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Life in early adulthood and threats to the individual

Życie w okresie wczesnej dorosłości a zagrożenia dla jednostki

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Abstract: The period of early adulthood is associated with undertaking many development tasks and performing social roles. The essence of being an adult is not reaching chronological age but fulfilling many obligations and remaining in them despite obstacles of a physical, social or psychological nature. Harmonious self-realization in every sphere facilitates the accomplishment of tasks emerging from the period of early adulthood. However, this is not always favorable. The purpose of this article is to present the dangers for young people at that time of development, taking into account both the family and professional areas.

Key words: professional work, early adulthood, threats, family life

Abstrakt: Okres wczesnej dorosłości wiąże się z podejmowaniem wielu zadań rozwojowych i pełnieniem ról społecznych. Istotą bycia dorosłym nie jest osiągnięcie wieku metrykalnego, ale realizacja wielu zobowiązań i trwania w nich pomimo przeszkód o charakterze fizycznym, społecznym, czy psychologicznym. Harmonijna realizacja siebie w każdej sferze jest ułatwieniem w wypełnianiu zadań, wyłaniających się z okresu wczesnej dorosłości. Nie zawsze jednak wszystko temu sprzyja. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie zagrożeń dla młodego człowieka, jakie czyhają na niego w tym czasie z uwzględnieniem zarówno sfery rodzinnej, jak i zawodowej.

Słowa kluczowe: praca zawodowa, wczesna dorosłość, zagrożenia, życie rodzinne

1. Introduction

People change all their life. At every stage of development the environment sets different expectations for them. Their body, fitness and life situation are changing. The course of the development path depends on the properties that he got from "Mother Nature" and the quality of the environment in which they meets their needs. The presence of other people who are important to them is also significant. Thanks to their sensitivity they are able to recognize human needs at a given stage of development and adapt their expectations to it. This is undoubtedly the main factor that determines the pace and quality of developmental achievements in terms of various spheres: physical, cognitive, emotional and social.

The period of early adulthood poses a number of challenges for young people and the need to take on many social, professional or family roles. They was entrusted with tasks but unfortunately not always carried out according to plan. Levinson (Miś, 2000) divided this period into three stages: entering roles, their redefinition and establishing a place in a group of adults. Intending, at each of these stages a young adult should take actions that will allow

to adapt to a weaknesses and strengths taking into account the perspective of society. Positive realization of developmental tasks leads to overall satisfaction and success in undertaking other roles at a later stage of development. In case of a failure, the individual becomes unhappy, feels disapproval from the environment, which significantly hinders the implementation of subsequent tasks (Manning, 2002, p. 75). This is due to the fact that developmental tasks are a certain standard rooted in socio-cultural expectations that are specific to a specific development period (Roisman et al., 2004).

Liberska and Malina (2011) use the term "developmental task" to define adulthood and its critical events in the perspective of further development. They also add that these tasks are particularly important and intensely engage the individual who development concern. Authors justify this by creating new qualities and implementing changes to already existing systems. They compare the fulfillment of developmental tasks to learning speech by the child which is the same determinant of future development.

Researchers operating in the area of development see factors in the world around us that may adversely affect this process. The possibility of carrying out developmental tasks is associated with every aspect of human life, i.e. family, work, recreation (Havighurst, 1981). Therefore, any obstacles that a young adult encounters on his way can interfere with his individual development on many levels.

2. Characteristics of early adulthood

It is not a simple task to define the timeframe of early adulthood. Some researchers say it is 20-35 years of age, others assume that 17/18 - 30 years of age. Erikson claimed in his concept that this is the period of seven years which begins at the age of 18 (Oleś, 2011). For a long time, there was not much interest in this area and all development studies ended with adolescence. In recent years, this situation has changed and these issues have gained in importance.

Kielar-Turska (2000, p. 325) reports that becoming an adult is a gradual and slow process because a person who enters this phase is already after a period of rapid changes, i.e. biological and social maturation. Intellectual and physical efficiency enables to fulfill specific roles: employee, parent, husband/ wife. During this period, the so-called development trends or stabilization of one's own identity which helps to define it, establishing lasting relationships with the external environment, devoting oneself to various activities, increasing sensitivity to moral and ethical problems, showing greater care for loved ones and offering help to the suffering and needy are marked (Ibidem).

Ziółkowska (2015, p. 423) defining the boundaries of the described period, puts great emphasis on making commitments and implementing them even when some factors - physical, psychological and psychological - may be disturbing.

A specific area of human activity and involvement is an indicator of developmental tasks, i.e. achievements that a person must go through to enter a further stage of development (Ibidem).

The Havighurst's concept provides information that they are as follows (Przetacznik-Gierowska and Tyszkowa, 2005):

- 1) the choice of a life partner;
- 2) learning to live with a partner;
- 3) starting a family and raising children;
- 4) housekeeping;
- 5) starting work;
- 6) taking civic responsibility;
- 7) finding a related social group.

