

## Original Papers

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### Perceived social support and life-satisfaction

*The article concerns the relationship between life-satisfaction and the features of interpersonal relationships and social support. The research presented in this paper concerned the satisfaction with the relationships with family members, friends, colleagues and acquaintances, the extent of the relationships among these groups, and the perceived social support. The aim of the presented research is to assess the impact of these characteristics on life-satisfaction. In addition, the changes that occurred after the social skills training in the level of life-satisfaction and its determinants were examined. The study group consisted of 60 participants. The results show that the strongest determinants of life-satisfaction are practical support and the satisfaction with the relationships with friends. After the social training the structure of the determinants changed. The factors which were relevant before the training appear to be insignificant now; however, the emotional support, satisfaction with family relationships and the number of friends gain in importance. The social skills training was also effective and increased the level of life-satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *life-satisfaction, perceived social support, extent of relationships, closeness of relationships*

#### Introduction

Life satisfaction is a general affective and reflective attitude towards life. It is a subjective process of perception and evaluation, referring to the perspective of the past accompanied by the affect. The processes of the assessment and living one's own life are made in the context of specific criteria which are very often individually matched at the moment of determining the level of satisfaction. Life-satisfaction is a structure that is more stable than the sensory experiences, although not as permanent as the will of life on one hand (Czapiński, 2004) and the quality of life (Nettle, 2005) on the other. This understanding of life-satisfaction is a broad definition of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being combines both the emotional as well as cognitive aspects of attitude towards life. Life-satisfaction is often described as a three-dimensional construct comprising: the level of life satisfaction, positive affect and a lack of negative affect (Diener, Oishi, Lucas, 2003).

Interpersonal relationships have long been associated with satisfaction and happiness and different results of research confirm this relation. Alfred Adler states that "the attitude towards others, the job and love" are the basic tasks of human life, which affect the fate and happiness of a man and the whole society (Adler, 1939, p.8)

The results of research on the relations between interpersonal contacts and life-satisfaction are not clear or complete (Myers, 2004; Argyle, 2004a) and require further exploration. The relation between positive interpersonal relationships and happiness can be described in three ways. Positive relationships determine happiness and are either its components or its effect. If we assume that happiness is, as Nettle suggested (2005), its second level (which is a relatively stable subjective affective and cognitive experience), each of these approaches is supported by the empirical evidence. These three types of relation of the discussed variables are difficult to separate (inter alia because of the manner in which the measurement and the analysis of empirical data are done).

According to Ryff et al. (2001), positive relationships with others form one dimension of human well-being. The relationships are the major factor in the psychological well-being, as the positive relationships with other people allow for human flourishing (Ryff and Singer (2000). Similarly, other researchers (Myers, 2004; Baumeister, Leary, 1995; Argyle, 2004a, 2004b), consider relationships with others as the very basic human need that is the source and the main component of the well-being. Such an assumption is made also by the author of this study.

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## Social support

The notion of social support derives from the clinical and therapeutic practice especially in the context of coping with stress and crisis, and social psychology investigating the importance of social relationships and social exchange. Among the many, mainly the operational definition of social support, the general definition which treats support as the objectively available network of contacts providing a sense of interpersonal relationships, acceptance and security and the possibility of obtaining various types of help in a difficult situation is the best reference to the current problem in this study (Sęk, 2003). Social support can be described by analyzing its different dimensions (categories) of which the most important is emphasizing the structural and functional support (Sęk, 2004).

Structural support may be described by five indicators: social network size, consistency and homogeneity, density, frequency of interaction and availability of contacts. The size or the extent of social relations networks is understood as an objectively available number of persons who may be the source of support and the sense of bonding. The level of consistency and homogeneity of the support is expressed in the demographic and social similarity but also in the mutual experiences of the partners of interaction. The density of relations is understood as the degree of interdependence between the interaction partners. The frequency of contacts is described by the ratio of the number of contacts per unit time. The availability of support is the number, distance and easiness of starting contacts (Sęk, 2004). Structural support, therefore, refers to the sources of support, that is, to people who potentially could provide help, their number and psychological closeness, physical accessibility and frequency of contacts in these relationships. These are the basic characteristics of interpersonal contacts, such as the number of people with whom a person has regular contacts and sources of support, depending on the proximity of psychological closeness or the kinship of the interaction partners. The first of these characteristics of interpersonal relationships is understood as the extent of social relations, the second one reflects the closeness (even if only of kinship) between the partners who share the support.

Functional support is defined as a type of the interaction or its consequences in the form of exchanging psychological or instrumental benefits. Functional social support can be distinguished as emotional support, practical support and social integration (Sommer, Fydrich, 1989). These types of social support are built by each man regardless of the available sources of support, family, friends and acquaintances and the extent of the relationships. Emotional support is manifested in expressing acceptance, sharing feelings, showing compassion. Practical support is expressed in providing help in the daily chores and social integration is shown by the common action and spending

time together, common interests. Each of these types of support seem to be important for shaping life-satisfaction.

