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## DETERMINANTS OF HAPPINESS AMONG THE POLES OF GENERATION X\*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction with life, a synonym of which is frequently the concept of happiness, is the main goal of human actions and desires, even if not always consciously so. In striving for this happiness, it is not only its level that is important for every one of us (I'm very happy, moderately, or not at all), but so too is the source of this happiness, in the sense of being satisfied with those areas of life that truly are important to us. After all, being satisfied to the maximum with an area of life not particularly important to us is not the same happiness as total satisfaction in the area of greatest importance in our system of values.

There are two conceptualization in research into happiness: 'bottom-top' and 'top-bottom'. The former assumes that the better 'at the bottom', understood as meaning in the different areas of life, then the better 'at the top' for us – in life as a whole. In this concept, the feeling of happiness is a result of the mathematical calculation on the set of partial satisfactions taking all important aspects of life into account. In such a calculation, overall satisfaction with life is the sum (possibly weighted in some manner) of satisfaction with one's partner, children, work, money, place of residence, health, and many, many other spheres of life. The more we earn, and the more we possess, and as such the better our material situation, then the more satisfied we are with it and, as a consequence, the more happy we are overall. On the other hand, the better our relations with other people, the less we quarrel with our spouse, the fewer problems our children cause, then the more cheerful and satisfied with life we are (socially and as a whole).

Two theoretical approaches are also distinguished in deliberations over happiness: hedonistic and eudaimonistic. In quantitative empirical surveys, whether based on experiments or using statistical analysis of data from questionnaire-based surveys, the former is applied most often. According to this, then what counts is not what socially important goals a person realises (for

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example one's own sacrifice for the good of others), but whether one is satisfied with one's life and whether this life provides more joy or more pain.

By taking these two perspectives into account (the 'bottom-top' conceptualization and the hedonistic approach), a subjective and comprehensive index can be obtained for satisfaction with life, which embraces the partial satisfactions (with specific areas) and their importance in a person's system of values. Thanks to the satisfaction index thus calculated, it was possible to set a goal for the deliberations set out here: to verify whether there exist factors (respondents' attributes) that contribute to the diversification in overall satisfaction with life (and if so, then in what direction and to what degree), while the group selected for the study was that of Poles aged 35 or more, or in other words persons representing the so-called Generation X (persons born in the latter half of the twentieth century). Generation X is described by sociologists as a society lost in the chaos of contemporaneity, searching for answers to difficult questions, for the sense of their own existence, yet thanks to this is a society that is more reflective, which from the point of view of the topic in question (and the reliability of the findings) is highly desirable.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data obtained from a questionnaire-based survey conducted independently in the first half of 2017 was used for accomplishing the goal thus set. The survey had a sample of 1,110 respondents from the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, all representatives of Generation X.

One of the issues tackled in this survey was the question posed to the respondents regarding their level of satisfaction with 21 areas (spheres) of life<sup>1</sup> and the importance of these areas for them. To give an answer regarding the importance of the areas, the respondents were required to mark 1 of 5 options: 1 – (a particular sphere of life is) 'not important to me at all', 2 – 'not very important to me', 3 – 'neither important nor unimportant', 4 – 'quite important to me', and 5 – (a particular area of life is) 'very important to me'; respondents also expressed their satisfaction with the areas in question using a 5-point scale, as follows: 1 – 'I'm very dissatisfied', 2 – 'I'm quite dissatisfied', 3 – 'I'm neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 4 – 'I'm quite satisfied', and 5 – 'I'm very satisfied'.

