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## The Issue of Loneliness and Isolation of Youths, Youth Detention Center Charges

**Abstract:** Alienation in the initial phase of adolescence is a common phenomenon and it is understandable due to the stage of development. It can be treated as a phenomenon that fosters the development of a person's identity and their achievement of autonomy. Erich Fromm points out that overcoming alienation is an element that improves the subject and gives the opportunity to answer important existential questions (Fromm 1996). A certain level of loneliness is conducive to shaping personal maturity and integration. It is important that a young person looking for answers to their burning questions needs contacts with loved ones and peers but also the time for thinking and intellectual reflection in solitude. By defining their own path, they learn to meet two seemingly contradictory needs: autonomy and intimacy with others; on the one hand, being together and on the other hand, moving away from social relations. Erikson assumes that adolescence is associated with the need to overcome a crisis defined as intimacy-isolation (Erikson 2000). A teenager who has already found their identity is looking for opportunities to connect it with the identity of others. The communal behaviors that appear in youth, characterized by sincerity, closeness and openness are combined with a positive resolution to the crisis associated with intimacy and isolation, and thus the willingness to engage in specific relationships and communities. The sense of alienation among adolescents may be explained through developmental regularities and a normative crisis. However, the alienation tendencies of adolescents occurring naturally in the developmental process, the essence of which is a sense of detachment or alienation from some area of external or internal reality, should be transitory. The negative consequences of a failure to address a developmental crisis, coupled with a sense of deep isolation and lack of a sufficient social support network, are linked to the cognitive and emotional spheres of an

adolescent and can lead to psychosocial consequences. When in high intensity, they significantly modify the psychosocial development and functioning of the teenager. The article will present the results of research on the sense of isolation of the charges of Youth Detention Centers in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship.

**Key words:** Isolation of young people, loneliness, adolescence, developmental crisis, Youth Detention Centers.

The sense of loneliness can be attributed to a person regardless of age, gender or health (Wood 1986, pp. 184–208; Rotenberg 1999, pp. 176–200). Finding an unambiguous definition of loneliness as well as a uniform theory or accurate and reliable method of measuring it in the literature on the subject is not easy. In psychology, the following terms are differentiated: *aloneness*, *solitude* versus *loneliness* (McGraw 1995, pp. 58–65; Kmiecik-Baran 1988, pp. 1081–1095; Szyszkowska 2000; Szczepański 1984). Jan Szczepański treats solitude and loneliness as two different states and forms of human existence. He characterizes solitude as a state resulting from one's own choice, as being in only one's own company. In his opinion, a human in solitude has no contact with other humans but remains in contact with their own inner self. This author points out that solitude is not only a search for oneself but it can be a skill of focusing on the inner world and distancing oneself from the world, providing a human being with a sense of inner self-sufficiency.

Loneliness can thus be accompanied by positive elements such as: the development of creativity, self-reflection or self-regulation (Larson et al. 1982, pp. 40–53; Buchholz, Catton 1999, pp. 203–213), it can aid the processes of thinking, concentrating or shaping the identity, while the sense of loneliness usually has negative connotations and is defined as experiencing divergence between the possessed and desirable quantity and quality of social contacts. (Peplau, Perlman 1982, pp. 1–18; Van Baarsen et al. 2001, pp. 119–135).

The relationship deficit is visible in both dimensions of loneliness: emotional (resulting from lack of intimate relationships with others) and social (lack of interpersonal networks, opportunities for sharing interests, activity, resulting in a sense of pointlessness, boredom or living “on the fringes of life”) (Buchholz, Catton 1999, pp. 203–213; Weiss 1973). Szczepański defines loneliness as a state in which the human being does not find support in other people or in their own inner world. It may also result from “the underdevelopment of the internal world, from a lack of order, in which we create a non-external rhythm of existence for ourselves, other measures of value, in which we are free from disasters, humiliations, triumphs [...]. It is also a world free from the suffering inflicted upon us by other people” (Szczepański 1984, p. 23).