Social support should also be considered by taking into account the subjective or objective characteristics of relationships with others. This criterion allows emphasizing received and perceived support. The measurement of the first one consists of collecting and describing the objective characteristics of the relationship, its extent, the level of kinship and closeness between the partners and the actual instrumental and psychological benefits of being in a relationship. Perceived social support is a subjective picture (psychological representation) of the authentic extent of the relationships and the benefits they bring. Perceived support is usually identical to the received one, but it does not have to be so.

The studies of social support are dominated by contexts of the sources of perceived social support, its types, matching the extent of support to the expectations of partners and its role in coping with the stress of living. The aspects of functional support are taken more often than structural support as factors of health improvement, coping with loss or improving mood and reducing depressive tendencies (for the review of research: Sęk, 2004).

## Social support and life satisfaction

Different researchers have shown that various types of social support are beneficial for health. Social support increases quality of life and sense of quality of life in struggling with oncological and cardiological diseases (for the review of research: Sęk, 2004) or multiple sclerosis (Motl & McAuley, 2009). It lowers the tension caused by stress, the approaching death of their own or their loved ones (Knoll & Schwarzer, 2004). Support allows proper and satisfactory paternal role performance such as being a father (Isacco, Garfield, Rogers, 2010). According to the buffer hypothesis of support, it allows to reinterpret their own life-situation, from the threat to the challenge. And according to the additive model, support enhances well-being if its strength overcomes the strength of acting stressor (Sęk, 2004). Social support, both in the structural and functional dimension appears, therefore, to be an important interpersonal relationships factor in shaping life-satisfaction.

One of the aspects of structural social support is the satisfaction with interpersonal relationships at different levels of kinship and intimacy.

The satisfaction with the interpersonal relationships especially within married couples and relationships with friends takes the highest or nearly the highest place among the conditions for happiness (Social Diagnosis 2005; 2009) and loneliness is negatively correlated with positive emotions and life-satisfaction (Argyle, 2004a, 2004b).

On the other hand, according to the Self-Determination Theory, satisfying relations with others along with the sense of autonomy and competence are the result and the indicator of well-being (Ryan, Decie, 2000). Most researchers point out the two-way relation of happiness and good relationships with others, which give the effect of “upward spiral” (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Building a relationship and support stems from the fact that we are social beings, as it is expressed in the desire to belong, the need for social acceptance, expecting support and assistance and in maintaining bonds. (Baumeister, Leary, 1995).

The relation between taking care of relationships, the satisfaction with them and the high quality of life can be explained by two theories, the theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1969) and the theory of intimacy (Nezlek, 2000).

Both concepts imply that safe and deep relationships with others constructed in childhood, last in adulthood and make achieving the sense of peace, support and shaping life-satisfaction possible (Nezlek, 2000). Both concepts also point to the quality (the functional aspect of the relationship) and not to the number of contacts (structural aspect) as the basis for developing a close bond, high satisfaction with them and the general well-being. Several studies show a positive relationship between attachment security to others and well-being (Simpson, 1990). The secure attachment to others increases satisfaction, because it allows for more activity, independence and courage in action, which in turn allows for experiencing autonomy, competence and relatedness (La Guardia et al, 2000). Satisfying of these three basic psychological needs, according to the Self-Determination Theory, gives meaning to life (Ryan, Decie, 2000, 2001). In addition, people who experience intimacy with others feel understood, engaged in deep, meaningful dialogue and have a good time with other people (Reis et al, 2000). All of the theoretical approaches above emphasize the significant role of support as the result of positive relationships with others. They suggest a variety of support functions such as the experience of community, getting help from others and the sense of being understood and accepted. The mere fact of discerning the support, independently of the existence of such, emphasizes the satisfaction with relationships and improves the psychological well-being of man.

The aspect that was most commonly tested in the context of interpersonal relationship of life-satisfaction is marriage, the characteristics of this relationship, its phase and duration, the sex of the spouse, having children. Studies show that married people are more happy (Inglehart, 1990), are rarely involved in conflicts, have the sense of support, relatedness and intimacy (Baumeister, Leary, 1995), often experience joy and positive mood (Argyle, 2004a, p. 135), and even exhibit better health and lower mortality (Uchino et al., 1999) than persons without a permanent partner. Longitudinal studies have shown that the increase

of happiness resulting from being married usually occurs 2 years after the entering such a union, and later it stabilizes at level which is characteristic for personality of each of the spouses (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

The research on the relationship of happiness with other relationships of kinship, friendship or having acquaintances is rarely undertaken.