Before calculating the overall satisfaction index, these answers were first of all transformed such that the importance of the specific areas of life was treated as an interval variable, taking a value from 0 ('not important to me at all') to 1 ('very important to me'), while satisfaction was expressed on a scale from -1 (maximum dissatisfaction) to +1 (maximum satisfaction). The pur-

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<sup>1</sup> These were the following spheres (also shown in Graph 2): private life, life as a parent, family life, social life, education, knowledge and skills, achievements and successes, work, social involvement, financial situation, possessions, housing conditions, independence, safety and security, fitness, health, appearance, sex life, religious life, free time, and prestige.

pose of these transformations was to obtain index values easier to interpret. Then, as a result of these two aspects being joined, a special weighted satisfaction index for all areas together emerged, and this was constructed as follows:

$$Z_{\text{overall}} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{21} W_i \cdot Z_i}{21},$$

where  $S_{\text{overall}}$  is the overall, weighted satisfaction index covering all 21 areas of life,  $W_i$  – the weighting awarded to a particular sphere, and  $S_i$  – the ‘pure’ (unweighted) satisfaction with this area.

The weighted index for satisfaction with life, as with the ‘pure’ (unweighted) partial indices, takes on a value of from  $-1$  to  $1$  ( $S > 0$  means felt satisfaction,  $S < 0$  means dissatisfaction, and the closer the value is to  $1$ , the happier the respondent is, while the closer its value is to  $-1$ , the more unhappy, but it takes into account all 21 spheres of life together with their importance in the respondents’ systems of values. One should also explain that a satisfaction index of  $0$  could be obtained by a respondent if they were to answer ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ frequently (that is, for many different areas), or if they were satisfied with a particular sphere of life, but such areas played no role in that person’s life (as being of no importance to him or her), which for a person’s overall wellbeing is not a desirable situation either, since it testifies to a certain withdrawal from certain areas, a lack of involvement. It may of course happen that a respondent is satisfied with certain spheres of life ( $S_i > 0$ ), but not with others ( $S_i < 0$ ), resulting in the overall combined satisfaction index ( $S$ ) also being close to  $0$ . It should also be added that in the methodology adopted, achieving a total combined satisfaction index of  $+1$  (maximum weighted satisfaction) is very hard, because in order to achieve this one would have to be satisfied to the maximum degree with all areas of life taken into account in the study, and these areas would have to play a very important role in life. In other words, one would show maximum happiness if not withdrawing from any important areas of one’s life and if very pleased with these areas.

Apart from determining index values for satisfaction with life separately for every respondent, in the next stage of analysis it was decided to check how these ratings correlated with selected respondent attributes. The attributes were chosen so as to describe the conditions of life for each of the 21 areas of life taken into account in the survey. For example, for the area of ‘housing conditions’, they were: population of the locality of residence, size of one’s accommodation, number of people regularly living there, and who the owner is of their home (house or flat). However, the very choice of the variables comprising the so-called objective living conditions, and ones on which a person’s wellbeing could depend, was not a simple matter. A review of studies conducted in this field<sup>2</sup> shows that the list of potential factors used in studies into

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Khan (2015); Boarini (2015); Christoph (2003); Ostasiewicz (2004); or one of the pioneering studies: Campbell (1976).

happiness is very long, beginning with demographic data (sex and age), through social (marital status, level of education), economic (having a job, financial situation), and ending at health-related data (including fitness) and attributes related to a person's psyche (level of self-reliance, security) and personality traits. However, certain methodological standards have been developed over the long-lasting tradition of research into happiness. Initially, the list of factors – of happiness determinants – sometimes embraced even a few hundred variables, but the authors of such reports, with the assistance of statistical methods, managed to prove that the list did not have to be so extensive, and that fortunately there were a dozen or so main factors exerting the greatest impact (which factors exactly depended also on the research methodology, the time, and its spatial scope). When designing my own questionnaire-based surveys, I strived to have them describe as broadly as possible the respondents' life situation, and alongside standard attributes (such as sex and age) made sure of adding a few new factors as well (for example the respondents' successes and failures in life). All attributes taken into account in the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Factors determining level of satisfaction taken into account in the research

