
- self-awareness concerning:
  - themselves (being aware of their own possibilities and limitations). Philip: *I don't speak well* (the answer to the question about barriers in fulfilling the plans); Stan: *There are sometimes such difficulties that I can't get by* (assessing the interviewee's independence). The awareness of possibilities is also noticing the features that enhance job opportunities, e.g. Jonas describes himself as 'intelligent, nice, helpful'.
  - competences essential to work performance. Albert: *I never give up, always move forward*; Sebastian: *[I want to] have skills so that I do my job well.*
  - possibilities to continue education and work in certain areas in a place of living. Peter (asked about the best jobs): *Well, this must be a professional fitter or a carpenter (...), cause it's easy to get a job*; Albert: *I was thinking of another course – I wanted to be a carpenter. But the school didn't have it – there were too few people [candidates]. (...) fitter, indoor painter, wallpaper*

*fitter are the best ever jobs (...) and well-paid; Jonas: I'll work for my grandpa. And if not, then I'll look for something.*

- their value system, in which graduating from school, gaining professional qualifications and getting a job plays a key role. Greg: *I want to graduate from school (...) to have these qualifications. Maybe I'll enroll again to have new qualifications;* Stan (when asked about dreams): *To have a job I'm trained for;* Peter: *To finish the school finally;* Jeremiah: *I want to finish [school] and I'm thinking of starting a new course.*
- possibilities to engage into new roles that are considered typical of adults (professional roles – being a worker, family roles of a husband, father). Jeremiah: *I help sometimes – when there's a renovation at neighbors' or something;* Philip: *I help my mum, feed the chicken, clear up or work in the field;* Pete: *Well, I work temporarily (...) At neighbor's (...) I drive a tractor, prepare food for farm animals.*

These factors may either enhance or weaken the motivation and activities connected with the process of transition to adulthood and establishment of a professional career.

*The external components consist of:*

- Social ties and social circles (family, teachers, friends – among them the key role play the significant others – people that the interviewees trust or act as their role models). Their role seems to be essential since they can affect the respondents' value system and stimulate the appearance of the above mentioned internal factors concerning objective state of health and subjective awareness of their own possibilities. Unfortunately, a lot of the informants claim that they have not got anyone close. When asked about someone significant, someone they can rely on, they usually answered shortly, using no more than a few words only, e.g. Greg: *There's my sister;* Albert: *A classmate;* Jonas: *My grandpa;* Mark: *Two teachers.*
- Polish system of education, access to labor market and financial opportunities (connected with education – school and the possibilities to continue education in order to develop professional qualifications, possibilities connected with getting a job – potential workplaces in a place of living – or – as some interviewees notice – connected with moving out to find employment). Peter: *Maybe I'll go to Belgium (...) My friend goes there;* Arthur: *[I can find a job] there where I studied, in R. or, if not, there where my uncle works, they make warm water there.*

### *Category 3: Factors Facilitating Transition*

The interviews allowed us to distinguish several factors that facilitate the transition from youth to adulthood. Among them there are:

- Abilities and skills (physical, intellectual, communication, and language);
- Earlier family and professional experience (e.g. voluntary work, temporary employment, usually during holidays, engagement with household chores and carrying out renovations – both in the interviewees' own homes and at neighbors') which can act as an inspiration to do a course at a vocational school and be an informal professional training practice both in a specific branch and at work in general;
- Plans and ambitions that are in accordance with the opportunities in local communities – such plans were illustrated by Stan, one of vocational school students: *Well, it's cool to be a carpenter. You can learn a great deal. I love doing it!;*