### **The social context of perceived social support and life-satisfaction**

The political and economic changes that have been experienced in Poland for 20 years formed social acceptance for living out of wedlock and caused changes in family patterns. There are fewer and fewer multigenerational households and families have fewer members. The role of the family in shaping interpersonal relations has been reduced. Although the number of marriages does not decrease, the number of divorces increases and there are more people who decide to be temporarily or permanently alone. The census (including family structure analysis in the post-war period, which was conducted twice, in 1988 and 2002.) indicates the increase in single households from 18.3% in 1988 to 24.8% in 2002 ([www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)). It is estimated that in Poland there are now 5 mln singles and the trend is growing ([www.biznes.interia.pl](http://www.biznes.interia.pl)). The census also revealed that the number of single mothers increased from 13.7% to 17.2% and fathers from 1.7% to 2.2% between 1988 and 2002 ([www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)). People have to compensate the evolutionarily shaped need for permanent partnerships by entering into other relationships in other ways like for instance socializing, and from there they get the benefits until now reserved for marriage and family relationships. Thus, the role of social relationships and friendship grows, especially for those who do not have large families living nearby.

The theories of attachment and intimacy and numerous studies on marital relationships clearly show that it is not the amount of social contacts on a regular basis that people have, but it is their quality that is decisive for life-satisfaction. Despite extensively proved weakness of ostentatious values (Czapiński, 2008) and goods which decide about position (Nettle, 2005) which raise happiness, people still show their tendency to multiply them. In the area of interpersonal relationships as such an ostentatious good would serve the number of contacts with others, regardless of their quality. Such a social phenomenon of “inflating relationships” is observed particularly among young people. This phenomenon involves building extensive social relations, constructing a rich network of contacts recorded in mobile phone, address books and email accounts. The phenomenon of “inflating relationships” is manifested in the tendency to organize meetings and social

events to which the friends or acquaintances invited are not necessarily those closest or even well-known, they are invited only to fill the room with guests and thus give the satisfaction with one's own popularity. This phenomenon is also manifested in participating in many forums and social network sites and inviting a growing number of people to the group of friends. Because such "inflated" relationships are quite extensive, the amount of time spent on them is relatively small, so they must be superficial. The principle of building very broad relationships focuses on the quantity, the more contacts stored in mobile telephones, guests and friends lists on various accounts, the greater the satisfaction. Those concepts clearly show a link between the relationship quality and satisfaction with the relationship and subsequently life-satisfaction. Under these assumptions, the extension of contacts with others should not impose the life-satisfaction, however, on the other hand, extensive social relations give a statistically greater chance for support and for satisfying relationships which are those which respect partners' expectations and not just the duty of the interaction. Having friends and colleagues itself allows one to feel socially acceptable and attractive, assuring well-being and high self-esteem. In addition, unstable families with few members tend to build relationships and extend them beyond the bonds of kinship and partnership.

On the other hand, there are examples of research which show that the number of friends is the most important factor shaping different indicators of well-being. The latest Social Diagnosis (2009) shows that from 28 different tested aspects of well-being (general satisfaction, partial satisfaction) the strongest determinant for 11 of them (rank 1) was by the number of friends. By contrast, the general life-satisfaction is determined by the number of friends in 1% (it takes the fourth place after marriage, age and unemployment). It is worth to state that 21 different factors were examined, which, according to the literature, form various aspects of the Mental Well-being (Social Diagnosis 2009). In this study, marriage as the happiness predictor ("pure" skipping other factors) has reached the value of 4.6, while as the predictor of current life assessment reached the value of 2.6. In turn, the number of friends explained respectively: 1.0% of the variance of current life assessment and 0.5% of the variance in happiness.

Despite the large literature and social observation it is not clear whether it is the number of social contacts with different levels of closeness, satisfaction with those relationships or received benefits from the relationship in the form of support that determine life-satisfaction.

In the positive psychology social relations are examined in the context of achieving and maintaining happiness and well-being. Therapies and workshops carried out in the spirit of the positive psychology independently of many individually postulated ways of achieving happiness suggest that good social relations are a reliable way to raise

life-satisfaction (Seligmann, 2005, Sheldon, Lyubomirsky, 2007, Haidt, 2007; Carr, 2009). The effectiveness of social skills training conducted in accordance with the principles of positive psychology should be investigated. Questions that arise on this occasion not only relate to the changes in the perceived level of life-satisfaction and the social relations but also indicate social relations that determine life-satisfaction before and after training.