<b>Attributes connected to relations with other people</b>	1) Marital status (qualitative variable, nominal scale, 5 variants) 2) Having children (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 3) No. of children (quantitative variable) 4) Social prestige, others' respect (qualitative variable, ordinal scale)
<b>Attributes connected to education and career</b>	5) Level of education (qualitative variable, 4 variants) 6) Possession of specialist knowledge (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 7) Possession of unique skills (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 8) Achievement of outstanding successes (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 9) Experience of severe failures (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 10) Having a job / work (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 11) Pensioner status (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 12) Active participation in society (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N)
<b>Attributes connected to financial standing</b>	13) Monthly net income (quasi quantitative variable) 14) Level of savings (quasi quantitative variable) 15) Level of debt (quasi quantitative variable) 16) Property in possession (quasi quantitative variable) 17) Place (locality) of living (qualitative variable, 5 variants) 18) Ownership of own home (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N) 19) No. of household members (quantitative variable) 20) Living space per person (quantitative variable) 21) Being financial independent (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N)

<b>Attributes connected to health (and related)</b>	22) Level of freedom, liberty (qualitative variable, ordinal scale) 23) Level of fitness and state of health (qualitative variables, ordinal scale) 24) Disability (qualitative variable, 2 variants: non-disabled / disabled) 25) BMI (quantitative variable) 26) Physical attractiveness (qualitative variable, ordinal scale) 27) Monthly frequency of sex (quantitative variable) 28) Attitude towards faith (qualitative variable, 2 variants: believer / non-believer) 29) Amount of free time per day (quantitative variable) 30) Having addictions (qualitative variable, 2 variants: Y/N)
<b>Demographic attributes</b>	31) Sex (qualitative variable, 2 variants: M/F) 32) Age (quantitative variable)
<b>Selected personality traits</b>	<u>Traits in the so-called big five:</u> 33) Level of extraversion 34) Level of agreeableness 35) Level of conscientiousness 36) Level of neuroticism 37) Level of openness <u>Other factors:</u> 38) Level of own agency 39) Level of indecision 40) Level of perseverance 41) Level of fondness for change <i>(qualitative variables, ordinal scale)</i>

In this case a quasi-quantitative variable means that the numerical values representing it were estimated on the basis of the middle of the interval.

Source: own material.

After drawing up the list of 41 variables – of potential determinants of satisfaction with life – the next step was to establish which of them were significant and which not for the level of happiness felt by the Wielkopolska respondents, and to identify the direction and strength of their influence. Due to the multidimensionality of the influence exerted by the factors in question on the satisfaction with life index, multiple regression analysis was applied, resulting in the construction of a model describing the influence of these factors on the overall level of satisfaction, together with information regarding a given factor's importance and the quality of the model as a whole (Tab. 2).

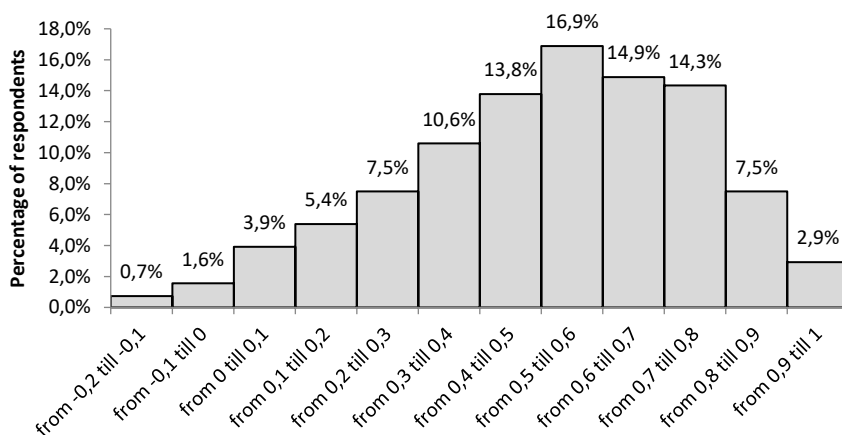
### III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before setting about constructing the model, first of all a histogram was put together for the overall index of satisfaction with life, so as to check its distribution, and whether as a result it would be possible to apply the classic regression analysis procedure, which performs best in a situation where