The state of loneliness usually results from a qualitative (subjective) evaluation of interpersonal relationships rather than on their objective (quantitative) characteristics (Asher, Paquette 2003, pp. 75–78). Preferences and individual evaluations can make people with similar numbers of interpersonal contacts feel lonely, regardless of the actual number and quality of contacts they have. The cognitive dimension, associated with the perception of the possessed and desired relationships, as well as the emotional and social dimensions, seem to be extremely important (Jong-Gierveld, Kamphuis 1985, pp. 119–128; Martin et al. 1997, pp. 203–224).

The notion of “solitude” encompasses three phenomena:

- physical solitude – due to a lack of family or when family ties have died out or weakened for various reasons, the individual voluntarily strives for isolation or is isolated by society; such solitude can be total, e.g. in the elderly, when the lack of natural bonds is combined with no permanent intimate bonds or partial, when there are no bonds or they are disturbed, but there are permanent personal contacts with other people (cf. Gajda 2006);
- mental solitude – being a negative personal and inner experience of a human being, disturbing the inner balance and sense of security, or having a positive dimension that is conducive to the analysis of achievements and losses, self-evaluation of one’s own conduct, the ability to understand the suffering of others through one’s own experiences;
- moral solitude – involving moving away from others, which is associated with a disordered hierarchy of values, egoism, resulting in a loss of life meaning; if a person perceives loneliness as a negative state that causes them suffering, they blame their surroundings and become bitter and dysfunctional in their contacts.

The results of the empirical research indicate that cognitive processes are a predictor for the quality of interpersonal relationships because they influence the manner of interacting and interpreting social situations. (Murphy, Kupshik 1992). The event and the emotional reaction are separated by thoughts, beliefs, attributions of the motives of a particular person, not necessarily consistent with the objective state, leading to negative feelings (loneliness, anxiety, depression) (Arnkoff, Glass 1989, pp. 61–74). Thus, the source of a sense of loneliness can be negative judgments and beliefs about oneself, the situation or the future.

Numerous empirical studies confirm the contribution of cognitive factors in the development of the sense of loneliness. In cognitive therapy, it is assumed that the main source of dysfunctional emotions and behaviors are attribution errors rather than motivation or reaction errors. The sense of loneliness is the result of complex social determinants and human personality traits. Loneliness is related to mental predispositions such as: low self-esteem, emotional immaturity, external sense of control, little need to belong, excessive concentration on oneself, high level of general and social anxiety. On the other hand, social determinants

include: the development of technology, the pace of life, the weakening of interpersonal contacts, anonymity. The determinants of the sense of loneliness are the divergence of moral norms, lack of authority, distortion of personal patterns and value systems, changes in the family model, divergence of the social roles fulfilled by the individual, the clash of tradition and the present. Difficulties in finding life meaning and one's place in it are experienced to the greatest extent by children, adolescents and the elderly. They try to cope with the sense of loneliness through various strategies, such as:

- escape – an attempt to avoid loneliness, subordination to authoritarian powers (in a group, a sect), obtaining apparent personal security and interpersonal contacts;
- shedding the mask, an attempt to show one's surroundings "their true face", or exposing one's most secret thoughts;
- hyperactivity – professional hyperactivity, taking on additional responsibilities.

All methods can turn out to be ineffective and additionally increase the sense of isolation and loneliness. The longer a given person experiences loneliness, the more likely they are to look for the causes within themselves and not in external factors. According to J. de Jong-Gierveld's and F. Kamphuis's concept (1985), loneliness is closely related to the way an individual perceives their relationships and communication with others, and it is the result of the perceived deficit in terms of their relationships and the degree of their intimacy. These authors identified five dimensions of loneliness: deprivation of the need for social contact, situational sense of social exclusion, lack (or loss) of a connection to a group and a significant lack of relationships with other people.

## **Psychosocial consequences of the sense of alienation in youth**

Alienation in the initial phase of adolescence is a common phenomenon and it is understandable in view of the stage of development. It can be treated as a phenomenon that fosters the development of a person's identity and their achievement of autonomy. Fromm points out that overcoming alienation is an element that improves the subject and gives the opportunity to answer important existential questions (Fromm 1996). Also in Tilich's opinion, a certain level of solitude is conducive to shaping personal maturity and integration (Tilich 1994). It is important that a young person looking for answers to their burning questions needs contacts with loved ones and peers, but also the time for thinking and intellectual reflection in isolation. By defining their own path, they learn to meet two seemingly contradictory needs: autonomy and intimacy with others – on the one hand, being together, and on the other, moving away from social relations. Erikson assumes that adolescence is associated with the need to overcome a crisis