In summary, several characteristics of relationships which determine life satisfaction should be singled out. They are: relationship closeness, relationship satisfaction, perceived support and extent of the relationship. All of them can affect the achieved satisfaction, raise or lower it. On one side, life-satisfaction is correlated with positive social relations, especially with one's family and one's partner. Good interpersonal relationships are expressed in the sense of satisfaction with the relationship and the perception of support from other parties. The closest bond is usually formed in the family and marriage, but because of their decreasing stability and the extent and spatial distance, it can be assumed that the dominant role in the creation of life-satisfaction was taken over by other groups such as friends. Thus, satisfaction with the relationship of friendship may be a stronger predictor than satisfaction with family relationships. Social support which may come from different people and do not necessarily take many different forms of practical assistance but be felt as the experience of integration up to the feeling of emotional closeness is another factor apart from the closeness of the relationship. The level of perceived support form, regardless of the proximity and extent of the relationship, may be a more important determinant of life-satisfaction. Another factor related to interpersonal contacts is their extent. The number of family members, friends, colleagues and acquaintances also correlates with life-satisfaction, as it even statistically reinforces the sense of support and self-esteem, allows for spending time in a good company and finding a companion in a passion. For development of the sense of happiness it is crucial to state features of interpersonal relations that have changed after positive interpersonal training and allow one to raise life-satisfaction.

### Research aim

The aim of this study is to describe the relationship between interpersonal contacts and general life-satisfaction and satisfaction with partial interpersonal relationships. Another aim is the assessment of extent of the importance of relationships and satisfaction with relationships with family, friends colleagues and acquaintances for life-satisfaction. Apart from the extent of the relationship and satisfaction, the perceived social support was analyzed as a predictor of well-being. Moreover, the aim of research is to

identify opportunities to raise life-satisfaction through the development of satisfaction with interpersonal relationships in the course of social skills training.

The analysis of the data from the literature suggests the following research hypotheses:

H1. Life-satisfaction is positively correlated with satisfaction with the relationship, social support and the extent of contacts.

H2. Interpersonal relations out of the family are more strongly connected to life-satisfaction than family relations.

H3. The number of positive interpersonal contacts positively determines life-satisfaction.

H4. The sense of social support determines the life-satisfaction more strongly than the extent of interpersonal contacts.

H5. After the social skills training the participants experienced higher satisfaction with relationships, the sense of better support and generally higher satisfaction with life than before.

## Methods

In this study, the following variables and their indicators were taken. To test life-satisfaction the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) Diener, Emmons, Larson and Griffin in the adaptation of Zygfried Juczyński (2001) was used. This method is used to assess the disposition described by three components: the level of life-satisfaction, positive feelings and the lack of negative feelings. The scale consists of five statements assessed on a 7 grade scale (from 1 to 7), where the higher score indicates the greater life-satisfaction (Juczyński, 2001).

The scale reliability indicator is satisfactory (Cronbach alpha = 0.81), the stability of the scale is 0.86, standard error of measurement is equal 0.21. Theoretical validity of the tool was tested by the factor analysis which indicated a single factor explaining 56% of the variance and by analyzing the relation between life-satisfaction and other theoretically related variables, such as self-esteem ( $r = 0.56$ ), dispositional optimism ( $r = 0.45$ ) and perceived anger, depression and anxiety ( $-0.18$ ,  $-0.23$ ,  $-0.24$ ) and stress ( $-0.56$ ) (Juczyński, 2001).

Interpersonal relationships were analyzed in three dimensions, closeness of the relationship, the extent of the relationship and satisfaction with the relationship. The closeness of the relationship is a qualitative variable which reflects kinship and the level of intimacy in the deepest of family ties to start with, then in relationships with friends, colleagues and in superficial relationships with acquaintances to end with. I assume that the highest level of intimacy is reached within the family, then among friends, subsequently among colleagues and the lowest

level is reached among acquaintances. The closeness is a category of structural support, which partially covers the consistency and homogeneity of the relationship, density and availability. But it is not identical with any of these dimensions. The extent of the relationship is defined as the number of relatives, friends and colleagues with whom the participant has a regular contact. To examine these variables the following survey questions were used: *how many people from family, friends, colleagues and friends do you have regular contact with and how satisfied are you with these contacts*. Regularity of contacts indicated in the question was not clarified deliberately. I assume that the individual assessment of regularity people exhibit is variable, it might be once or several times a day or a week or a month, or a year. To analyze the extent or satisfaction of relations is enough that the tested person recalls and starts to be aware of these people, regardless of the regularity or frequency with which the contacts with them are taken.