the dependent variable distribution is similar to the normal distribution. As Graph 1 shows, the variable investigated shows a quite symmetrical distribution (the skewness factor in this case is  $-0.44$ , and the kurtosis:  $-0.28$ ), although the Shapiro-Wilk test of the distribution's normality test finds that the hypothesis of normality in the distribution of overall satisfaction (at the level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ ) should be rejected. It is interesting to note that only 25 respondents (2.3%) were dissatisfied with their life as a whole (with a  $Z$  index of less than 0).

**Graph 1**

Distribution of weighted overall satisfaction with life among the respondents



Source: own material based on questionnaire data.

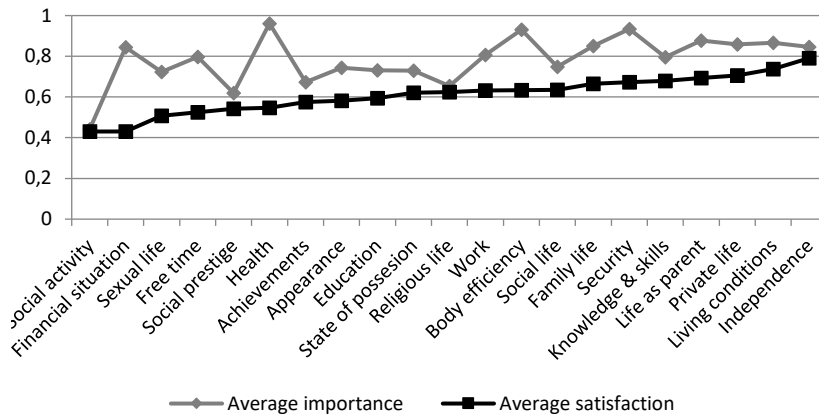
Graph 2 in turn presents what partial indices (satisfaction with specific spheres of life) make up the overall index of satisfaction, what the average level of satisfaction with these areas of life was in the group of 1,110 respondents, and what average importance these areas were ascribed by them (this is because the satisfaction with life index used in the report takes both of these aspects into account). The respondents turned out to be most satisfied with their independence, their living conditions, their private life (with their partner) and with life as a parent, whilst they were least satisfied with their activeness in society, their financial situation, and their sex life. As for the areas of life that they paid most attention to, these proved to be: health, fitness, and safety and security, whilst those of least importance to them were activeness in society, prestige, and religious life.

In the next part of the analysis a linear regression model was constructed, in which the dependent variable was the weighted index of satisfaction with life, and the independent variables – all the attributes listed in the methodological section (Tab. 1). Prior to calculation, in the case of some of the factors, certain categories were joined within a particular attribute so as to obtain

dichotomous variables, each with only two possible levels: this was done, for example, with education, putting all those who had not completed higher studies into a single category.

**Graph 2**

Average importance and satisfaction with specific spheres of life based on respondents' opinions



Source: own material.

Table 2 presents the estimated parameters of the model, their estimated error, *t*-tests for the significance of a given variable in the model, and the *p*-value. One can check on the basis of the results obtained which factors contribute significantly (at the adopted significance level of 0.05) and in what way (the direction of their influence) on weighted overall satisfaction with life. Such factors among the qualitative attributes include: having children (those who do have them are on average more satisfied with life, by 0.064 points on average on a scale from  $-1$  to  $+1$ ); being financially independent (raising the happiness level on average by 0.045 points); living in Poznań (reducing one's sense of happiness on average by 0.048 points); and experience of some kind of exceptionally painful failure in life (lowering sensed happiness on average by 0.129 points). As for quantitative attributes, satisfaction with life is affected by: the number of children (among those having them): those who have more are less satisfied with life (each additional child reduces satisfaction on average by 0.018 points); the value of one's property (every additional one thousand zlotys worth of property raises the respondents' satisfaction on average by 0.104 points); the level of freedom and liberty, the level of safety and security, and level of fitness (in each case an increase in the attribute entailing an increase in satisfaction); state of health (the healthier the respondents, the happier they are); monthly frequency of sex (increasing level of happiness); the level of one's prestige (raising satisfaction with life); and in regard to psychological attributes the level of extraversion (sociability) and conscien-