Early adulthood is compared to some type of investment because it requires initial capital, i.e. identity. In the case of absence of it, the risk that development tasks will not be undertaken or taken in the wrong way increases. It is similar with fulfilling social roles that rank is large enough to determine the functioning of an adult. It means that the individual entering adulthood will fulfill its tasks without satisfaction - both for itself and others from the external environment. At this time, the number of different types of conflicts that man will encounter in a way may increase (Brzezińska, 2002). In a word of introduction, the sense of adulthood lies in making and fulfilling commitments to oneself and the external environment in many dimensions of human life. The ability to become aware of one's needs and find a way to meet them is also identified with this period. Young adults are responsible for their behavior and actions.

Havighurst (1981) states that this should be considered in three areas:

- 1) professional activity;
- 2) relationship;
- 3) starting own family.

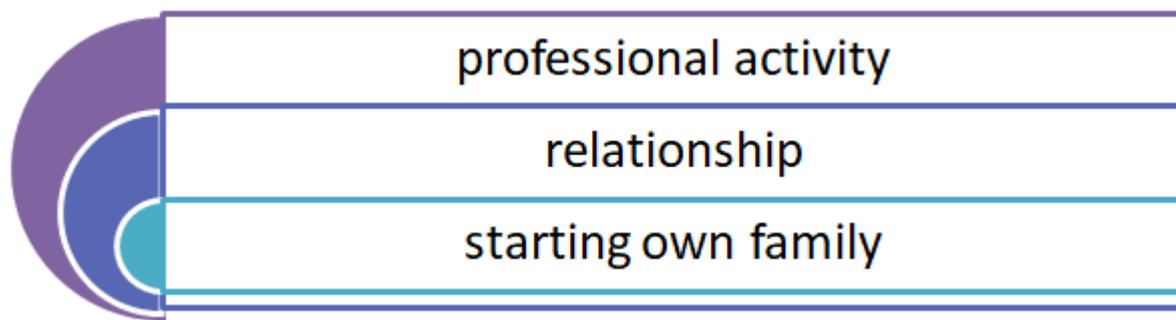


Fig. 1. Dimensions of human obligations in early adulthood

Source: Own study based on Havighurst (1981).

It is a time of challenges - their fulfillment gives a chance for further development. However, it is also a period in which an individual may come across certain threats. Bee (2003) distinguishes the following threats, typical for early adulthood: lack of involvement in social roles, too long dealing with identity determination, lack of independence - both financial and emotional, treating this period as a transition phase, strong relationship with parents, which prevents transferring feelings to another person, lack of support from the external environment, environment which relieve young adult of doing duties, lack of a way to perform roles and striving for maladjusted/ rigid implementation (Brzezińska, 2002).

On a social level, adulthood is walking along the path of tradition passed down from generation to generation taking into account self-confidence, beliefs and own lifestyle. Thanks to this synthesis, the young adult is recognized by others as an individual who has found

a unique form of lasting ancestor tradition. As a result, it leads to social trust and confidence that the care that adults offer to themselves, their life partners and children will be continued with the upbringing efforts of previous generations. The most important change in the described period of life is the "transition" from being an object of care to a person who cares about others. This is related to three basic components (Dylak, 2002, p. 89):

- 1) identity stabilization, thanks to which it is possible to free yourself from excessive concentration on oneself;
- 2) becoming independent;
- 3) interest in others and their needs.

3. Threats in early adulthood

The early adulthood is a time when efficiency of the individual changes efficiency of the individual changes. There are two main areas: the body and the mind. The first term should be understood as changes in body proportions, muscle performance, internal organs, nervous and respiratory systems, sense acuity and reproductive capacity. When it comes to the mind, the literature on the subject distinguishes: dialectical, metasystemic and relativistic thinking, high efficiency of learning in the areas of self-involvement, identification and solving practical problems, high efficiency of memory and good orientation in action (Dylak, 2002, p. 97).

The context of development threats consists of three phenomena: a continuous process of transformation of environments with an emphasis on family, and social phenomena which is the reason for the lack of a sense of security and stability; too broad, one could even say that for a general understanding of freedom, i.e. without taking into account responsibility for oneself and others (Straś-Romanowska, 2008, p. 15) and uncritical acceptance of models that are famous for promoting individualistic values without

considering relational ones. It should be understood so that one considers oneself but does not pay attention to the point of view and the needs of others (Kagitcibasi, 1996). These phenomena have a significant impact on the punctuality and efficiency of performing roles developmental tasks.

At the beginning, it is worth focusing on intimacy, i.e. the emotional and sexual relationships of two people of different sexes (Erikson, 1997). The closeness between them is a kind of test/ check, self-determination. Confidence in yourself and your partner is a condition for intimate relationships. If it is not met, the young adult may feel anxiety about losing his own identity which, in turn, can lead to increased control in intimate situations, restraining, as well as caution in obligations. Creating a close, intimate relationship certainly requires a lot of sacrifices but there may still be threats. Modern life is not full of proper conditions for the development of intimacy. Factors which come to mind are: alternative forms of life including social consent for loose, non-binding relationships without a sense of responsibility (Tyszka, 2002), strong need to express autonomy and individuality (Kwak, 2014) and the transformation of gender roles (Liberska and Matuszewska, 2014). As a result, young adults more and more often enter into cohabitation relationships in which it is characteristic to live, run a household together and maintain intimate contacts (Janicka, 2014).