The participants marked the responses indicating their number of people within each group and the level of satisfaction with those relationships on the scale from 0 to 4, where 0 means *I'm very dissatisfied*, and 4 means *I am very pleased*. The perceived social support was examined by the use of the Social Support Questionnaire (F-SozU K-22) Fydrich et al., in the adaptation of Z. Juczyński (in press). The questionnaire consists of three independent subscales reflecting the three types of social support, emotional support, practical support and social integration. The sum of these subscales gives a general indicator of perceived social support. The short version of this tool consists of 22 statements, which the person tested answers using the 5 point Likert scale. The higher the score in the individual scales, the higher the perceived social support. Questionnaire F-SozU K-22 is characterized by satisfactory psychometric properties. The psychometric properties of the Polish version of the questionnaire are satisfactory. Internal consistency (*Cronbach alpha*) is 0.92 for the entire questionnaire (from 0.76 for practical support, to 0.88 - for emotional support.). The indicators of stability (test-retest with an interval of 6 weeks) range from 0.68 for practical support, to 0.82 for emotional support. The theoretical validity was confirmed on the basis of factor analysis (*Principal Component Analysis*) and it gave a structure similar to the original version. The criterion relevance was established by correlations of the overall result of the questionnaire with the perceived practical support (0.75) and emotional (0.84) of *Significance of Others Scale - SOS* Power and Champion (Juczyński, 1999) and the search of emotional (0.66) and practical (0.46) support of Mini COPE scale (Juczyński, 2009).

**Table 1**  
**Correlations (Pearson r) between life-satisfaction and various indicators of interpersonal contacts (N = 58).**

| The indicators of interpersonal contacts           | Life-satisfaction before the training | Life-satisfaction after the training |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Social support                                     | 0.40*                                 | 0.57*                                |
| Emotional support                                  | 0.40*                                 | 0.51*                                |
| Practical support                                  | 0.39*                                 | 0.48*                                |
| Social integration                                 | 0.25                                  | 0.50*                                |
| Satisfaction with relationships in general         | 0.32*                                 | 0.25                                 |
| Satisfaction with family relations                 | 0.12                                  | 0.40*                                |
| Satisfaction with the relationship with friends    | 0.31*                                 | 0.16                                 |
| Satisfaction with the relationship with colleagues | 0.15                                  | 0.10                                 |
| Satisfaction with relationships with acquaintances | 0.15                                  | -0.10                                |
| The extent of the relationship in general          | 0.03                                  | 0.18                                 |
| The extent of family relationships                 | 0.14                                  | 0.17                                 |
| The extent of friendship relations                 | 0.10                                  | 0.37*                                |
| The extent of the relationship with colleagues     | -0.11                                 | 0.12                                 |
| The extent of relationships with acquaintances     | 0.02                                  | 0.08                                 |

\* result statistically significant  $p < 0,05$

### Procedure

The tests were performed in a quasi-experimental procedure with two assessments, the initial and final, with no control group. The first measurement was carried out before the psychological workshops which enhanced the social skills, the second when they have finished. Social skills training were aimed at beginning entrepreneurs from the Kujawsko-Pomorskie and were aimed at improving social skills in personal and professional relationships. Apart from the hard skills (in the field of economics and law), the participants were trained in their communication skills, the capacity for empathy, assertiveness, auto motivation, strengthened self-esteem and self-efficacy. The training was conducted for 9 months, in five groups of 12 people. The training for each group lasted 2 months. Classes were held two days a week for 6 hours. Summing up, the training comprised 96 hours of workshop, out of which the development of social skills took 36 hours. The study was conducted from April to December 2009, the time from pre-test to post-test in each group was 2 months.

### Participants

There were 59 participants. Each of them took part in the workshops which enhanced social skills. The average age of subjects was 31 (SD=7,9), minimum age was 20, and the maximum was 55 years. There were 31 men and 27 women, all participants had secondary and higher education.

### Results

The results were analyzed in three steps, before the workshop, and then after it, then the differences between the measurements was tested. The collected data were analyzed using the procedure of multiple correlation and regression.

### Social support, the extent of the relationships, satisfaction with them and life-satisfaction before and after the social skills training

One of the primary purposes of this research is to assess the characteristics of interpersonal contacts as correlates and determinants of life-satisfaction. Table 1 contains the results of life-satisfaction with various indicators of interpersonal relationships. It was found out that, regardless of the measurement, life-satisfaction is most strongly correlated with perceived social support and satisfaction with the relationship. Thus, the hypothesis 1 and 2 were confirmed, which suggested statistically significant relationship between life satisfaction and social support and satisfaction with the relationship but only with friends (only in the measurement before training) and family (only in the measurement after the training). According to hypothesis 2 the number of friends is related to life-satisfaction, but only after the training.

The results indicate no significant correlation between the first measurement of the extent of relationships and family relationships and life-satisfaction. Thus, the theories pointing to the quality of the relationship as a basis for developing a satisfaction have explanatory power.

The positive relationship between satisfaction with family relationships and the number of friends and life-satisfaction revealed only after training. This result is consistent with the results obtained in the diagnosis of Social Diagnosis (2009).