tiousness (both increase one's level of satisfaction). All of these factors proved to have a statistically significant (at a significance level of 0.05 at the most) impact on overall satisfaction with life. However, it has to be added that the quality of the model's Goodness-of-Fit (measured by the *R*-squared coefficient of determination) is moderately satisfactory, meaning that there are many other potential factors (apart from those taken into account in the research) capable of explaining better what satisfaction with life depends upon among Poles representing Generation X.

**Table 2**

Regression model describing the level of weighted overall satisfaction with life among the respondents

Independent variable	Estimation of parameter	Standard error	<i>t</i> -test	<i>p</i> -value
(Constant term)	-0.471	0.071	-6.656	0.0000
Possession of children (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.064	0.026	2.506	0.0125
Number of children	-0.018	0.008	-2.413	0.0161
Being financially independent (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.045	0.018	2.505	0.0125
Value of property *	0.104	0.031	3.354	0.0008
Living in Poznań (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-0.048	0.020	-2.453	0.0145
Experiencing a major failure in life (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-0.129	0.031	-4.124	0.0000
Level of freedom, liberty	0.044	0.011	4.096	0.0000
Level of security	0.045	0.009	5.064	0.0000
Level of fitness	0.035	0.011	3.116	0.0019
Self-assessment of state of health	0.027	0.011	2.565	0.0106
Frequency of sex	0.003	0.001	2.517	0.0121
Level of prestige	0.036	0.009	3.952	0.0001
Level of extraversion	0.041	0.008	4.932	0.0000
Level of conscientiousness	0.019	0.008	2.475	0.0136
<u>Model's goodness-of-fit:</u> $R^2 = 0.4312$ Adjusted. $R^2 = 0.4174$ Standard error of estimation: 0.1778				

\* unit change for this explanatory variable relates to a skip of PLN1,000.

Source: own material.



#### IV. DISCUSSION

The findings are consistent with other studies that have been conducted in this area since many years ago, not only in Poland (suffice to mention as an example the largest Polish study – Social Diagnosis), but also abroad. Naturally everything depends on who is being studied (in this research, the focus was on members of Generation X, meaning those of 35 years old or more), on how we measure satisfaction with life (whether with a single question or a few, and if using a few partial indices – then of what kind), the attributes we use to describe the respondents' conditions of life (what determinants of happiness we take into account), or whether for example when asking about state of health we go by the respondents' subjective appraisal or carry out medical measurements of some kind.

Moving on now to discuss the individual findings, then in regard to having children, other contemporary empirical studies suggest that it would be hard to acknowledge the lack of offspring as a significant premise for a sense of unhappiness; sometimes childlessness can even be conducive to mental wellbeing,<sup>3</sup> because somebody who does not have children is not going to be exposed, for example, to the stress related to their upbringing or the dramatic events that a parent might face (such as the chronic illness or even death of a child – one of the most traumatic events). On the other hand, having children brings numerous mental benefits (particularly for mothers), if only to mention satisfying the instinct of motherhood/fatherhood, mutual closeness and bonds, experiencing the joy of a child's development, or a source of security in old age, and so on. Unfortunately children are also the sources of problems for their parents, especially economic, which in turn mainly increase their level of depression<sup>4</sup>). Much is said of the double-sided impact that children have on their parents' wellbeing: indirectly a negative impact (increase in expenditure, and deterioration of financial situation) and directly a positive impact (realization of the need for motherhood and other psychological benefits).