- Having a passion that enhances internal motivation – this is visible, to give an example, in case of Greg who wants to be a confectioner and has dreamt of becoming one since his childhood, Jonathan whose grandfather was a plumber and who dreams of doing *the job just like him* or David who studies hard to be a good chef and really cares about *good grades and opinion at school*;
- The system of values – two values seem to be crucial in the transition to adulthood: work and family. As for the first one, the interviewees often perceive the profession and employment as an important (for some – the most important) part of adult life. On the other hand, there are also participants who declare that the most important values for them are love and family happiness. What is also characteristic, however, is the fact that the appreciation of family values is complemented by the awareness of the need to be able to support the family. When asked why they want to work in the future, one of the interviewees, Edward, answered, *To breed my family, of course*;
- Role models that strengthen the males' motivation. To give an example, for Jonathan this is his grandfather – a plumber, and the model is closely related to the realization of Jonathan's professional aspirations. In other cases these can be parents (especially fathers) or other family members, teachers or – as Keith and Albert claim – people (e.g. classmates, schoolmates) with disabilities that are perceived as models that are not so difficult to follow;
- More or less carefully planned strategies of looking for a job after finishing school. Some respondents are planning to look for a job actively, for example Xavier: *Hmmm ... I thought it'd be good to come around and find some groceries or restaurants', others, like Stanley, have not made concrete plans yet: 'I'm not sure. Maybe I'll go to the USA – my uncle lives there and I could work somewhere there*;
- Imagining oneself in the role of a husband and/or father and perceiving the roles as demanding. In the three studies (Bsdurek 2010, Ćwirynkało 2010, Łysoniek 2014) there were no participants who would claim that they would never want to get married. Some interviewees simply allowed possibility of getting married and having children, others declared a desire to fulfill the roles. In both groups the participants often mentioned that to be a (good) husband or father one needs to get engaged into some activities, for example *help your wife* (Jeremiah), *take care of others* (Jonathan), *look after kids, play with them' or have a job* (Mark) *I'm not sure [about getting married] ... Maybe when I find a job – then I'd like to have a wife* (Edward);
- Self-awareness, being aware of having such features, like diligence, independence, quietude, reliability. It is difficult to assess whether the qualities were the actual characteristics of the interviewees, but the declarations might indicate that they knew which qualities were socially valued among adults and believed that they were expected to be characterized by such qualities;
- Striving for independence, which is clearly visible among all the interviewees in the studies, is usually expressed as a desire to move away from the family home, setting up and supporting the respondents' own families. The following statements illustrate the desire: *I don't want to move out, but when I have my own family, I'll support it on my own* (Jeremiah), *'...I want to move out and live alone* (Albert), *I want to have everything – a pretty wife, driving license and my own home* (Gregory). There are some interviewees, however, who have doubts about their chances to live independently from parents. They can be caused either by their health state (*I think the doctor won't let me work as a chef cause I'm sick*, Keith) or hesitations connected with a choice of career (Philip, for example, dreamt of becoming a farmer, and his mother owned a farm where he would have a chance after graduating from school so if he decided to work there, he would not feel completely independent);

- The interviewees' own activities. These are related to the previous factor – the strive for independence. The respondents perceived themselves as subjects who have an impact on their school work, future career and important life decisions (e.g. choosing their partners), they can definitely affect the realization of plans in a positive way;
- Opportunities to discuss topics related to the transition to adulthood and employment with people they considered significant and whom they trusted.

#### *Category 4: Factors Hindering Transition*

The analysis of the participants' interviews also shows that there are factors that may have a limiting or delaying effect on the respondents' transition to the adult life. They include:

- Limited physical and intellectual skills (including disorders in the sphere of communication, general health condition confirmed by a doctor who decides whether a person will or will not get a medical certificate to work in a particular profession). To give an example, in case of Peter, his original plans had to be modified for this reason: *I wanted to be a hairdresser, but they didn't give me some certificates;*
- The awareness of the males' own limitations and disabilities. Xavier can serve as an example of this as he dreamt of working a teacher, but decided to stop making attempts to become one, because – as he says – *You have to go to college, then do your master's degree. And I cannot do this, cause, you know, I am mildly disabled. And it'd be hard;*
- Lack of local opportunities (no schools or particular courses). This situation applies to Jeremiah who wanted to be a car mechanic, but *there is no such course in the school, so I chose this [a hotel service technician];*
- Lack of planned strategies of active job search. In the interviews most participants gave only short responses when asked how they would be looking for a job. This might indicate a lack of awareness of the males that there is the need to take action in order to find employment, and that lack of such actions could become a factor impeding the transition to the stage of adulthood and professional career;
- Lack of awareness of some external factors, which can be an obstacle to apply career plans. When the interviewees, were asked whether they were concerned about the future, one of them, Gregory replied: *No, what will be, will be,* and Stan said *I'm sure it'll be ok, don't know how for now, but it will.* Another participant, Philip, when he was asked what determines the application of plans in his life, replied, *I don't know.* The problem may be the perception of the opportunities to implement plans that are dependent on the participants;
- Lack of people in their environment the participants would trust and who could enhance their aspirations and stimulate to action. The lack of (in case of almost all informants) a school staff member who would be a vocational counselor the participants would trust and talk to, is particularly striking. The fact that all the participants study in a vocational school makes the situation even more surprising. It seems that especially in a place like this there should be someone who would serve as a 'guide' or vocational counselor on the way to adulthood as far as students' future career is concerned. It is possible that there are employees / teachers in a school who play such a role, but, what seems to be important, the young males do not talk about such a person. The participants did not perceive the presence of such counselors/teachers as significant in their professional development.



## Discussion

The secondary data analysis of the raw data from the research by Bsdurek (2010), Ćwirynkało (2010), and Łysoniek (2014) allowed us to have a more in-depth view into the process of transition to adulthood of young males with mild intellectual disabilities. The main components of this transition are presented in table 2.