What is interesting, the extent of relations with friends appears as an important correlate of satisfaction only after the second measurement. An important thing here may be the training during which participants learn to appreciate

**Table 2**

**The percentage of the discussed life-satisfaction variation by individual indicators of interpersonal contacts (squared partial correlation x100).**

| The indicators of interpersonal contacts            | % of life-satisfaction variation explained by ratios before training | % of life-satisfaction variation explained by ratios after training |
|---|--|---|
| Emotional support                                   | 5.8  | 6.8   |
| Practical support                                   | 7.3  | 0.1   |
| Social integration                                  | 3.6  | 3.6   |
| Satisfaction with family relations                  | 0.04   | 10.9  |
| Satisfaction with the friendship relations          | 5.3  | 0.01  |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with colleagues | 1.0  | 0.5   |
| Satisfaction with relationships with acquaintances  | 0.0  | 10.9  |
| The extent of family relations                      | 0.1  | 1   |
| The extent of friendship relations                  | 0.5  | 12,96   |
| The extent of the relationships with colleagues     | 8.4  | 1.96  |
| The extent of relationships with acquaintances      | 0.4  | 1.4   |

**Table 3**

**The results of stepwise regression analysis for life-satisfaction variable (before training).**

| Variables significant to life-satisfaction | Step | R    | R-squared | R-square change | F – to enter / delete | p-level |
|--|------|------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Practical support                          | 1    | 0.44 | 0.19      | 0.19            | 13.0                  | 0.00    |
| Satisfaction with friendship relations     | 2    | 0.51 | 0.26      | 0.07            | 5.5                   | 0.02    |

the fact of having friends and the integration of the mental well-being.

The average (statistically significant) negative correlation ( $r = -0.27$ ) was obtained between the age and the number of colleagues. The older people are, the fewer friends they have. Since there is no difference in the level of life-satisfaction between older and younger participants, extent of the relationship is not relevant to life-satisfaction.

Apart from the measures of correlation the extent to which various factors explain the variance of the relationship of life-satisfaction were examined. Table 2 contains the results of the determination of life-satisfaction before and after training. Prior to the training, life-satisfaction among respondents was most strongly determined by the sense of emotional and practical support from colleagues and the number of friends and the additional satisfaction with relationships.

After the training, the number of friends, satisfaction with family relationships and among friends as well as a sense of emotional support were important in the formation of satisfaction. The significance of these characteristics of the relationship which were negligible before training increased and the factors which were prior to the training achieved the high indicators of pure determination lost in importance. The number of colleagues and friends as a factor remained in the first place. The groups of friends and colleagues are joined together as the boundaries between those groups are blurred, especially after the training that may change the criteria of the classification.

After the training the rank of satisfaction with family relationships and satisfaction with relationships with acquaintances and emotional support increased and the importance of practical support decreased. According to the demands of interpersonal skills training, personal happiness and one's effectiveness is built in the emotional intimacy with others and not in anticipation (even receiving) assistance from them and belonging to emotionally close groups (family and friends). These assumptions of the social training correspond to the objectives of the positive therapy postulated by positive psychologists, for example Sonja Lyubomirsky (2007). It is therefore not entirely indifferent to the life-satisfaction with how many people have a regular contact, although the quality of these relationships, which are manifested satisfaction with relationships and experienced the benefits of support, is equally important.

The number of family members does not correlate with satisfaction, because one does not have any impact on its size, but one has an impact on satisfaction with those relationships.

To find the answer to the question on the relationship model of the impact on life-satisfaction the stepwise regression analysis was performed for all indices of interpersonal contacts (Table 3).

It appears that life-satisfaction is determined in 26% by two, statistically significant ratios: practical support and satisfaction with friendship relations, but the important aspect in the model (although only statistically determining the trend) were emotional support and the extent of the relationship. *Beta* factors presented on Figure 1 showed, that practical support determines to greater extent life-satisfaction, than satisfaction with friendship relations.

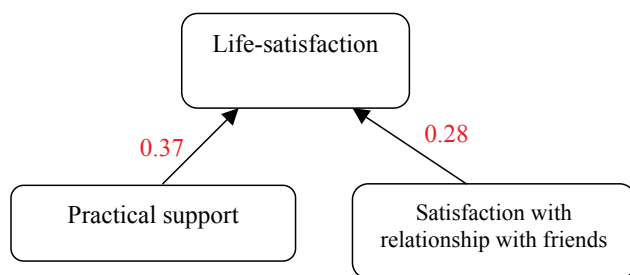


Figure 1. Life-satisfaction determination (measured before the training); statistically significant beta factors ( $R = .52$ ;  $R^2 = .26$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = .24$ ;  $F(2,55) = 9.8$ ,  $p < .000$ ; estimation std. error: 4.4)

Interestingly, life-satisfaction is not determined by family relations or both their extent and the satisfaction with them.