Having children is also linked to number of offspring. In the research described above it turned out that the higher the number of children, the worse for the respondents' happiness, but other studies conducted on a broad scale<sup>5</sup> do not give explicit findings in this matter. It is therefore most probably an individual matter: some prefer having more, others fewer children. What is certain, however, is (as signalled earlier on) that usually the more children, the higher the level of poverty – because children generate costs; they have to be fed, to be clothed, and so on. And as the next paragraph shows, financial standing is also an important factor determining satisfaction.

According to the analysis, the next two attributes, this time strictly economic (being financially independent, and the value of the property one possesses), have a positive impact on one's sense of happiness. Other studies have

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<sup>3</sup> Tanaka, Johnson (2016).

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Werding (2014).

<sup>5</sup> Baranowska, Matysiak (2011); Kohler (2005); Margolis, Myrskylä (2011).

often proved that money does ensure happiness, but mainly for the poor, since it enables their satisfying of the basic needs in life. However, once these needs have been satisfied, a further increase in income ceases to contribute to the level of sensed satisfaction.<sup>6</sup> This is also connected to the law of diminishing marginal utility, which says that the benefits drawn from each subsequent unit consumed of a good are lower than the benefits from the preceding unit of the good, and therefore its further consumption does indeed improve one's standard of living, but with each unit of the good this improvement is successively smaller.

Another important observation in the matter of how income influences happiness is that satisfaction with life depends not on one's absolute level of income, but on the relative level of income – which is the result of social comparisons and comparisons over time.<sup>7</sup> What is important for one's sense of satisfaction is being better off than others, and better off than in the past.

A strength of financial independence from the perspective of achieving happiness is that it provides very many opportunities for realization: one can calmly plan one's future without worrying that everything will suddenly collapse; one can feel safe, and have more time for what really gives one pleasure.

The research findings also revealed that level of happiness is affected by place of residence, and more specifically that living in a large city (in Poznań) lowers satisfaction with life. The findings of other studies<sup>8</sup> confirm this observation: mentally, rural life is generally healthier than life in large cities, which is mainly explained by social factors. Social bonds for example play a greater role, there is less loneliness and alienation in the smaller rural communities, communities which at the same time are more integrated. Drawbacks in large, anonymous urban agglomerations are the very large number of stimuli, unhealthy lifestyle and pace of life (causing excessive stimulation and mental overburdening), as well as the density of the population or escalation of crime.<sup>9</sup>

Easterlin and others<sup>10</sup> proved, in turn, that whether people lead happier lives in the countryside or the city depends on a country's level of economic development: in better-developed countries, rural living is conducive to happiness, while in poorer countries people are happier living in the city. And since Poland (and particularly its western regions) are relatively well developed, the findings obtained in the Wielkopolska survey may be acknowledged as logical – with life in smaller towns (not in Poznań) bringing more happiness to the respondents.

The findings also showed that a very important symptom of low satisfaction with life is experiencing some kind of exceptionally painful failure in life. The authors of other studies on the subject emphasize that such traumatic failures lead to a drop in self-confidence, and blaming oneself for the setbacks experienced, while these negative states evoke serious emotional reactions,

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<sup>6</sup> Hagerty, Veenhoven (2000).

<sup>7</sup> e.g. Clark, Oswald (1996).

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Berry, Okulicz-Kozaryn (2011).

<sup>9</sup> Albouy (2008).