Table 2. *Components of transition to adulthood pattern of young males with intellectual disabilities*

| Internal components  | External components  |
|--|--|
| 1. Objective – state of health (mainly physical, intellectual)   | 1. Social ties & Social circles – family, teachers, friends  |
| 2. Subjective – awareness of the participants' own possibilities and limitations, competencies, their value system | 2. Polish educational system, access to labor market and financial opportunities – educational and professional (lack of) opportunities: availability of courses, workplaces in a place of living or/and a possibility to move out |

We also identified several factors that can either facilitate or act as barriers on the way to the participants' adult life. They are shown in table 3.

Table 3. *Factors facilitating and hindering the process of transition to adulthood pattern of young males with intellectual disabilities*

| Factors facilitating transition to adulthood  |  | Factors hindering transition to adulthood   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Internal  | External   | Internal  | External  |
| Abilities and skills  | 'Good' role models, supporters and significant others in close environment   | Limited physical and intellectual skills  | Lack of supporting people in the environment that the participants would trust and who could enhance their aspirations      |
| Experience (in fulfilling certain family or professional roles)   | The existence of significant people the participants would trust and could talk to about their plans for the future          | Awareness of the limitations  | Professionals (e.g. doctors) who make decisions whether they can or cannot do certain jobs (e.g. give medical certificates) |
| Strong interests and passions   | The existence of schools and courses in educational system that are in accordance with the interviewees' plans and ambitions | Lack of planned strategies of active tertiary education, lifelong learning, and employment search | Lack of local opportunities (no schools, particular courses or employment places)   |
| High estimation of work and family in the system of values  | The existence of a variety of accessible workplaces in the community the participants lived in                               | Lack of awareness of some external factors, which can be an obstacle to apply career plans        | High unemployment rate or lack of workplaces in the participants' future professions  |
| Being characterized by (or believing to be characterized by) features that are considered typical of adults |  |   |   |
| Striving for independence   |  |   |   |
| The interviewees' own activities  |  |   |   |

We believe that, although there are certain benefits of undertaken qualitative secondary data analysis, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of our research. We are aware that we analyzed 46 transcripts of interviews, which raises questions about the saturation of the content. Usually, qualitative researchers would like to have more and more data. So we believe that more transcripts would perhaps draw slightly different and broader picture of transition pattern to adulthood of Polish young males with mild intellectual disabilities and give deeper level of saturation. What is more, just like with most secondary analyses of data which was collected for other purposes, the fit between means and ends in the paper cannot be completed or easily saturated (see: Booth, Booth, 2002) and there are several themes we would explore more. Furthermore, except for one more experienced researcher, Ćwirynkało (2010), the primary data was collected by beginning researchers (Bsdurek, 2010; Łysoniek, 2014) with little experience in practical interviewing vulnerable participants, for example individuals with various types of disability, which may cause less saturated data in transcripts and datasets 2 and 3. Another issue is associated with the specifics and richness of the data collected from persons functioning intellectually on a mild level of intellectual disability (70-55 I.Q). Data collected from informants with such abilities may not be rich due to certain skills of people with intellectual disabilities, e.g. lower intellectual abilities, language competencies, finally communication willingness etc. The last issue related to difficulties in the field, was associated with gender of the young female researchers who interviewed young males, almost their peers who tried to flirt with the researchers during the interviews. We suppose that gender issue in the field might possibly have some impact on collected data.

## **Conclusion**

The secondary data analysis was conducted in order to identify the pattern of transition to adulthood of 46 young Poles, males with mild intellectual disabilities. We indicated that the main theme of the pattern was a quest for autonomy. The secondary analysis let us also name the components included in the pattern. The results show that the components are both internal (related to health, limitations, capabilities, values, competencies) and external (relating to the education system, the labor market, financial and life opportunities in Poland as well as to social ties and social circles of the significant others supporting the 46 males).

The factors supporting the autonomy of 46 young males were associated with their own potential, social environment that supports their development as well as lifelong education and work opportunities in the community. Barriers that hinder the process of transition are systemic factors related to the lack of needed social networks supporting the development of young males. Moreover, the lack of learning opportunities in the system of Polish education and educational solutions, concerning lifelong learning courses are of great importance. Other barriers include the lack of adequate opportunities in the system of employment that would be addressed to needs of males with intellectual disabilities, and the lack of suitable job offers in the local environment, which would give people intellectual deficits a chance to work.

We believe that to make the transition process to adulthood successful for young males with intellectual disability, developing their skills and abilities is not enough. It is also important to allow them to branch out and work up their interests. This could be done through offering a wide range of experiences. We believe that young people with intellectual disabilities should be offered regular transition services and support. They may include, as

Flaxer et al. (2013; in: Hoover, 2016) notice, instruction, community experiences, the development of employment or acquisition of daily living skills.

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