The first condition of life-satisfaction, practical support results from the need for seeking assistance in matters of everyday life. Waiting for help or advice from others is the result of low confidence in their abilities to deal with them. Low faith in their own ability may be an individual characteristic of the surveyed training participants and their personal motivation to enroll to positive interpersonal skills training. Such an explanation is only an assumption, because the level of self-efficacy was not controlled in this study. Low self confidence can be further strengthened by slightly less stable and predictable economic and social situation of the country (studies were conducted during the economic crisis in Europe and America). The possibility of receiving practical support can calm down and gives the sense of security and reduces negative emotions. In general, they may give a mistaken impression that help from other is comforting. The reduction of negative emotions through support and providing positive emotions in a group of friends are the two factors of life-satisfaction.

In turn, satisfaction with the relationship with friends determines life-satisfaction through the function given to friends and good relationships with them. Satisfying relationships with friends are experienced in the sense of belonging, common interests and opportunities for confessions. Such relations give the feeling of being socially accepted and attractive, they increase positive affect, which reinforces the feeling of happiness. Generally, family, from all relationships structures, the least correlated with satisfaction. Family ceased to play a dominant role, which was taken over by friends and colleagues.

After the training the model of determination of life-satisfaction has changed. The results presented in Table 4, refer to the emotional support, satisfaction with family relationships and the number of friends as the determinants of life-satisfaction. The result confirms hypothesis 4, according to which the sense of support (it turns out that it is mainly the practical one – before the training and the emotional one - after the training) determines life-satisfaction more strongly than the extent of the relationship. Hypothesis 3 proved to be accurate only in the case of relationships with friends and then only after

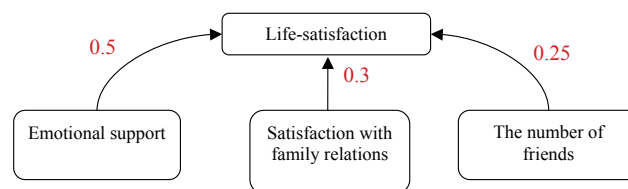


Figure 2. Life-satisfaction determination (measured after the training), statistically significant beta factors ( $p < .01$ ); ( $R = .66$ ;  $R^2 = .45$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = .41$ ;  $F(3,52) = 13.92$ ,  $p < .00$  estimation std. error: 3.9).

the training. The role of satisfaction with friendship and family relationships disclosed respectively before and after the training as an important predictor of happiness is to be strongly emphasized.

The changes in the determination of satisfaction should be assigned to the role of social skills training and its purposes set for its duration. The training aimed to raise the participants' awareness that happiness depends on each man, not on external factors, and beyond it, and that the activity for the expansion of happiness is an effective way to achieve it. Better confidence in one's own abilities of achieving satisfaction reduced the instrumental aid of others as a source of happiness, in return, the emotional closeness became the source of satisfaction. Life-satisfaction is determined by emotional support, satisfaction with family relationships and by the number of friends (Figure 2).

After the training (and it is also statistically significant) the number of friends and colleagues, with whom one contacts on a regular basis increased. This does not mean that each participant during the two months found additional contacts in each group, although making the acquaintance in the group training was certainly included. The change may be due to the fact that people categorize other people into groups of friends or to other more closely in different ways. Enlarging the extent of the relationship and its impact on satisfaction may also stem from two mechanisms. First, the change of perception not yet known people started at the training and of appreciating their role in shaping the psychological satisfaction moved the people from further to closer groups. Secondly, through exercises in the environment, not yet known people gained the status of friends, colleagues. It is interesting whether this enlarged (even subjectively) extent of interpersonal relationships determines the extent of increase in satisfaction with the relationship. Multiple regression results presented in Table 5 indicates that it is.

Satisfaction with the relationship is determined in 34% by the practical support and smaller number of relatives and more friends with whom one has regular contacts. The number of the relatives with whom one has regular contacts reduces satisfaction with the relationship, perhaps because of the lack of time for deep and frequent ties. The difficulty in meeting these social orders may create a sense of guilt. Obligations associated with being a member of the family undermines satisfaction with the relationship. The extent of relations positively forms satisfaction with the



**Table 4**  
**The results of stepwise regression analysis for the life-satisfaction variable (after training).**

| Variables significant to life-satisfaction | Step | R    | R-squared | R-squared change | F - to enter / delete | p-level |
|--|------|------|-----------|------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Emotional support                          | 1    | 0.52 | 0.26      | 0.26             | 19.5                  | 0.00    |
| Satisfaction with family relations         | 2    | 0.62 | 0.38      | 0.12             | 10.0                  | 0.00    |
| The number of friends                      | 3    | 0.67 | 0.44      | 0.06             | 5.9                   | 0.02    |