defined as intimacy-isolation (Erikson 2000). A teenager who has already found their identity is looking for opportunities to connect it with the identity of others. The communal behaviors that appear in youth, characterized by cordiality, closeness and openness are combined with a positive resolution to the crisis associated with intimacy and isolation, and thus the willingness to engage in specific relationships and communities. The research conducted by A. Woźniak-Krakowiak and D. Ortenburger 2003, pp. 273–283) or K. Tomaszek (2007) – indicate that the sense of alienation among adolescents may be explained via developmental regularities and a normative crisis. However, the alienation tendencies of adolescents occurring naturally in the developmental process, the essence of which is a sense of detachment or alienation from some area of external or internal reality, should be transitory (Brown et al. 2003, pp. 3–7).

The negative consequences of a failure to address a developmental crisis, coupled with a sense of deep isolation and lack of a sufficient social support network, are linked to the cognitive and emotional spheres of an adolescent and can lead to psychosocial consequences. When in high intensity, they significantly modify the psychosocial development and functioning of the teenager. Some authors believe that they are one of the causes of deviant and self-aggressive behavior in youths (Piotrowski, Zajączkowski 1999, pp. 428–441). The reaction to the alienation experience, which is an attempt at compensation, can take an inward direction and affect the structure of the self (Korzeniowski 1990, pp. 121–145). It may manifest itself as apathy, a sense of helplessness, and sometimes, if it is directed at social structures – open rebellion, opposition, or rejection (Kmieciak-Baran 1995, pp. 461–480). Kmieciak-Baran analyzes the processes accompanying alienation in the somatic, mental, cognitive, emotional and social spheres. She describes two manners of reaction to the experienced alienation: destructive and constructive.

## Cognitive and emotional consequences

McCloski and Schaar (cited from: Tomaszek, Tucholska 2012, pp. 163–178) characterize people experiencing a sense of alienation as having little knowledge of the applicable social and political system, little interest in culture, with low intellectual activity, difficulty in thinking in an orderly manner, solving logical problems, making decisions, distinguished by rigidity and obsessive behavior. In the emotional sphere, they are characterized by a high level of anxiety and a tendency to experience negative emotional states, which makes their personal situations seem difficult and unchangeable, and their surroundings threatening. They are characterized by low self-esteem and dissatisfaction with one's own life, lack of tolerance for others, a tendency towards authoritarianism and totalitarianism. A phenomenon accompanying the sense of loneliness is magical thinking, belief in omens and prophecies.

Piotrowski's and Zajączkowski's research suggests that youths belonging to groups exhibiting deviant behavior and difficulties in social adjustment were characterized by a higher sense of loneliness (alienation) and lower level of self-esteem than their peers from the control group. The research subjects were characterized by a considerable discrepancy between what they were (real self) and what they wanted to be (ideal self). Based on the research conducted so far it can be concluded that the vast majority of youths experiencing loneliness find it difficult to adjust to school standards, which results in educational failures. (Osterman 2000, pp. 323–367).

The sense of loneliness (alienation) in youths is related to a lack of a cohesive and mature personality structure, increased tendency towards neurotic behavior, difficulty in controlling emotion, emotional instability, low threshold of frustration, tendency to withdraw oneself and accumulate negative emotions (Tomaszek, Tucholska 2012, pp. 163–178).

Coping with internal tensions often takes the form of deviant, antisocial and self-destructive behaviors. Adolescents experiencing high levels of loneliness experience adaptive difficulties resulting from their low emotional, communicational and coping skills. This results in an inability to understand their own mechanisms of action and a sense of being misunderstood by the surroundings, which in turn increases susceptibility to marginalization. When searching for the sources and pathomechanisms of this phenomenon, psychologists are of the opinion that they result from a significant reduction of social ties that are extremely important in the development of adolescents.

