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TO BE THE AUTHOR OF ONE'S OWN LIFE: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF THE *AUTHORSHIP OF THEIR OWN LIVES**

Introduction: The *Authorship of Their Own Lives* (AOL) construct has undergone multi-threaded theoretical analyses, which have produced a diagnostic tool: *The Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS). Initially, this scale's reliability was assessed and used in numerous diagnostic and comparative studies, which gradually became the source of inspiration for further research projects.

Research Aim: The research aims to identify selected socio-demographic determinants of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and indicate the relationship between AOL and the respondents' gender and age, their level of education, and place of residence.

Method: The research uses the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS), which was developed on the basis of previous conceptual analyses, exploring the issues of well-being, self-determination, coherence, quality of life, and social support.

Results: The research produced varied findings in specific aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*. An analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated that the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS) demonstrated satisfactory reliability. Statistical studies have revealed that gender and place of residence are linked to AOL, but with a weak effect. However, the age of the respondents and their level of education do not differentiate the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*.

Conclusions: The obtained results are regarded as a preliminary step towards conducting multidimensional diagnostic and comparative analyses of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* in various research settings.

Keywords: *Authorship of Their Own Lives* (AOL), *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS), socio-demographic factors, measurement reliability, significance of differences

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the concept of the “authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities” (AOL-PwD) was created and defined (Głodkowska, 2015). In consequence, this was the source of inspiration for repeated theoretical and empirical analyses. While developing the AOL-PwD construct, reference was made to the concept of well-being, self-determination, coherence, quality of life, and social support (Głodkowska, 2015). Initially, the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* was rooted in analysing the phenomenon of disability (Głodkowska, 2014a, 2014b) and defined according to it (Głodkowska, 2015). It was also explained from the perspective of the axiological pillars of contemporary special education (Głodkowska, 2018). An initial version of AOL-PwD was a diagnostic and rehabilitation framework rooted in a positive and affirmative approach to learning and supporting the development of people with disabilities. This notion makes it possible to perceive a person with psychophysical limitations as an agentic subject, striving for independence and self-determination while longing to experience a sense of satisfaction from performing daily tasks. Within this understanding of disabilities, aspects of creating one’s own self and life on the part of people with disabilities are described. The analyses conducted to-date have provided the means to shape and supplement the AOL-PwD construct gradually.

Subsequent reflection on disabilities highlighted the need to emphasise people’s inherent psychophysical variability and the developmental forces at work in them, enabling them to function and create their own lives. This inner strength in people with disabilities allows them to feel proud of themselves despite their limitations, and sometimes in defiance of them (Głodkowska, 2023). Recognising authorship in light of the natural variability of the human condition and the developmental forces at work in people, along with the desire to be proud of one’s life, allowed us to assume that the concept of AOL has a universal dimension and applies to all.

The *Authorship of Their Own Lives* construct fits within the psychological concept of self-authoring personality (Obuchowski, 2000a, 2000b; Obuchowski & Błachnio, 2011). Obuchowski (2000b) defines two important concepts here: people-objects and people-subjects, characterising them in the context of values. According to the author’s assumptions, the lives of people-objects are subject to manipulation and control, and their values are obedience, adaptation, and submission. On the other hand, people-subjects are responsible individuals, aware of themselves and their place in the world, guided by values such as individuality, autonomy, and independence. Obuchowski (2000b) proves that the societal transition from people-objects to people-subjects took place in an extremely short period of time, as it began in the second half of the twentieth century. At that time, a new dividing line between people emerged. People were divided into “people-subjects” and “people-objects,” differing in terms of education, ways of perceiving the world,

location of control and sense of responsibility (Obuchowski, 1996, p. 58). The author specified the relationship between people and society in terms of the “human puppet,” “human actor,” and “human as an intentional being.” The latter term describes people marked by psychological autonomy, a sense of self-dignity, and who perceive themselves as agents on which everything can depend (Obuchowski, 1996, pp. 48-49). Such people are, therefore, authors of their own lives.

According to this approach, human-authors process and interpret information, thus creating themselves in an individual approach to the world, reflected in personal life plans. As Obuchowski demonstrates, a revolution in human development took place in the 1960s, which he described as the Revolution of Subjects (Obuchowski, 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2006, 2009). At that time, the era of a distinctly humanistic approach to matters concerning the world and humanity began, glorifying human individuality and appreciating initiative, creativity, and innovation. People began to enjoy shaping their surrounding environment and creating their inner world, giving it their own personal meaning. Subsequently, by shaping their own selfhood, people became the authors of their own lives. At the same time, they assumed responsibility and, at times, could sense it as a source of suffering in the world of freedom, consumption, and globalisation (Bauman, 2004; Błachnio, 2011).

Attention should be given to the increased importance of subjectivity, self-determination, decision-making, and independence when considering various areas of human life. In response to this trend, the concept of subjectively authoring one's own life was also introduced into the field of education. Here, among other things, one can cite the views of Magolda (2023), who, in an article entitled *Self-authorship as the Common Goal of 21stcentury Education* presented the notion that authoring one's own life is an essential goal of education in the twenty-first century. The author formulated recommendations for American higher education and stressed the need for reform aimed at changing the curriculum to allow self-authorship to become a central, holistic goal of higher education, preparing for a subjective and autonomous adult life.