<sup>10</sup> Easterlin et al. (2011).

such as depression and anxiety.<sup>11</sup> The observations obtained of the very adverse influence that failures have on happiness also coincide with the classic comparison theory of Michalos and Inglehart, according to which the three main criteria for appraising one's own life are: (1) aspirations, meaning what I'd like, (2) expectations, and therefore what I expected, and (3) that which I believe I deserve. According to this theory's authors, a conviction that my situation is worse than I'd like, than I expected, and than what I deserve, is the source of an exceptionally deep sense of unhappiness.<sup>12</sup>

As for the level of independence, then according to data from the Gallup World Poll and Inglehart's research,<sup>13</sup> there is a distinct, positive relation between sense of freedom and happiness. In countries in which people have freedom of choice and control over their own lives, the citizens tend to be happier. Thus it comes as no surprise that among survey respondents, a greater level of freedom furthers greater happiness, and it would probably be hard to find a research group whose members would claim to be happier if were they to feel more restricted. Neither is there any doubt about the fact that apart from freedom, a second fundamental element of individuals' wellbeing is their personal safety and security. This embraces not only the risk of physical harm (for example due to an assault), but also loss of property (theft). Studies in this area are also unambiguous: the lower the crime index (greater security), the happier the communities living there (whether in regard to countries, provinces, or cities).<sup>14</sup> Safety and security can also apply to fear for tomorrow – but in this case it is more about the criterion of income and being financially independent as discussed above.

Other important determinants of happiness proved to be state of health and level of fitness. Studies conducted to date prove a correlation between state of health and happiness at an average level of between 0.16 and 0.35.<sup>15</sup> This relation is obviously most often negative, meaning that as a process of illness deteriorates, there is a drop in self-appraisal, a decline in pleasure, an increase in unpleasantness, and difficulties emerge in activeness in life resulting from debilitation of the body. Thus the list of unfavourable consequences of illness processes is really long. However, the most interesting conclusion from such research is that the subjective assessment of one's own health (which was how health was measured in the research described above) is a better index explaining mental wellbeing than an appraisal carried out by others or even a professional medical diagnosis.<sup>16</sup> A person feels better even if they discern the very smallest signs of improvement, draws faith in a rapid recovery, and so on. On the other hand, signs of deterioration can once again put somebody back into a bad mood.

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<sup>11</sup> Ellenhorn (2005).

<sup>12</sup> Michalos (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Inglehart (2008).

<sup>14</sup> Cohen (2008).

<sup>15</sup> e.g. Okun et al. (1994).

<sup>16</sup> Diener (2018).

The influence that a lower level of fitness (and particularly a state of disability) has on one's sense of satisfaction is quite specific: this is because disorders of various kinds detract from one's satisfaction, but most often only for a certain time. This is due first of all to the mechanism of adaptation and accommodation. Secondly, that which can improve the wellbeing of disabled persons is activity (in particular physical exercise). As research by Oswald<sup>17</sup> shows, ill people can be just as happy as healthy people, as long as they remain active.

The regression model also indicated the number of times having sex as a factor stimulating satisfaction with life. Other studies<sup>18</sup> show that the relationship between frequency of sex and wellbeing is best described by a curvilinear relationship, in which the more frequent the sex, the greater the wellbeing, but only when having sex from 0 to 4 times per month; having sex more often than 4 times a month no longer results in a distinct increase in satisfaction with life.

Social prestige proved to be another factor that satisfaction with life depends upon. In general, the opinion is that satisfaction increases in a linear fashion together with prestige.<sup>19</sup> One of the signs of prestige is the occupation one practises. The authors referred to above, basing on a large sample of British employees, stated that satisfaction with life increases in the case of more prestigious occupations. In addition, those with high social prestige (manifestations of which are, for example, higher income and a higher level of education) usually claim a higher sense of safety and security, and are at less risk of being affected by crime; and as explained above, the greater the safety, the higher one's level of satisfaction with life.

The final two factors of significance for the respondents' satisfaction with life are two attributes connected to personality: level of extraversion and conscientiousness. As Furnham and Christoforou<sup>20</sup> write, negative and positive feelings in various situations in life depend to about 52% on the particular person (on their individual traits), and only to 23% on the changing situations. This is so because people maintain a certain constant mood, they interpret situations in a manner characteristic for them, or they choose (or avoid) certain situations. People choose the kinds of situation that are in keeping with their attributes and their motivation. For example extroverts spend more time in sociable situations and in physical activities, while those low in socializing skills or experiencing a high state of anxiety when among others even avoid numerous ordinary situations, including those commonly considered enjoyable, such as parties or dates.<sup>21</sup>

Personality traits quite distinctly determine mental wellbeing: DeNeve and Cooper carried out a review of research in this area, showing that wellbeing is correlated the most strongly with neuroticism (the average correlation

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<sup>17</sup> Oswald (2008).