## **The social consequences**

Negative cognitive representations of the environment of lonely people lead to tendencies to isolate themselves from the world and sometimes hostility towards it. Kmiecik-Baran (1995) associates the sense of loneliness (alienation) with three areas:

- low level of resourcefulness: social anxiety, low sense of dignity, shyness, tendency to withdraw;
- distorted relationships with other people resulting from a lack of family ties, dependence on others, lack of altruistic attitudes, lack of trust;
- limited participation in social life resulting from the external sense of being controlled from the outside, lack of specific life goals, lack of faith and personal beliefs.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Piotrowski's research, who examines the relationship between loneliness and deviant behavior in youths. He points out the lack of acceptance and misunderstanding of social rules and the defined hierarchy of values in the examined group. These findings were confirmed in

the works of Woźniak-Krakowiak and Ortenburger (pp. 273–278). Among social correlates of loneliness Jones (1988, pp. 38–58) lists the problematic tendencies and feelings such as: self-depreciation, pessimism, anxiety, sense of rejection and emptiness. However, he does not specify whether irregularities in the sphere of interpersonal contacts are primary or secondary to loneliness. The examined youth's views on marriage are interesting. The main motive for them to marry is escaping from loneliness, seeking security, finding support. It is difficult to predict in the examined group the fulfillment of roles, symmetry in taking up tasks and responsibilities in the future families started by these young people. The research results obtained also indicate a relationship between the sense of loneliness and the general level of physical aggression.

In youths with a sense of loneliness, there is a strong concentration on one-self, which significantly reduces sensitivity to the needs and problems of others and distorts interpersonal contacts, confirming their inability to establish positive relationships and achieve an appropriate social response. The research conducted by Dołęga (Dołęga 1999, pp. 146–153) in a group of high school students indicate a relationship between loneliness and aggression, expansive anti-social behaviors. They are interpreted as non-adaptive forms of breaking alienation; in other words, attempts at marking one's presence in a peer-to-peer environment that may, according to the author, take the form of criminal behavior and tendencies to create communities of a destructive nature. Piotrowski's and Zajączkowski's works indicated that belonging to destructive groups does not permanently reduce the sense of alienation (Piotrowski, Zajączkowski 1999, pp. 42–441).

## **The consequences regarding mental health**

Many authors (cf. Kmiecik-Baran 1993, Peplau, Perlman 1982) emphasize the relationship between loneliness and depression, suicidal behavior, social anxiety, addiction, conflicts with the law (cf. Cekiera 1975; Płużek 1994). May states that the feeling of isolation can be linked to various types of apathy, which can be caused by an internal inability to act, a defensive reaction to stress (leading to authoritarianism), or the manifestation of callousness (which can transform into destructive behaviors and violence) (May 1995).

Such an interpretation of loneliness may explain teenagers committing punishable acts against peers or teachers.

## **The consequences associated with the somatic sphere**

All mental dysfunctions observed in youths experiencing loneliness may affect their physical health in an adverse manner. Susceptibility to illnesses or risky be-

haviors (alcoholism and drug addiction) can be linked to destructive manifestations of coping with a high sense of alienation, such as an attempt to escape from negative emotions. The literature of the subject associates anxiety and loneliness with the emotional and behavioral disorders of youths, i.a. depression, opposition and rebellious or nutritional disorders that can significantly affect the physical health of a teenager, and sometimes even endangers their life.

## Research methodology

Research of a quantitative nature provides information that allows data to be listed in a manner that enables you to find answers to the questions that require estimation and development of probabilistic models. Measurements made using these methods makes it possible to obtain multivariate statistical characteristics that enable the exploration, description, and explanation of the problem through parametric and index data analysis. That is why quantitative research is an important method of collecting information in indicative terms. Therefore, the research requires a well-chosen research sample ensuring the representativeness and correctness of the conclusions drawn.

The article includes an analysis of the examined youth from MOW (Youth Detention Centers) and a reference made between their results obtained on the loneliness scale and the Poland-wide sample.

## Research questions

Due to the exploratory nature of the conducted research, the control group was excluded from the analyses and focus was put on the exact characteristics of the MOW wards.

The aim of the article is to find answers to the following research questions:

- What level of solitude is presented by MOW charges being in the process of self-empowerment?
- Do MOW charges have a sense of received support ?
- Is there a dependency between the support received and the sense of loneliness?
- Is there a dependency between gender and the sense of loneliness?
- Is there a relationship between the sense of loneliness of the respondents and their learning results?
- Does the fact of a repeated stay of the research subjects at the MOW differentiate the charges in terms of the sense of loneliness?