**Table 5**  
**Multiple regression summary for dependent variable: satisfaction with relationship (R= .58; R<sup>2</sup>= .34; Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>= .30; F(3,51)=8.8; p<.000; estimation std. error: 1.28)**

|                         | BETA   | Std. Err. of BETA | B     | Std. Err. of B | t(51) | p-level |
|-------------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|
| Intercept               |        |                   | 5.76  | 2.1            | 2.86  | 0.00    |
| Practical support       | 0.433  | 0.12              | 0.21  | 0.06           | 3.64  | 0.00    |
| The number of relatives | -0.398 | 0.12              | -0.07 | 0.02           | -3.37 | 0,00    |
| The number of friends   | 0.262  | 0.12              | 0.09  | 0.04           | 2.22  | 0.03    |

relationship. As this factor also affects the life-satisfaction, it can be assumed that it is the two-track variable shaping satisfaction as a global attitude to life and the partial covering sphere of interpersonal relationships.

### Shaping life-satisfaction

Comparing the results from before and after social training, the indicators of life-satisfaction (Table 6), satisfaction with relationships with acquaintances (from M = 2.6 to M = 3, p <0.00) and a sense of social integration (from M = 31 to M = 32, p <0.00) increased. Satisfaction with family relations and friends/colleagues have not changed. The extent of relationship among colleagues (from M = 10 to M = 14, p <0.04) and friends (from M = 16 to M = 27, p <0.04) increased.

These results are not surprising, since participation in training has enabled people to make new acquaintances, practice in workshops which create intimacy, confidence in others and increase level of openness in the relationship. These characteristics of the relationship and the realization of common interests are the key dimensions of activity correlated with satisfaction with the interpersonal relations among colleagues, friends and acquaintances. However, the same increase in the number of colleagues/friends and the integration and satisfaction with relationships with friends are not a sufficient condition for life-satisfaction, as the results of multiple regression show (Table 4). However, the increase in life-satisfaction after positive social training provides an important result of the effectiveness of group work in favor of incurring personal happiness in a time of reflection and evaluation of their lives (probably in the context of the current positive mood or emotional experience generated during training). The change in the structure of the determinants of life-satisfaction as a result of participation in training is also important. The process of training launched a possible reformulation of their own perception of life, social environment, needs and expectations.

### Sex, age and life-satisfaction

The additional analysis of the results was devoted to the role of sex and age in building relationships, taking from them satisfaction and support. In the literature, sex does not differentiate people in life-satisfaction, and so it was in this study. However, I think that age and sex may reveal asymmetries in the extent of perceived support from social contacts. The participants indicated the different extent of their relationship, from the 13 people to 309 people, with whom they have a regular contact. The participants who pointed to the extent greater than 100 people are not numerous (4 out of 59 respondents, interestingly, all are male, unmarried, their age below 34 years). On average, younger respondents (M = 24 years) have nearly twice as many personal contacts (65) than older respondents M = 41 years) who have regular contact with an average of 33 persons (difference significant at p = 0.01). Nearly twice the difference confirms the phenomenon of “inflating contacts” but only among younger persons. But it is not a phenomenon widespread as it is in the high school youth group, students and disappears during adulthood, work, or starting a family.

It turns out that the collection of numerous contacts is not correlated with either life-satisfaction or satisfaction with the relationship. There were no differences in any aspect of social support experienced. Sex was also not important a factor in any aspect of satisfaction, or the extent of the relationship.

### Conclusion

Social skills training increases life-satisfaction but also the sense of social integration and satisfaction with the relationship among colleagues and acquaintances. The training also changes the structure of the determinants of life-satisfaction. Practical support is replaced by emotional support and satisfaction with the relationship with friends is

**Table 6**  
**The differences in the average level of life-satisfaction before and after the social skills training (N = 55),**  
**Friedman ANOVA (N = 55, df 1) = 14.08, p = 0.00**

| Life-satisfaction | average rank | rank sum | mean  | std. err. |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|-------|-----------|
| before training   | 1.26         | 69.5     | 21.88 | 5.18      |
| after training    | 1.74         | 95.5     | 23.96 | 5.13      |

replaced with family relationships. Additionally, the number of friends gained in importance. Changing determinants of life-satisfaction is consistent with theories of satisfaction and happiness and the concept of the positive therapy. According to the first, it is not the instrumental value of such help from others but the psychological proximity that is a factor that builds lasting happiness. According to the other, the ties of kinship are more sustainable and socially disinterested (although the evolutionary principle of “selfish gene” is thwarted) than any other friendship relationship. It is therefore relevant to say that family ties are not weak and replaced by bonds of friendship. This trend becomes visible though is still weak. The number of friends as a determinant of life-satisfaction (and other indicators of well-being in the Social Diagnosis) indicates that more research could also attempt to reveal the importance of satisfaction with the friendly ties. The phenomenon of “inflating contacts” in the group is not revealed, perhaps because it is not common (in this study covered 2.4% of respondents) and may not apply to working adults.

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