<sup>18</sup> Cheng, Smyth (2015).

<sup>19</sup> e.g. Loewenstein et al. (2015).

<sup>20</sup> Furnham, Christoforou (2007).

<sup>21</sup> Argyle (2004).

amount to  $-0.22$ ) and with conscientiousness ( $+0.21$ ), and the weakest with openness to experience ( $+0.11$ ).<sup>22</sup> A widespread opinion is that happy people really do have a different personality to unhappy people: that they are more open, more agreeable and more conscientious; that they have a higher level of extraversion and lower level of neuroticism. These facts show what people could develop or evolve in their personality in order to achieve (a higher level of) happiness. Sadly, both happiness and personality traits are largely congenital, and as such one cannot really tell whether these attributes, as well as happiness, can be stimulated.

## V. CONCLUSION

Identifying which factors contribute to general satisfaction with life, and in what direction and to what degree (such was the main goal of the analysis), is not an easy task, as it requires not only the singling out of potential determinants of happiness, ascertaining in what way the happiness will be measured (with a single question or based on partial indices, and with or without weightings), but above all it requires one to have the appropriate set of data. This analysis used a very broad set of statistical material: the sample numbered 1,110 respondents from the Wielkopolska voivodeship, who were investigated in regard to 21 subjective and partial indices of satisfaction with life, while the set of explanatory variables comprised 41 factors.

The results of the modelling, using multidimensional regression analysis, indicated 14 statistically significant determinants of happiness, and the following respondent attributes were in the set of these factors: having children; the number of children; being financially independent; value of one's property; place of residence; having experienced a major failure in life; level of freedom / liberty; the level of safety and security; level of fitness; self-assessment of state of health; frequency of sex; level of prestige; level of extraversion; and level of conscientiousness. In addition some of them have a positive impact on the level of satisfaction, others a negative impact, and this influence also varies in intensity. Important to note is that all the rules observed in the study found confirmation in studies conducted to date, although they mainly covered societies in highly developed countries (the United States of America, Western Europe), and as such the conclusions reached should be treated as a signal that in regard to determinants of happiness, Polish society (and especially the persons analysed, aged 35 and above, representing the so-called Generation X) does not differ much from wealthier populations.

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## DETERMINANTS OF HAPPINESS AMONG THE POLES OF GENERATION X

## Summary

The research undertaken focused on a specific group: Poles aged 35 and over, thus representing so-called Generation X. The main objective of the study was to check which factors affect overall satisfaction with life, as well as how to what extent, which was measured as a weighted average of partial satisfaction indicators from 21 different spheres of life. The weights used to establish this general indicator were the declarations of respondents on how important every sphere is in their life, how much they want to be implemented in it. To achieve this goal, the results of a survey conducted in the first half of 2017 on a sample of 1,110 respondents from the Wielkopolska Voivodeship were used, and in determining what factors significantly determine a high or low level of satisfaction a multidimensional regression analysis was used. The results of the modelling process indicated 14 out of a potential 41 determinants of happiness, and the set of these factors includes the following characteristics of respondents: having children, the number of children, being financially independent, the value of property, place of residence, experiencing or not experiencing great failure in life, level of freedom/ liberty, level of safety, fitness level, self-assessment of health, number of sexual contacts, social prestige, level of extraversion and level of conscientiousness. In addition, it turned out that some of these factors positively affect the level of satisfaction, some negatively, and this influence is also manifested with varying intensity.

Keywords: life satisfaction; quality of life; regression analysis; Generation X