The formulated meaning contexts of *Authorship of Their Own Lives* include a sense of one's personal resources and subjectivity, a sense of functioning in a satisfactory manner, well-being, and the experience of social support (Głodkowska, 2015). Previous studies have defined the key assumptions of the research strategy for *Authorship of Their Own Lives* (Głodkowska & Pągowska, 2020), formulated the main diagnostic assumptions of AOL (Głodkowska et al., 2018), constructed a measurement tool, and assessed its reliability (Głodkowska, 2023). Within the academic studies conducted by the Department of Interdisciplinary Disability Studies (APS) at the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, Poland, interview questionnaires were also created, which broaden the perspective of identifying AOL when applying qualitative research.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM

This research aims to identify selected socio-demographic determinants of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*. The statistical analyses seek to demonstrate the relationships between the five aspects of AOL (well-being, self-determination, coherence, quality of life, social support) and, more broadly, between AOL and the respondents' gender and age, their education and place of residence. At the outset of the differential and correlation analyses, a reassessment (conducted on a larger sample) of the reliability of the measurement tool used – the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS) was carried out. The main research problem focuses on two complex variables: the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and socio-demographic factors. The problem is set out as follows: To what extent do the selected socio-demographic features of the respondents differentiate their sense of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*?

Socio-demographic factors are variables with a moderating effect on various features of human functioning. They are important at every stage of performing development tasks, including adulthood. These factors can play an essential role in assessing personal resources. They can also serve as motivation to shape one's own life. Within these relationships lies the crucial role of self-awareness and the way individuals engage with meaningful information from their surroundings – information that can either empower or undermine their sense of self-authorship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out using the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS) (Głodkowska, 2023), which was constructed based on the theoretical and methodological studies previously mentioned. The scale comprises 25 items corresponding to the five aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*: Well-being, Self-determination, Coherence, Quality of Life, and Social Support. The number of items and the scale points assigned to them (on a 1-5 Likert scale) indicate that the maximum possible score (five points for each of the five aspects of AOL) – $X_{\max} = 25$.

The *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS) initially underwent psychometric evaluation (Głodkowska, 2023), which confirmed that the AOLS is a valuable diagnostic tool, as evidenced by its discriminative power, reliability, and exploratory factor analysis results. Results of the AOLS's reliability assessment confirm that it is a satisfactory psychometric tool, suitable for use in scientific research. Conclusions of the psychometric assessment emphasised certain limitations in interpreting the obtained results. It was therefore concluded that (1) the tool was tested on a very small research sample; (2) the sample was selected based on available respondents (a group of special education students who expressed

consent); (3) the research sample was not gender-proportional, as the research was conducted at a pedagogical university and the vast majority of the participants were female. Recommendations highlighted the merits of conducting further studies using the AOLS and also indicated the need to re-evaluate its reliability on a larger sample. The analyses presented in this article utilised research findings from a study involving 400 participants, including special education students and individuals from their social circles, selected through purposive sampling due to their easy accessibility. Research assumptions did not limit participation of any person who expressed willingness to fill in the questionnaire. The study sample comprised 220 women (55.5%) and 180 men (44.5%). They were adults aged between 27 and 58 years of age, of which 27 people (6.75%) were under 30, 261 respondents (65.25%) were between 31 and 40 years of age, 94 people (23.5%) were between 41 and 50 years of age, and 18 people (4.5%) were aged between 51 and 57. The respondents were students ($n = 73$; 18.25%) with completed higher education ($n = 124$; 31.0%), secondary education ($n = 183$; 45.75%), or vocational education ($n = 20$; 5.0%). The test sample was divided into two categories: (1) students and people with completed higher education ($n = 197$; 49.25%) and (2) without completed higher education (others, $n = 203$; 50.75%). In this group, 49 (12.25%) people lived in rural areas and 351 (87.75%) in urban centres.

Research participants were recruited by means of “snowball sampling” (Pilch & Bauman, 2010, p. 58). In the initial stage, special education students were invited to participate and their involvement helped disseminate information about the adult study. As a result, in the next stage, the respondents included friends, family, or teachers at schools in which the students worked part-time. No cases of participant withdrawal were noted in this procedure. However, in the initial stage of the study, 73 students out of the anticipated 111 participants accepted the invitation. A link to the survey questionnaire (*Google forms*) was made available via email with an outline of the purpose of the research. The respondents were guaranteed informed, anonymous, and voluntary participation in the study. During the final lecture, selected aspects of the obtained results were presented to the group of students who participated in the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Obtaining an answer to the main research problem required the use of statistical analyses. IBM SPSS Statistics 29 was used for this purpose. Initially, the basic descriptive statistics were analysed, and the distribution normality was estimated by means of a Shapiro-Wilk test. Subsequently, reliability was determined by calculating the Cronbach's α coefficient, and further analyses were undertaken to demonstrate the relationship between AOL and the socio-demographic factors.

A Student's t-test was also conducted for independent samples (comparing the results for female and male participants), and a Pearson's r correlation analysis (correlation between the respondents' age and AOL) and a Mann-Whitney test (comparing AOL results based on the respondents' place of residence) were also performed. The significance level in these studies was $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of the Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale

Descriptive statistics are measures of distribution, which allow for characterising the structure of collected data for further exploration. These results enabled us to draw basic conclusions about the adopted variable – the *Authorship of Their Own Lives (AOL)*. In this part of the article, the descriptive statistics will be presented, in which the sum of raw results, the arithmetic mean, and percentage in relation to specific items are presented (AOLS1-AOLS25; see Table 1 below), together with the percentage results for the five aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* (see Figure 1 below).

Table 1.

