LIFE GOALS OF PUPILS THAT LEAVE YOUTH EDUCATIONAL CENTERS (YEC) IN RELATION TO THE SURVEYED POPULATION OF MINORS STAYING AT YECs OF MASOVIAN VOIVODESHIP

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Abstract: Adolescence is the period when young people look for the meaning of life and focus their actions around specific goals. They choose them on their own, in which they follow specific values. Youths strive to reach their goals by orientating themselves to the world in a specific way. By analyzing the ever-changing reality and interpreting it, they function in the world in a better way and make better choices. Decisions made by adolescents concern various areas of life and they have a different level of significance, degree of involvement in actions that lead to fulfillment of the intentions. In the first part of the article selected concepts of purposeful behavior are presented. They illustrate human activity in terms of goals set by individuals. These concepts are primarily characterized by individual life goals, their properties and the mechanisms that govern them. The second part of the article will present results of the research on the life goals of pupils that stay at Youth Educational Centers in Poland, and they will be compared to the research on life goals of self-reliant pupils (pupils that leave YECs).

In a variable and diverse socio-cultural reality, every person faces the necessity of independent and constant building their own biography, planning the future, setting goals and life plans. During the adolescence period, being at the threshold of adulthood, youths make important life decisions related to the choice of profession, further education, employment or family building. At this time, apart from ad hoc short-term plans, long-term, prospective plans are created. They are the result of multiple experiences and thoughts, aimed at a better understanding of the world [Szewczuk, 1990, pp.210].

In the past, socialization was explicit. Nowadays, its basic principle is a statement: you can be whoever you want to be, and the offer of available identities seems unlimited. On the other hand, the society "shifts the entire responsibility onto an individual for the consequences of identity choices made by them, which arouses the conviction that personal and socio-professional success depends solely on the individual. At the same time, one has an unfounded impression that all the factors that once channeled the social capabilities of individuals have disappeared." [Melosik, 2015, pp. 77].

The young man wants to be successful at all costs, identifying themselves above all with themselves. Reference points such as homeland, nation or ideology have lost their importance. As a result of changes that have taken place in the world, the concept of "isolated privatism" has emerged, not referring to "deeper social pressures, duties or obligations."[Elliot, Katagiri, 2012, pp. 441]. Such a vision of the individual causes that personal freedom is perceived in terms of personal power and the ability to bear responsibility. Men should be independent, rationally plan their future, self-control and self-improve. The basic condition for managing one's own life is a high level of self-esteem [Rose, 2000, pp. 334]. All interpersonal relationships have changed their nature, including close relationships. They are to be hassle-free and convenient, which makes them superficial in nature and they adapt to temporary, situational or instrumental needs. If these conditions are not met by friendship or love, they can be given up and one may try to enter into other relationships. Relationships are associated more with pleasure or the pursuit of one's own interests than loyalty, solidarity or common identification. A generation of singles has emerged, self-centered and concentrated on their own problems (psychological problems), emerging from the safe haven of their own privacy to enter into intense, short-term relationships.

Contemporary neoliberal man does not want to have any problems, with either his own psyche or other people. His identity should be free from existential problems. Asking oneself questions about the meaning and purpose of one's own life and creating existential dilemmas is an "identity ballast." The modern "self experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meanings, accompanied by a decline in the role of the family."[Cushman, 1990, pp. 600] As Fromm stated: "Universal individualism is an »empty shell«" [Fromm, 2011, pp. 252], which makes the individual want to fill it with consumption of goods, new people and experiences. The basis for functioning is the idea of competing for success and division into winners and all the rest. Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik claims that "the lack of stability and makeshift biography of an individual in their relations with the neoliberal economy (devoid of motives to support the individual) causes a constant sense of failure in millions of people who internalize the necessity of success." [Gromkowska-Melosik, 2011, pp. 140]

The necessity for constant changes brings with it uncertainty and lack of constant reference, which causes fear and helplessness in the face of the challenges of postmodernity. [Giddens, 2010] The result of this openness to change is the loss of predictability and repeatability. Living in a neoliberal society is therefore not easy even for talented, educated young people whose socialization has been successful: it appears to be full of threats, uncertainty fears, risk and dilemmas. Each success is only a starting point for further pursuit, and the lack of success is severely experienced and turns into a desire for someone else's failure. So it is no surprise that the percentage of people who wish others harm is increasing. Negative or even hateful comments appearing more and more often in social media with regard to popular, wealthy people at the top of their careers are - as Zbyszko Melosik points out – "a side effect of the neoliberal ideology of competition and division into winners and frustrated losers." [Melosik, 2015, pp. 85]

Young people, brought up in a loving and supportive family, graduating from good schools, get lost in the realities of a neoliberal society. So what are the chances of young people at risk of social maladjustment or socially maladjusted to understand the modern world and purposefully construct their own lives?