## Characteristics of the research subjects group

There were 456 people aged between 17 and 20 ( $M = 17.31$ ;  $SD = 0.68$ ) staying at the MOW in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship who participated in the study. In accordance with the Act on proceedings in juvenile cases, charges stay in MOW before reaching 18 years of age, but the study also included 35 self-empowered people ( $n = 35$ ) living in sheltered dwellings or facility branches.

In the research subjects group, women accounted for 59.2%, while 40.8% were men. Currently, there are 5468 charges in 97 MOW facilities in Poland: 3729 boys and 1733 girls (cited from: SIO). Such a large number of girls participating in the study results from the specifics of the facilities in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship: 6 facilities for girls, 5 co-educational facilities, 9 for boys, and from the fact that volunteers participated in the research.

Therefore, the selection of people for the study should be treated as a deliberate selection. At the research stage, efforts were made to ensure the most representative sample of youths as possible. The gender, age and duration of stay at the MOW were controlled. In the case of significant disproportions between the examined sample and the MOW youth population, analytical balances will be developed to ensure the high reliability and relevance of the conclusions drawn.

## Research tools

The research used the Loneliness Scale and the author's own survey in which support was measured with open questions: "Who's support can you count on", "Who can you talk to about your problems?", "From whom do you receive signals that you are liked, loved, accepted?" and "Who can appreciate your skills or abilities?". The answers were categorized on the basis of the gathered information. The subjective assessment of learning outcomes was also controlled. The research subjects evaluated them on a 5-level scale: very good, good, medium, poor and very poor.

## Scale for the measurement of the sense of solitude

The research used the Polish adaptation (Grygiel et al. 2012) of the De Jong Gierveld (Gierveld et al. 1985) loneliness scale. The tool consists of 11 items: 6 formulated in a negative manner and 5 formulated in a positive manner. Answers are given on a 5-point Likert scale. The higher the end result, the higher the level of the sense of loneliness. The scale has satisfactory psychometric properties.

In addition, it was proven that self-esteem is significantly correlated with the social functioning scales and the executive aspects of the self. It was proven that self-esteem increases along with social functioning, placement of control, belief in self-efficacy, optimism, hope for success, and basic hope. It was observed that the higher the scores on shyness and loneliness scales, the lower the self-esteem.

## Research results

### Statistical analysis of the results

All statistical calculations were performed in the IBM SPSS Statistics program. The number and percentage of occurrence of a given category were used for the description of the qualitative data, whereas quantitative variables were characterized using the following descriptive statistics: average, standard deviation, minimum value and maximum value. Prior to the commencement of the analyses, all quantitative variables were checked in terms of data distribution by means of two distribution measures: skewness and kurtosis. Statistically significant results were considered to be those where the probability of type I error was at maximum 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Below are the analyses used in this study:

- Mann-Whitney U Test (in the case of comparing two groups; nonparametric t-test equivalent for independent trials);
- Single factor variance analysis (in the case of comparison of more than two groups);
- Spearman's rho correlation.

### Characteristic of loneliness

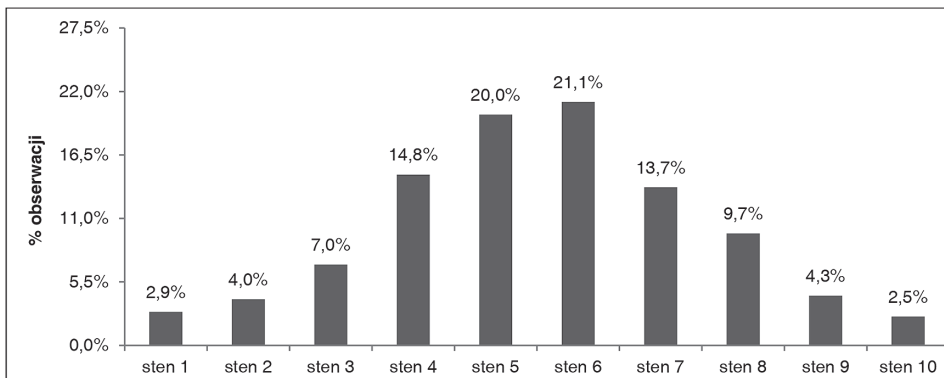
In the study, the obtained index of loneliness assumed the values between 11 and 54 points ( $M = 26.62$ ;  $SD = 8.43$ ). The index has a distribution close to normal (skewness = 0.38; kurtosis = 0.02). The reliability of the scale measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.838 and it indicates a high consistency of measurement. The scale can be used in both scientific research and individual diagnosis. There were no significant differences in respect to the Polish normalization test, where the average was 26.89 ( $t(445) = 0.68$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Also, there were no significant differences observed for the self-reliant youth ( $t(34) = 0.31$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), where the average for the loneliness index was 26.42 ( $SD = 8.95$ ). Thus, there is no reason to accept that youth from MOW experience a lower or higher sense of loneliness compared to the Polish nationwide sample. Due to the lack of recalculated standards in the validation article, it was decided to calculate the sten standard. They are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Loneliness scale – sten standards (1–3: low results, 4–7: average results, 8–10: high results)