Sum of raw results, arithmetic mean, and percentage of specific items on the Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale, highlighting aspects of AOL

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	Scale item	Sum of the raw results Σx	Arithmetic mean M	Percentage %
Well-being	AOLS1	1,545	3.86	77.25
	AOLS2	1,488	3.72	74.41
	AOLS3	1,592	3.98	79.60
	AOLS4	1,596	3.99	79.80
	AOLS5	1,519	3.78	75.95
Self-determination	AOLS6	1,745	4.36	87.25
	AOLS7	1,819	4.55	90.95
	AOLS8	1,753	4.38	87.65
	AOLS9	1,710	4.28	85.50
	AOLS10	1,794	4.49	89.70

Coherence	AOLS11	1,787	4.47	89.35
	AOLS12	1,670	4.18	83.50
	AOLS13	1,529	3.82	76.45
	AOLS14	1,347	3.37	67.35
	AOLS15	1,633	4.08	81.65
Quality of Life	AOLS16	1,448	3.62	72.40
	AOLS17	1,427	3.57	71.35
	AOLS18	1,529	3.82	76.45
	AOLS19	1,711	4.28	85.55
	AOLS20	1,652	4.13	82.60
Social support	AOLS21	1,619	4.05	80.95
	AOLS22	1,601	4.00	80.05
	AOLS23	1,506	3.77	75.30
	AOLS24	1,700	4.25	85.00
	AOLS25	1,808	4.52	90.40

Source: Author's own study.

The study reveals varied results across the adopted research categories, which will be analysed in the particular aspects of the AOLS. It was also demonstrated that in terms of:

- Well-being (77.36% of the maximum score); certain item results were above 70.00%; the highest scores were obtained in relation to the following items: *I am interested in new challenges* (AOLS4; 79.80%) and *I know what I am capable of in different life situations* (AOLS3; 79.60%).
- Self-determination (88.21%); certain item results were above 80%; the highest score was obtained in relation to the following items: *I can get the information I need* (AOLS7; 90.95%), *I can deal with matters that are important for me* (AOLS10; 89.70%).
- Coherence (79.66%); varied results for specific items (ranging from 67.35% to 89.35%); the highest scores were obtained in relation to the following items: *I can make decisions independently and I am responsible for them* (AOLS11; 89.35%), *I feel that my life and my achievements primarily depend on me* (AOLS12; 83.50%).
- Quality of life (77.67%); results ranging from 71.35% to 85.55% were obtained in certain items, and the highest scores were obtained in the following items: *I am prepared to face the difficulties and problems life brings*

(AOLS19; 85.55%), *I am satisfied with what I have achieved* (AOLS20; 82.60%).

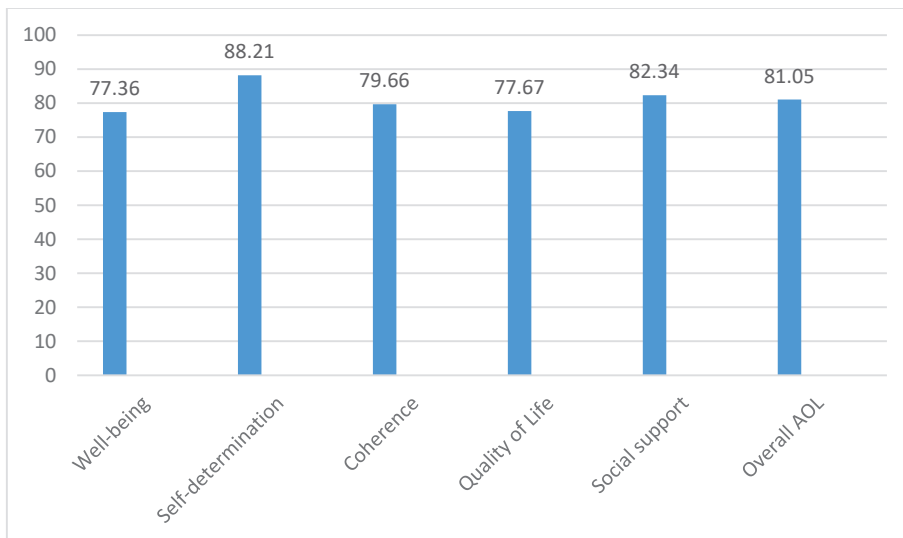
- Social support (82.34%); in certain items, the results ranged from 75.30% to 90.40%; the highest scores were obtained in the following items: *I respect the feelings of others, I can show gratitude for the care and help shown to me* (AOLS25; 90.40%), *If necessary, I can always count on help and support* (AOLS24; 85.00%).

An analysis of the percentage results indicates that in most AOLS items, the respondents obtained more than 80% of the maximum score. This applies to 14 out of the 25 items, mainly in the areas of self-determination and social support. When exploring the results, it is necessary to emphasise the relatively highest levels obtained in the following items (above 85% of the maximum score): *I respect the feelings of others, I can show gratitude for the care and help shown to me* (90.4%), *I can obtain the information I need* (90.9%), *I can deal with matters that are important to me* (89.7%), *I can make decisions independently and am responsible for them* (89.4%), *I am prepared to face the difficulties and problems life brings* (85.6%), *If necessary, I can always count on help and support* (Table 1).

The percentage results in specific aspects of AOL and the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall are presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.

Percentage results of specific aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and AOL overall



Source: the Author's own research.

It is important to note that in terms of the five aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*, all results exceed 70% (see Figure 1 above). According to the graphic presentation, the five aspects of AOL can be presented in the following order: Self-determination (88.21% of the maximum score), Social support (82.34%), Coherence (79.66%), Quality of Life (77.67%), and Well-being (77.36%). In terms of the entire AOLS, the respondents obtained 81.05% of the maximum score.