Recently, there has been a decline in concern. The sentence or rather the opinion: "He is an adult" is a kind of manifestation of its lack and comfort in life, leading to weakening of the bond. Lack of ways and possibilities to cope with such situations can be the main reason for isolation from the external environment. A developmental task related to starting a family and raising children is also associated with this area. Lack of satisfaction with fulfilled family roles is associated with the inability to use the offers proposed by society. The assessment of own abilities seems to play an important role here. When it is too high or too low, it is impossible to undertake and implement developmental tasks. Not only that, a young adult can engage in activities that either will not give him a chance to test himself or will not reckon with his real possibilities. This, in turn, may result in various types of somatic disorders (Brzezińska, 2002). Commercialization, which we have to face nowadays, is also a threat to individuals in early adulthood. Defining both the role of mother and father in consumer terms is associated with two basic dimensions (Jasielska and Maksymiuk, 2011, p. 33):

- 1) treating parents as investors;
- 2) using psychological resources to generate parental behavior in shopping situations.

There is a reason for the term 'parenting marketing' which often appears in advertisements that have the features of social manipulation. The susceptibility of parents is compared with the whining factor of a child who asks for the purchase of another toy for the

collection, taking into account other specific factors, e.g. number of children in the family, critical events, etc. Subsequently, each family is assigned to a specific model. The discussed construct is associated with identifying parenthood with economics and marketing which results in treating children as an element of the market and impoverishing the aspect of content as a parent (Ibidem).

Taking up a job determines the place of a young person in society and should be a reflection of his ambitions and a source of satisfaction. It is not always the case that finding a job can be regarded as fulfilling a development task. A young adult may encounter a significant threat, from the perspective of individual development which is difficulties in achieving profession in professional life (Walesa, 2011, pp. 23-26). Most often it is a long and unstable way to acquire the necessary professional qualifications, filled with difficulties in the context of taking a professional role towards previously achieved education.

Obtaining many job offers, unrelated to professed values, causes a disturbance in the continuity of professional development, which, in addition, is compounded by various types of seasonal, occasional, spontaneous work which is detrimental to stabilizing the individual's professional identity. In addition, undertaking such activities is recognized as a form of "earning your own moratorium" and a huge obstacle to the effective implementation of developmental tasks of a young adult (Czerka, 2007). Staying on the subject of professional career, it is worth mentioning that there are other development threats at this level, e.g. succumbing to the cult of eternal youth and treating it as a standard for assessing one's life and oneself (not only in terms of appearance, but also how to perform social roles) which does not allow the development of mature forms of behavior and appropriate role play of a young adult. The result is infantilization of adults which is allowed by the social environment (Harwas-Napierała, 2009, p. 11).

Particular attention is paid to the important, though underestimated role of a person who is a guardian of a young adult who takes up work. It turns out that involvement in caring for him is facilitating the fulfillment of social roles (Manek, 2008, p. 23).

As mentioned, the period of early adulthood is a time to accomplish many tasks. It turns out that this may hinder the lack of valuable personal patterns that are associated with social roles. In this regard, particular attention is paid to the lack of authority and dispersion of standards previously passed on to young adults. The large role of other adults who were intermediaries in undertaking developmental tasks assigned to this period is emphasized. Young people need specific rituals called initiations that will contribute to their integration into adulthood. This is not possible. It is said in the scientific community that they can only experience something like her (quasi-initiation) with an emphasis on the lack of shaped consciousness and life patterns (Walesa, 2011, p. 30). Entities that cannot refer to valuable personal standards cannot experience their full and uniform impact, and therefore are susceptible to external influences. A large role seems to be played by the media which

propagate a specific, pre-assumed way of functioning in social life, e.g. a comfortable lifestyle, lack of responsibility, promotion of alternative life forms which aims to arouse artificial needs and present ideologies that favor the interests of various companies: from food to clothing (Mc Daniel and Bradley, 2008, pp. 269-275).

It should also be added that the media encourage the individual to live without the presence of creative development perspectives (Zagórska, 2004). Generally, the diversity and glamor of information flowing from mass media cause informational stress, and as everyone knows, stress does not support the process of making development-oriented activity choices. It would be different if only reliable and verified information reached the unit (Ledzińska, 2002, pp. 77-83).

Summary

Analyzing the literature on the subject, it can be concluded that the period of early adulthood, because of the complexity of changes, is not an easy time for a person. This is the moment when the values transferred in earlier stages of development are checked. If they have been visualized in an inappropriate way and the authorities are dispersed - there are such threats as: failure to work, which results in economic problems or difficulties in building close relationships and fulfillment as a parent. The situation is definitely not facilitated by the media because it encourages people to lead such a lifestyle through constant promotion. Undoubtedly, it can be stated that the period of early adulthood is important in human life. Realization of development tasks assigned to him requires maturity and responsibility that is why it is so important to support the development of each individual, while maintaining certain standards and subjectivity.

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