Sten	Scope of results
1	< 12
2	12–14
3	15–17
4	18–21
5	22–25
6	26–31
7	32–34
8	35–38
9	39–46
10	> 46

Source: own research.

Graph 1 shows the distribution of the results obtained by the research subjects after conversion to stens. Low results were obtained by 13.9% of the research subjects, 69.6% obtained average results and 16.5% obtained high results.

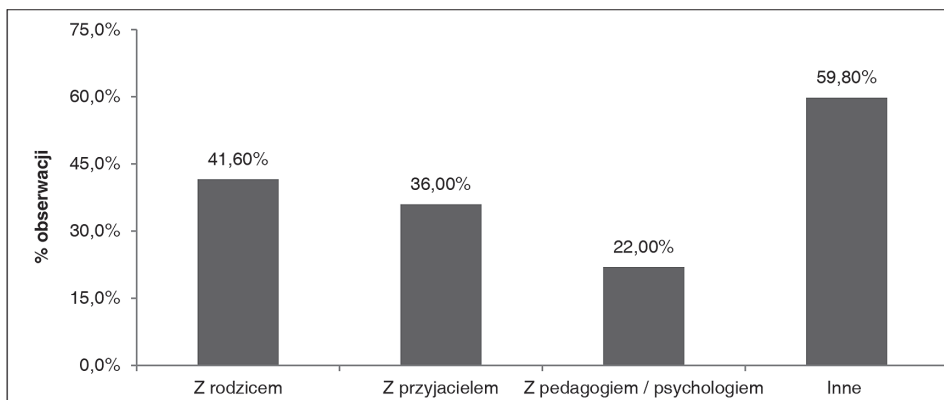


Graph 1. Results obtained on the loneliness scale converted to the sten scale

Source: own research.

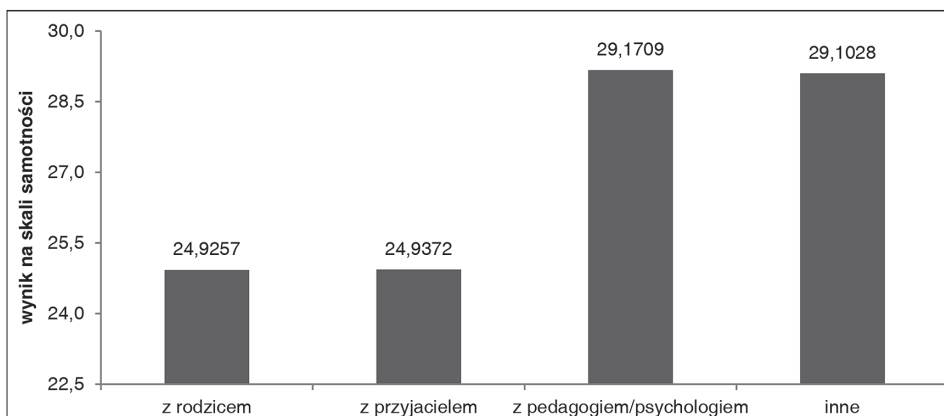
## Received support

The research subjects report receiving support mainly from their families (71.4%). Support from friends is declared by 4.4% of the research subjects, while the remainder (24.2%) receives help from other people (their surroundings, MOW educators, probation officers, psychologists or priests). The research subjects talk about their problems most often with people other than their family and close ones – the following are mentioned here most often: other people from the facility, educators and priests. 41.6% of the people talk with their family, while nearly every third of the research subjects talk with their friends (see graph 2).