Assessing Normality of the Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale results

It was also important to demonstrate whether the collected results met the assumption of a normal distribution. The outcome of the normality assessment served as the basis for applying appropriate statistical tests. Therefore, descriptive statistics were supplemented by testing the normality of the distribution of quantitative variables using a Shapiro-Wilk (W) test. The obtained results were reported in tabular form (see Table 2 below) and were also analysed and interpreted.

Table 2.

Basic descriptive statistics of examined variables using the Shapiro-Wilk test (N = 400)

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	M	Me	SD	$Sk.$	$Kurt.$	$Min.$	$Max.$	W	p
Well-being	19.34	20.00	3.74	-0.79	0.48	6.00	25.00	0.95	<0.001
Self-determination	22.05	23.00	2.72	-1.30	2.57	8.00	25.00	0.88	<0,001
Coherence	19.92	20.00	3.16	-0.89	1.58	6.00	25.00	0.95	<0,001
Quality of Life	19.42	20.00	3.81	-0.80	0.69	5.00	25.00	0.95	<0.001
Social support	20.59	21.00	3.25	-1.03	1.88	5.00	25.00	0.93	<0.001
Overall AOL	101.31	104.00	13.98	-0.98	1.46	41.00	125.00	0.95	<0.001

Source: Author's own study.

Averages and standard deviations were calculated for each aspect the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and for the entire AOL variable. They were as follows: Well-being $M = 19.34$ ($SD = 3.74$), Self-determination: $M = 22.05$ ($SD = 2.72$), Coherence: $M = 19.92$ ($SD = 3.16$), Quality of Life: $M = 19.42$ ($SD = 2.81$), Support: $M = 20.59$ ($SD = 3.25$), Overall AOL: $M = 101.31$ ($SD = 13.98$) (Table 2).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (statistics D) and the Shapiro-Wilk test (statistics W) may be used to assess distribution normality. The purpose of these statistical calculations is to compare the distribution of a given variable's results to the theoretical distribution (i.e., the normal distribution). If the p -value is lower than

the assumed significance level, the result is considered statistically significant. This indicates that the variable's distribution deviates from normal distribution. However, such a result does not mean abandoning the use of parametric tests and applying non-parametric tests. It should be pointed out that abnormal distribution is not significant. Slight deviation from normal distribution is indicated by the skewness and kurtosis values, which are within the absolute value of 1 or the absolute value of 2 (George & Mallery, 2024; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014; Trochim & Donnelly, 2001).

The Shapiro-Wilk test results – in all aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and AOL overall proved to be statistically significant. This indicates that the distribution of results significantly differs from normal distribution. However, considering the skewness of the distribution (Sk.), it is worth noting that the result never exceeds an absolute value of 2. It can therefore be concluded that the distributions of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* results are slightly asymmetrical. As a result, carrying out further analyses using parametric tests is well-founded.

Reliability of the AOLS

Studies conducted several decades ago (since the 1960s) began to formulate rigorous rules for conducting scientific measurements in the social sciences, among others. Reliability in research means that a given tool's results are stable and consistent (Blalock et al., 2008). A measurement tool should be constructed to ensure a high degree of repeatability of results (i.e., to eliminate the influence of confounding factors). In this respect, researchers must monitor this at various stages of the research, including the preparatory stage (constructing the measurement tool, adopting a justified research method, determining the criteria for selecting a sample, participation in the study by consenting individuals), the implementation stage (ensuring appropriate conditions for conducting research and monitoring its course), and subsequent stages including collecting research results (adopting a proper form of collecting results and archiving them), and elaborating results stage in accordance with the adopted methodological assumptions of the research project. One of the important conditions for obtaining reliable results is the use of a measurement tool with established reliability, ensuring the authenticity of the results obtained.

Reliability is defined as a method of assessing stability and accuracy of a measurement tool (Brzeziński, 1996). Reliability can be assessed using the *Item Response Theory* (IRT) and by calculating Cronbach's α or McDonald's ω coefficients. These are distinct concepts in psychometric analyses. The first method is a mathematical model that examines the relationship between responses and hidden traits (Bock & Gibbons, 2021). The *Item Response Theory* (IRT) was developed in the 1960s. As Darrell Bock (1997) as well as Thissen and Steinberg (2009) have noted, the IRT

is a systematic method used in psychometry, and since its emergence, numerous researchers have used this psychometric analysis to assess the reliability of measurement tools.

A tool's reliability provides a justified basis for trusting the findings obtained in scientific research in various circumstances, regardless of the time and place it was carried out. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the AOLS has already been assessed on a sample of 40 students from the Maria Grzegorzewska University (Głodkowska, 2023). By assessing reliability of the measurement tool, it is possible to determine the extent to which specific items measure the same construct. Previous studies have included an analysis of the discriminatory power of specific items, a reliability assessment using Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω internal compatibility coefficients, as well as an analysis of a scree test and an exploratory factor analysis (Głodkowska, 2023).

