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Personal resources of the homeless and strategies for dealing with a difficult situation

SUMMARY

This doctoral dissertation tries to answer the question, what kind of personal resources homeless people have while coping with a difficult situation. The first part of the dissertation includes theoretical aspects of homelessness. The meaning of home in human development has been analyzed here. The term of a homeless person and homelessness itself has been presented and the conditions leading to the acceptance of a homeless person's status by an individual have been followed through. According to Michał Porowski's concept „homelessness is a relatively permanent situation of a man deprived of the roof over his or her head or not having his or her own flat.”¹. Literature concerning the reasons for homelessness distinguishes social and individual perspectives which lead a person to the state of exclusion. In the second chapter of the dissertation some chosen contexts of homelessness have been depicted. The research that have been conducted until now, referring to the discussed phenomenon have applied to people living in institutional support centers². The undertaken analysis has led to conclusion that currently, carrying out research among people who stay in places where normally nobody lives in (railway stations, streets, allotments), is out of reach. Single men (divorced, widowed or separated), aged 40 to 60 comprise mainly the homeless population. They have primary education or incomplete vocational one, having been homeless for at least five years and most often living on social benefits, collecting, temporary jobs or sickness benefit/pension.

In the third chapter, the term of a difficult situation and the concept of Richard Lazarus' transactional model of coping with stress have been characterized. Transaction – the interaction between person's abilities (resources) and the demands of the environment - is one of the basic ideas in R.S. Lazarus' theory³. While in chapter four, categories of personal resources contributing to dealing with a difficult situation have been depicted. Aaron Antonovsky paid a lot of attention to the concept of resources in his salutogenetic model⁴ and Stevan Hobfoll, assuming that people strive for maintaining and developing their resources⁵. In the fifth chapter of the thesis, forms of help given to the homeless by administrative institutions of government and non-governmental organizations have been analyzed.

In the second part of the dissertation, the problem itself and methodology used have been presented. The aim of the research was to recognize personal resources of the homeless in coping with a difficult situation, staying in centers for homeless people in Greater Poland. The crucial issue was to find the answer to the question what personal resources homeless

¹ M. Porowski, *Homelessness – a picture of the phenomenon and the population of the homeless*, [in:] (ed.) T. Pilch, J. Lepalczyk, *Social Pedagogy*, Warsaw 1995, p. 433-443.

² Source: Statistic Data of MPiPS, <http://www.mpips.gov.pl/index.php?gid=1114>. Diagnosis carried out on 7/8 February 2013 showed that there were 22.000 homeless people in institutional centers, and about 8,5 thousand out of the institutions.

³ S. E. Hobfoll, *Stress, culture and society. Psychology and philosophy of stress*, GWP, Gdańsk 2006, p. 137.

⁴ H. Sęk, *An Introduction to clinical psychology*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warsaw 2007, p. 51-56.

⁵ S. Hobfoll, *Stress, culture and society. Psychology and philosophy of stress*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 62-63.

people have and determine dependences between the sense of coherence, the level of self-efficacy, social support, self-assessment of the resources and strategies of coping with a difficult situation by homeless people, and also examining the correlation between personal resources of the homeless and demographic – social factors. The research was carried out by the author in the centers for homeless people from October, 2014 until June, 2015. The quantitative research was conducted on 369 homeless. The qualitative one included 7 respondents. The following order of research tools was used: *interview questionnaire* (sex, age, marital status, education and social background, period of being homeless and the place of accommodation), *WCQ (Ways of Coping Questionnaire)*, *Life Orientation Questionnaire (SOC-29)*, *ISEL - 40 Scale*, *General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES)*, *E. Berg's Scale*, *Modified Scale for measuring the sense of social stigmatization among the homeless*, *Modified Ego Identity Status Scale (EIS)*, *structured interview*.

In the third part of the dissertation, the results of the conducted own research were analyzed. The obtained data indicates that the kind of center in which homeless people dwelled, has appeared to be a moderator of many analyzed relations. That is why it was decided that model testing would be carried out separately, for each group of the homeless (pro-Christian versus the rest of them) explaining the way of dealing with a difficult situation by the person being tested, depending on what personal resources they possess. The models showed dependences only among homeless people living in pro-Christian centers. Created models featured that ego identity itself is not meaningful, personal resources of an individual are important, such as: self-efficacy, life orientation, accepting others and the feeling of safety. Gathered that way empirical material proved that there is a connection between coping with a difficult situation and general belief of the homeless concerning their self-efficacy while facing a difficult situation. Homeless people living in pro-Christian centers demonstrate adequate self-assessment and strong sense of self-efficacy. They do not feel homelessness stigma, they emphasize the role of actions taken by the center in order to minimize the sense of being stigmatized, especially the role of the center's manager, as the meaningful person. However, the obtained empirical material has not confirmed that the connection between the coping-with-stress strategy of homeless people with a difficult situation and the sense of coherence exists. The connection between the coping strategy taken by the homeless and their identity status has not also been shown. Therefore, it is improper not to appreciate the resources that homeless people have while planning preventive or corrective actions. The fifth chapter depicts a model of working with the homeless, based on developing personal resources. Essential constituents are included there: establishing relationships, strengthening adaptational resources, monitoring and motivating to change behaviour and individual plan of becoming self-sufficient.

While planning preventive or corrective actions, resources which the homeless have should be appreciated. Good methods used in pro-Christian centers are worth using and adopting in other centers.