Graph 2. With whom do the research subjects talk about their problems?

Source: own research.



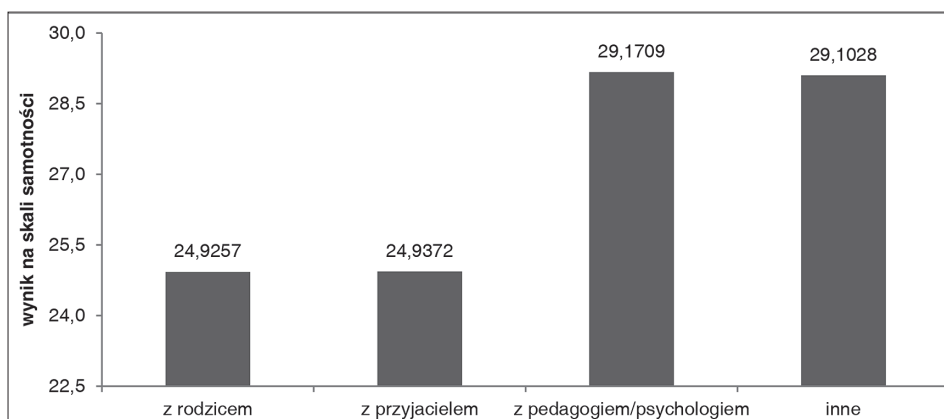
Graph 3. Average results on the loneliness scale depending on the support received

Source: own research.

It was also confirmed that the type of support received is significantly differentiated by the sense of loneliness ( $F(3.418) = 8.55$   $p < 0.001$ ). A thorough Scheffe's post-hoc test analysis showed that people who can count on the help from their parents and friends experience a much lower level of loneliness compared to people who talk to pedagogues and psychologists or other people about their problems. The obtained dependence is presented graphically in graph 3.

## Dependencies between loneliness and gender

In the examination using the loneliness scale no differences resulting from gender were confirmed ( $p > 0.05$ ). The Mann-Whitney U Test analysis did not indicate that women differed from men in terms of the average scores obtained on this scale (see graph 4).



Graph 4. Average results on the loneliness scale depending on gender

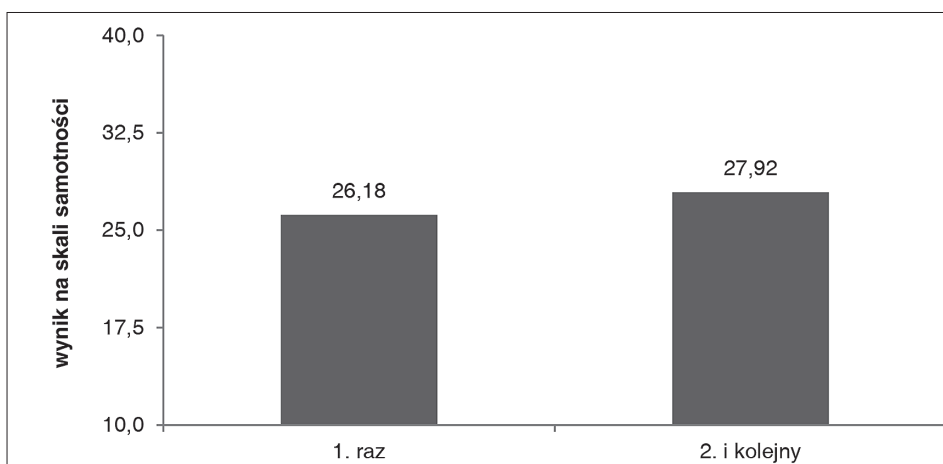
Source: own research.

## The relationship between loneliness and assessment of learning outcomes

Using the Spearman rho correlation analysis, it was examined whether there was a link between loneliness and subjective assessment of the learning outcomes in the examined youth group. The obtained results showed that there was no reason to infer a correlation between variables ( $\rho = -0.072$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Subjective assessment of learning progress is not related to the sense of loneliness.