Some researchers note that it is crucial to use both alpha and omega coefficients, particularly at the initial testing stage of the measurement tool (Graham, 2006; Revelle & Zinbarg, 2009). In the research presented in this article, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency and comparatively demonstrate the role of the sample size in estimating reliability of the measurement. Cronbach's method was developed in the 1950s by Guttman as lambda (λ_3), and popularised by Cronbach a few years later (1947, 1951) (see: Revelle & Zinbarg, 2009). Since then, Cronbach's alpha coefficient has become a standard method of assessing reliability of measurement tools. Numerous authors have attempted to explain its role in scientific research, showing the alpha coefficient in conditions violating two assumptions (Zimmerman et al., 1993), Cronbach's α in internal cohesion reliability (Bonett & Wright, 2015; Osburn, 2000), alpha as a tool for estimating the reliability of measurement scales (Mohamad et al., 2015; Santos, 1999), and alpha in assessing the Likert reliability scale (Qasem et al., 2014). Estimating reliability of a measurement requires meeting crucial requirements (or the justified presumption that any deviations are minimal) to obtain credible research results (Green & Yang, 2015; Shevlin, et al. 2000; Zyl et al., 2000). When these requirements remain unmet, other methods should be used, including McDonald's omega (Cieżkowska, 2018; Dunn et al., 2014; Graham, 2006).

Results of the AOLS measurement tool indicate that for the entire scale (25 items) Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.926$. However, for specific aspects of AOL, the result is varied: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.705$ for Coherence, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.750$ for Self-determination and Social support, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.779$ for Well-being (see Table 3 below).

Table 3.
Reliability of the Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	Cronbach's α	Number of items
Well-being	0.779	5
Self-determination	0.750	5
Coherence	0.705	5
Quality of Life	0.826	5
Support	0.750	5
Overall AOL	0.926	25

Source: Author's own study.

Comparing these results with previous psychometric evaluation studies (Głodkowska, 2023) indicates that the reliability coefficient of the AOL, which previously (on a smaller sample) was Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$, increased. The results for the entire AOL ratio obtained in this study ($\alpha = 0.926$) are satisfactory according to George and Mallery's criterion (2024), which is $\alpha > 0.70$. Therefore, testing the scale on a larger sample (400 people) not only confirms reliability of this measurement tool, but also confirms its credibility in the coefficient previously discussed.

George and Mallery (2024, p. 240) propose classifying the reliability coefficients obtained in studies. According to this classification, the authors consider $\alpha > 0.9$ to be excellent, $\alpha > 0.8$ to be good, $\alpha > 0.7$ to be acceptable, $\alpha > 0.6$ to be questionable, $\alpha > 0.5$ to be weak, and $\alpha < 0.5$ to be unacceptable. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (SOLS) meets the psychometric standard in terms of reliability: excellent ($\alpha > 0.9$ for the entire scale), good ($\alpha > 0.8$ for the Quality of Life subscale) and acceptable ($\alpha > 0.7$ for the remaining scales).

The AOL construct in socio-demographic comparisons

The research carried out indicates existence of a link between the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* and selected socio-demographic factors. The following socio-demographic data were included in the analyses: the respondent's gender and age, their education and place of residence.

Gender comparison in terms of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*

The study investigated whether gender differentiates the level of specific aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and AOL in general. To this end, the scores obtained by female and male participants in terms of AOL were compared using the Student's *t*-test for independent samples overall and with respect to particular as-

pects: Well-being, Selfdetermination, Coherence, Quality of Life, and Social Support. The Student's t-test is a parametric test for comparing independent samples. Employing this test requires meeting relevant requirements, including a normal distribution of the sample in both groups and homogeneous variance. In the absence of homogeneous variance, an alternative version of the t-test, Welch's t-test, may be applied. A statistically significant t-test result ($p < 0.05$) demonstrates the differences between the compared groups in terms of the intensity of the variable under consideration.

Table 4.

Comparison of female and male participants in terms of the Authorship of Their Own Lives (N = 400)

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	Women (n = 220)		Men (n = 180)		t (397)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Well-being	19.00	3.89	19.74	3.52	-1.97	0.049	-1.48	0.01	0.21
Self-determination	21.93	2.83	22.21	2.58	-1.02	0.308	-0.82	0.26	0.10
Coherence	19.79	3.30	20.06	3.00	-0.84	0.403	-0.89	0.36	0.08
Quality of Life	19.02	3.92	19.91	3.64	-2.31	0.021	-1.63	-0.13	0.23
Social support	20.34	3.27	20.89	3.22	-1.67	0.095	-1.19	0.10	0.17
Overall AOL	100.10	14.52	102.81	13.22	-1.94	0.054	-5.47	0.04	0.20

Source: Author's own study.

The analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups compared in two aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*: Well-being [t (397) = -1.97; $p < 0.049$] and Quality of Life [t (397) = -2.31; $p < 0.021$], and AOL overall [t (397) = -1.94; $p < 0.054$; see Table 4 above). The results showed that male participants, compared to female ones, are characterised by significantly higher levels of two aspects of AOL and the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall. In terms of well-being, the respondents defined themselves (on a Likert scale) by responding to the following items:

I have an optimistic, cheerful attitude towards life, and I derive joy from it.

I have clear goals in my life.

I know what I am capable of in different life situations.

I am interested in new challenges.

I am a happy person.

In terms of quality of life, the participants described their lives in the following items:

I take care of my own development, I educate myself, and I look for new challenges.

I am capable of planning my future and systematically pursuing my life goals. Every day, every year, I achieve my goals with increasing ease.

I am aware that my life will change in various ways, but I am confident that I will manage it.

I am prepared to face the difficulties and problems life brings.

However, it should be noted that the significance of the differences between female and male subjects in indicated categories was weak. It is accepted that in the context of Cohen's d , 0.20 is a weak effect, 0.50 is a moderate effect, and 0.80 is a strong effect (Cohen, 1988). In three aspects of AOL (Self-determination, Coherence, Social support), $d < 0.20$ was obtained, which indicates the absence of significant differences between the compared groups. Therefore, the differences between male and female participants in the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* do not allow for definite interpretations. As a result, the results obtained should be further investigated and explained.

The relationship between age and AOL

The research also investigated whether there is a relationship between age and the level of individual aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and in AOL overall. Consequently, a Pearson's r correlation analysis was performed to determine co-occurrence of variables. A positive coefficient reveals a positive correlation between variables (both variables increase), while a negative one indicates a negative relationship (one variable increases while the other decreases). The correlation coefficient value is interpreted as follows: $r = 0.10$ – weak effect; $r = 0.30$ – moderate effect; $r = 0.50$ – strong effect (Cohen, 1988).

Table 5.

Correlation of age with the Authorship of Their Own Lives (N = 400)

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	Age	
	Pearson's r	p
Well-being	0.06	0.213
Self-determination	0.08	0.096
Coherence	0.06	0.199
Quality of Life	0.07	0.155
Social support	-0.01	0.890
Overall AOL	0.07	0.193

Source: Author's own study.

The analysis did not reveal any statistically significant links between the participants' age and the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall. Further, the five aspects of AOL also did not reveal any statistically significant correlations (see Table 5 above). This means that changes in the participants' age do not correlate with changes in the level of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall and in terms of Well-being, Self-determination, Coherence, Quality of Life, and Social support.

Comparison of the results of AOL based on the participants' place of residence

The next step of the analysis investigated whether the place of residence differentiated the level of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*. For this purpose, people living in rural areas were compared with people living in urban centres, taking into account AOL overall and in specific aspects. Due to the statistically significant *disproportion* between the compared groups ($\chi^2(1) = 228.01$; $p < 0.001$), the analysis was performed using a Mann-Whitney *U* nonparametric test.

Table 6.

Comparison of AOL results based on the participants' place of residence (N = 400)

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	Age (n = 49)			Female (n = 351)			Z	p	η^2
	average rank	M	SD	average rank	M	SD			
Well-being	168.81	18.43	3.76	204.92	19.47	3.72	-2.06	0.040	0.01
Self-determination	198.71	22.16	2.32	200.75	22.04	2.78	-0.12	0.907	0.01
Coherence	170.90	19.12	3.36	204.63	20.03	3.12	-1.92	0.054	0.01
Quality of Life	171.99	18.41	4.25	204.48	19.56	3.73	-1.85	0.064	0.01
Social support	167.56	19.45	3.86	205.10	20.74	3.13	-2.14	0.032	0.01
Overall AOL	169.60	97.57	14.69	204.81	101.83	13.82	-2.00	0.046	0.01

Source: Author's own study.

The research revealed statistically significant differences between urban populations and rural residents in terms of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives overall* [$Z = -2.00$; $p < 0.046$] and in two aspects: Well-being [$Z = -2.06$; $p < 0.040$] and Social support [$Z = -2.14$; $p < 0.032$] (see Table 6 above). Since the items of well-being have already been compared in an analysis of gendered results carried out earlier, in this part, only the items of the AOL scale defining the aspect of Social Support are provided:

I have people around me who encourage me to develop and make new achievements.

*I am able to listen to other people's opinions about me and draw conclusions.
There is an atmosphere of kindness, cooperation and respect in my environment.
I can always count on help and support when needed.
I respect the feelings of others, and I can show gratitude for the care and help shown.*

It turned out that people living in cities are characterised by significantly higher levels of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall as well as in terms of well-being and social support, compared to people living in rural areas. However, it should be noted that the differentiation effects are weak (Kelley & Preacher, 2012).

The participants' level of education and the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*

The final stage of the analysis examined whether the participants' level of education differentiates the level of specific aspects and the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall. To this end, a Student's *t*-test was used for independent samples to compare two groups in terms of AOL: people without higher education (primary, secondary, vocational) with people with higher education. Table 7 below illustrates this stage of our analyses.

Table 7.

Comparison of people without higher education with people with higher education in terms of the Authorship of Their Own Lives (N = 400)

The Authorship of Their Own Lives	People without higher education (n = 197)		People with higher education (n = 203)		<i>t</i> (398)	<i>p</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Well-being	19.62	3.67	19.07	3.79	1.47	0.141	-0.18	1.28	0.15
Self-determination	22.06	2.50	22.04	2.93	0.06	0.952	-0.52	0.55	0.01
Coherence	20.10	2.97	19.74	3.34	1.13	0.259	-0.26	0.98	0.11
Quality of Life	19.74	3.79	19.10	3.82	1.68	0.094	-0.11	1.39	0.17
Support	20.74	2.97	20.44	3.50	0.91	0.361	-0.34	0.94	0.09
Overall AOL	102.25	13.39	100.39	14.50	1.33	0.184	-0.89	4.61	0.13

Source: Author's own study.

The analysis did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the level of education of the compared groups and the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* overall and in terms of the five aspects of AOL. This means that people with higher

education did not differ from people without higher education in terms of AOL. Consideration could be given to the reasons behind such findings, as it seems reasonable to believe that higher education strengthens self-esteem and one's perception of oneself as the author of one's own life. Further, in-depth research should be undertaken to identify the outlined but undocumented differences.

DISCUSSION

The study involved adults aged between 27 and 58. According to Havighurst's (1981) concept, adulthood can be divided into three phases: early, middle, and late adulthood. Each of them, as the author pointed out, may be characterised in terms of fulfilling specific development tasks. Importantly, successful completion of developmental tasks in a given period makes fulfilling tasks of the following phase possible and ensures both the approval of one's environment and a sense of personal satisfaction and happiness (Havighurst, 1981). Failure to master tasks at specific developmental stages evokes a sense of failure, unhappiness, and social disapproval. Oleś (2011, pp. 17-19) defines adulthood in connection with tasks related to starting a family, embarking on a professional career, and shaping personal traits such as responsibility for oneself and others, emotional independence, as well as independent decision-making skills.