## Dependency between loneliness and number of stays at the MOW

Using the Mann-Whitney U Test it was examined if people staying at the MOW for the first time were different from those who stayed at the MOW for at least the second time. It was observed that the people who were staying at the MOW for the first time experienced a lower level of loneliness compared to those who had stayed at the MOW at least twice before ( $p < 0.05$ ). The exact results are shown in the graph below.



Graph 5. Average results on the loneliness scale depending on the number of stays at the MOW

Source: own research.

## Discussion

This research showed that youths staying at the MOW do not differ in their sense of loneliness from the normalization sample.

Śliwak's, Reizer's and Partyka's research (2015), the aim of which was to determine the relationships between the sense of loneliness and social adjustment, clearly indicated the existence of a relationship between these phenomena. The most statistically relevant relationships were found between the sense of loneliness (lack of intimate bonds) and social adjustment. It was demonstrated that people with a high sense of loneliness are characterized by poorer social adjustment. Youths staying at the MOW exhibit risky behaviors, characteristic of social maladjustment.

This research indicates that the level of the sense of loneliness in MOW charges, regardless of the sense of support they declare, does not change during their stay at the facility. It is similar in people staying at the facility for the first time and in self-reliant charges. In people who could count on the support of their loved ones (family and friends), the level of loneliness was much lower than in those who declare receiving support from other people. The relationship between the sense of alienation and the support given to minors may indicate that communal support is a factor protecting against alienation (see: Biegasiewicz 2010, pp. 125–152). Receiving the necessary information, financial help, positive messages from loved ones (family, friends) minimizes the risk of perceiving communal reality, as well as values or other persons, as aliens. This indicates a need for broader cooperation between MOW and families of the charges, and to strengthen the influences helping these families, which may result in increased support for rehabilitated youths.

Support received from a peer group is just as important as help received from the family. The quality of peer-to-peer relationships, extremely important in adolescence, fosters the sense of “growing roots” and reduces loneliness (Meeus 1994). Support from colleagues protects against the feeling of detachment, loss of communication with the peer community. It allows one to gain knowledge about oneself by way of comparison with others (Festinger 1954 quoted in: Sęk, Cieślak 2004).

The described research did not confirm differences in the level of loneliness due to gender. Therefore, it can be assumed that the feeling of alienation is experienced by both girls and boys in this age group staying in the MOW in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship.

It was also established that a subjective assessment of learning progress is not related to the sense of loneliness, which – according to the research subjects – means that this does not translate into their progress in learning.

On the basis of this research, it can also be stated that people staying there for the second time or more experience a higher level of loneliness than those staying at the MOW for the first time, suggesting that the influence of the MOW did not produce the expected social rehabilitation effects (since the charges are returning to the center), nor the psychological therapy, building the feeling of being a member of a group that could eliminate the sense of loneliness. It seems that people experiencing social rejection and large discrepancies between the desired and real state of their own relationships with their surroundings will feel them more severely as insufficient and deviating from the accepted standards. Such an interpretation of the research is consistent with the suggestions of Rurawski (1988) and Śliwak, Zarzycka and Dziduch (2011). If the sources of loneliness are to be sought in the manner we perceive ourselves and the world, it can be assumed that every human, by creating judgments of their own self and interpersonal relationships, can cause resonance in the emotional sphere. The phenomenon of

loneliness is a certain area of mental reality common to such phenomena as the sense of security (Maslov's 1964 concept), sense of coherence (Antonovsky's 1984 concept) and sense of meaning and purpose in life (Frankel's 1978 concept). The socio-cognitive theory implies that belonging to a group and close relationships with others can enhance self-esteem and openness to functioning with others, giving a sense of belonging and preventing feelings of loneliness and rejection. This, in turn, suggests the need to strengthen the measures that include strengthening self-esteem and training psycho-social skills in MOW charges. This will allow to overcome the sense of loneliness and develop optimistic attitudes that make it possible to acquire behaviors that are conducive to overcoming loneliness, significantly improving the effectiveness of social rehabilitation.

Living in the modern world requires everyone to adapt to dynamically occurring changes, bearing the risk of loneliness. Research on the consequences of loneliness caused by difficulties in social adjustment correspond to the problems of modern humans and should be conducted in all age groups, especially among young people. They can serve the role of indications for intense interactions in this sphere.

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