Most of the people who participated in the study were in the middle adulthood phase (35 to 60 years of age). Therefore, for a more complete characterisation of the test sample, the tasks assigned to this development phase will be indicated. These tasks include developing both personal and social responsibility, participating in the lives of growing children to provide them with the necessary support and a sense of security, and ensuring an adequate economic standard of living for themselves and their families. Of equal importance is one's acceptance of biological and physiological changes, which helps in getting used to the aging process and new situations and tasks resulting from belonging to the adult age group (Brzezińska et al., 2015, p. 35). These tasks can be carried out in a satisfactory manner when the developmental tasks of the preceding period (i.e., early adulthood at 23 to 34 years of age) have been completed successfully: making efforts to start a family, including choosing a partner and establishing a spousal relationship, fulfilling the role of a wife, mother, running a household, as well as starting work and taking care of one's professional career (Brzezińska et al., 2015, p. 34).

It should be noted that the people participating in the AOL study were also undertaking the developmental tasks of early and middle adulthood. In performing these tasks, they exhibited an individually determined level of the authorship of their own lives, reflected in a sense of their own well-being, self-determination, coherence, quality of life, and in experiencing social support. Stud-

ies have shown that the level of the five aspects of *AOL* varies across the entire research sample and that the results differ between particular *AOLS* items. It should be noted that in each case, the results exceed 60% of the maximum score, and there are also categories in which the participants obtained more than 90% of the maximum score.

When discussing this project's research findings, reference can be made to selected empirical data, in which the significance of various socio-demographic factors for specific dimensions of one's subjective functioning and well-being has been evaluated. The *Authorship of Their Own Lives* study has revealed that, relatively speaking, gender differentiates *AOL* most strongly. Accordingly, the discussion of obtained results will include references to previous studies that have taken this variable into account.

Finogenow (2018) identified links between having a sense of one's own attractiveness and well-being in late adulthood (from about 60 years of age). In the study on attractiveness, Finogenow took into account the moderating role of gender. The study revealed that gender, among others, significantly impacts the links considered: physical attractiveness of women and feelings of sadness as well as attractiveness in social relationships and a sense of shame, and attractiveness in the context of fulfilling a professional role and experiencing love. In the group of men, the relationship between these variables was statistically insignificant. In conclusions, Finogenow stated that women can perceive the aging process as a period of loss. Therefore, when assessing themselves in late adulthood, they compare themselves to the time of their early youth and see many negative changes in their attractiveness and sense of well-being. At the same time, women, alongside the aging process, are more sensitive to changes in their physical appearance and in other dimensions of psychological and social well-being and life satisfaction.

Finogenow's research findings (2018) can be interpreted in light of the "double standard of aging," which indicates more favourable attitudes towards old age in men compared to women (Sontag, 2018). It turns out that this standard mostly applies to women aged 35 to 55 years of age (Berman, O'Nan & Floyd, 1981). The research sample in the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* included women in the age range indicated by the authors. Therefore, it can be concluded that they also experienced the "double standard of aging" and the fact that they are women was also significant for their sense of well-being, self-determination, coherence, quality of life, and social support, that is, the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*.

A study on gender-based aging was conducted among university students from the United States, England, and Australia (N = 1,042). A questionnaire on attitudes towards aging and the elderly (Chonody & Teater, 2016) was used. The findings indicated that gender, age, beliefs about one's own aging process, and fear of death explain 30.4% of the variance in terms of fear of aging. A study conducted by Datta Gupta

et al. (2016), which found that gender plays a moderating role in feelings of greater attractiveness, well-being, and lower levels of depression, may also provide insight.

The results of Mensah's (2021) study prove that stress at work has a direct negative impact on the psychological well-being of adults. This correlation showed significant differences in terms of gender, with women being affected to a greater extent than men. Social support has also been found to be an intermediary effect in the link between work stress and mental well-being. However, this effect did not produce significant differences in terms of gender.

As Czapiński (1994) stated, numerous studies have proven differences in the sense of well-being between women and men. Unfortunately, in this respect, it is difficult to formulate general conclusions in a reliable and conclusive manner. Some studies highlight the importance of differences in the well-being of women and men, emphasising a greater effect in one or the other research group. In other studies, however, conclusions cannot be made concerning the statistical significance of the differences based on the findings. In this respect, researchers are also undertaking review analyses using meta-analysis. Pinquart and Sörensen (2001) reached their conclusions based on 300 studies in which the authors demonstrated the differences between men and women in terms of life satisfaction and happiness. Studies including older people were also considered. The findings allowed the authors to indicate that although significant differences do exist, gender accounts for less than 1% of the variance in well-being outcomes. In conclusion, they claimed that this result cannot be considered conclusive, pointing to the moderating role of gender in the sense of well-being of women and men.

Pasik (2007) conducted a study on the sense of coherence to show the differences between retired men and women. The results indicated significant differences in the overall sense of coherence and two of its components: comprehensibility and meaningfulness. It turned out that women of retirement age perceive reality as predictable and explainable (comprehensibility) to a lesser extent than men. At the same time, women are less likely than men to consider emerging challenges and difficulties as significant for their development and worth the effort to overcome them (meaningfulness). This may indicate that, as the author suggests, women experience more circumstances related to their own limitations. It also turns out that women's sense of well-being determines all the components of the sense of coherence (comprehensibility, manageability, meaningfulness). However, in the group of men, the most important role is played by a sense of manageability. In conclusion, Pasik (2007) formulates the question: do the revealed differences in the sense of coherence affect women and men only at retirement age, or are they a general gender-related regularity that also exists in other periods of life? This question is worth exploring in further research studies.

The results of other authors' research mentioned in this discussion, to varying degrees, testify to the moderating role of gender. They also indicate effects in terms of well-being and coherence. It should be noted that well-being and coherence are two aspects of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* construct, and that in AOL research on well-being, there were significant differences between women and men.

CONCLUSIONS

This article reveals the determinants of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*, taking into account socio-demographic factors such as the participants' gender and age, their level of education, and place of residence. The analysed research findings, using descriptive statistics, indicated varied results in the research categories in a spread of 30% (ranging between about 67.35% and 90.95%). At the same time, statistical analyses allowed for confirming the satisfactory level of reliability of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale* (AOLS) on a larger sample. It meets the psychometric standard in terms of perfect reliability (for the entire scale), good (for the Quality of Life subscale), and acceptable (for the remaining subscales).

The statistical analyses and interpretations undertaken later showed that gender and place of residence are variables significantly linked to AOL. On the other hand, age and level of education do not differentiate the *Authorship of their Own Lives*. The findings presented in this article are one of the first empirical studies to employ the AOLS.

The cited research data in this project can serve as inspiration to conduct fresh analyses and interpretations of the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*. Other empirical evidence can be sought to demonstrate links between AOL and other socio-geographic variables. For instance, marital status, professional status, the number of people in a given household, and socio-economic conditions, could also be considered.

Further research is expected on the use of the Authorship of Their Own Lives Scale in diagnostic and comparative analyses of various research samples, as well as in identifying links between AOL and various areas of human functioning. In this way, it will be possible to systematically consider the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* in multidimensional analyses and interpretations. It is also worth expanding the use of the AOL construct more intensively in qualitative research on understanding the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* and explaining its various contexts. These studies will allow us to delve deeper and identify unique and original dimensions of life in the "human perspective."

LIMITATIONS

Research on the *Authorship of Their Own Lives* was carried out using a quantitative method, which by its very nature applies rigid statistical procedural rules. However, it should be noted that gathering results employing a reliable measurement tool provides credible information on correlations and the significance of differences. However, it is important in this respect to be aware that the quantitative methods used in the procedure of elaborating the results prevent, or rather limit, investigating detailed, non-quantifiable aspects of the variable (i.e., the *Authorship of Their Own Lives*). AOL is a personality category with a clearly internal, emotional, and complex psychological construct. This concept has been developed over the last ten years. In parallel with quantitative research, qualitative research is also carried out, which will enable an in-depth exploration of this variable. In accordance with the accepted research intention, a purposive sample was selected, the only criterion of which was adulthood. The first stage (conducted on a sample of special education students) ensured a certain degree of control over the research process, while collecting further results remained out of direct supervision. It should be noted that such a course of research makes it difficult (impossible) to monitor the responses of the respondents. It is impossible to prove how reliable these answers were and whether they were well-thought-out or marked without thoughtful consideration. This constitutes a certain limitation which is, unfortunately, difficult to avoid in quantitative studies on a larger sample when collecting results online.

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BYĆ AUTOREM SWOJEGO ŻYCIA – SOCJODEMOGRAFICZNE UWARUNKOWANIA AUTORSTWA WŁASNEGO ŻYCIA

Wprowadzenie: Opracowany konstrukt autorstwa własnego życia (AWŻ) był poddany wielowątkowym analizom teoretycznym. Na ich podstawie skonstruowano narzędzie diagnostyczne: *Skalę autorstwa własnego życia* (SAWŻ). Wstępnie oszacowano rzetelność *Skali* i zastosowano ją w licznych badaniach diagnostycznych i porównawczych, które sukcesywnie stają się inspiracją dalszych projektów badawczych.

Cel badań: Celem badań jest rozpoznanie wybranych socjodemograficznych uwarunkowań *autorstwa własnego życia* i wykazanie związków między AWŻ a płcią, wiekiem życia badanych, ich wykształceniem oraz miejscem zamieszkania.

Metoda badań: W badaniach zastosowano *Skalę autorstwa własnego życia* (SAWŻ), której opracowanie poprzedziły analizy koncepcyjne, rozpatrujące zagadnienia dobrostanu, samostanowienia, koherencji, jakości życia i wsparcia społecznego.

Wyniki: Przeprowadzone badania wykazały zróżnicowane wyniki w poszczególnych aspektach *autorstwa własnego życia*. Analiza z zastosowaniem alfa Cronbacha pozwoliła wykazać satysfakcjonującą rzetelność skonstruowanej *Skali autorstwa własnego życia* (SAWŻ). Opracowania statystyczne udokumentowały, że płeć i miejsce zamieszkania są powiązane z AWŻ, ale efekt jest słaby. Natomiast wiek badanych i ich wykształcenie nie różnicuje *autorstwa własnego życia*.

Wnioski: Uzyskane wyniki uznane zostały jako wstęp do podjęcia wielowymiarowych diagnostycznych i porównawczych analiz autorstwa własnego życia w różnych kontekstach badawczych.

Słowa kluczowe: *autorstwo własnego życia* (AWŻ), *Skala autorstwa własnego życia* (SAWŻ), czynniki socjodemograficzne, rzetelność pomiaru, istotność różnic