All educational influences are related to "shaping the correct attitude of the pupil towards the future life" [Kunowski, 1993, pp. 170], and thus preparing for a better life through education, getting a profession, finding one's own place in society and starting one's own healthy and stable family." [Kunowski, 1993, pp. 179]

The analysis of the image of the perfect future shows the understanding of the changes taking place in the dynamically changing reality and the extent to which a young person is able

to understand them and flexibly adapt to them; what are their desires and expectations. It also allows to assess the model according to which the pupil models his or her own "self" and what values they follow. As a result of an unsuccessful socialization process, a "distorted" life plan may arise, directed against the normative system represented by custom, law or upbringing.[Mysłakowski, 1971, pp. 123]

The analysis of life goals, due to their important role and multiple functions of the generally understood life plans of adolescents, is an important element of pedagogical research, because in the dreams formulated by young people, ideas of their own future, as well as the life goals constructed, the results of educational influences are visible and, in a certain way, they allow to verify the effectiveness of upbringing.

Forming personal identity should be analyzed as one of the basic development processes taking place in human life. It is closely related to personal story and successive stages of development, but is associated not so much with the automatically progressive maturation of the body and improvement of its biological functions, but with a consciously performed task that requires human effort. It is a reflective process conditioned by the intentional activity of a person, involving the integration of various time perspectives in the story of their life.[McAdams, 2001, pp. 100] The shaping of a reflective identity is therefore a process that requires the subject's intentional activity in the constant construction of a sensible pattern of connections between life experiences. In adolescence and early adulthood, it is particularly important to have a prospective attitude and to create scenarios for the future. Such mental representations of oneself in the future, the construction of imaginary visions of oneself ("possible self"), the imagined concept of oneself, is extremely important for this stage of development. Research conducted by Cartis S. Dunkel and Kristine S. Antis [Dunkel, Antithis, 2001, pp. 765] confirms the role of the "possible self" in building one's own identity. The scientists confirmed that the exploration process, understood according to the status theory [Marcia, 1966, pp. 351] as a way of thinking and acting, focused on getting to know new things and experimenting with alternative attitudes, positively correlates with the number of "possible selves." The process of commitment, understood as attachment to attitudes and values, as well as the obligation to implement them, is associated with the coherence of the desired "possible selves" over time, which proves the significant role of commitment in setting and achieving life goals.

According to Martin G. Erikson, [Erikson, 2007, pp. 348] "possible selves" can be analyzed not only on the cognitive level, but also in the narrative perspective, because they are not only a cognitive representation of our "self" in the future, but are also part of the "current

self". Thus, "possible self" contains the experience of activity, in which it differs from a life task or life goal. According to Erikson, "possible self" can be a source of ideas about oneself in the future.[Brygoła, Batory, 2012, pp. 274] Continuing this thought, such visions of oneself can play an important role in motivating and directing actions, as well as influencing self-regulation of behavior. In visions (dreams), we plan our lives, constructing potential scenarios, and we set goals. These ideas of who we are, who we can become in the future, have an important influence on the formation of identity.[Vignoles a.o., 2008, p. 1165] Research conducted by Claudia Manzi and colleagues [Manzi a.o., 2009, pp. 669] allows to assume that changes taking place in identity are partly determined by a pre-existing "possible structure of identity," that is, what form it may take in the future. Therefore, it confirms that the vision of one's own identity is important for actual changes in the future, both the desired changes (dreams, plans, goals) and those that we are afraid of (fears). Therefore, it can be concluded that anticipating the future has a significant impact on what the future will be in reality, because this anticipation is a derivative of the motivational functions of a possible vision of oneself in the future. The degree of achievement of the desired identity structure, anticipated before the transition period, is associated with the subsequent emotional adjustment. Mc Adams defines identity as "an internalized life story, integrating the reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future [...] so as to give life a sense of coherence and purpose." [McAdams, 1989, pp. 161]

According to Anthony Giddens, we continuously shape self-identity thanks to self-reflection.[Giddens, 2007] Therefore, if the ideas about their own future have a significant impact on the current shaping of identity, then the formulation of youth life goals, not always operational goals, containing ideas and dreams, serves to integrate experiences into a meaningful whole, including various time perspectives, past experiences, the present and anticipated future.[McAdams, 2001, pp. 100] The result of such reflection may be the following questions: "what do I want to be?", "how should I act?"; or reflection on the subject of shaping the ability to engage in dialogue with others and with oneself, treated as attempts to understand oneself and others, as well as the meaning of human existence.

Insight into one's own intersubjective experience and creating a vision of the future (by formulating life goals of the "possible self"), which the respondents had, will allow them, perhaps, to answer the questions: "what kind of person do I want to be?", "what should my life be like?", "what relationships do I want to create with others?", "what do I call success?". Even an attempt to reflect on the answers may be the first step to consciously construct goals and plans for the future, as well as take the trouble to implement them. It seems that only an analysis of the current situation by the pupil and its understanding allows, on the one hand, self-

knowledge and, on the other hand, taking independent actions, and the "therapeutic" insight into oneself and a look at the current situation gives a chance to discover and work through implicit or unconscious intentions of one's own actions, emotions, prejudices, stereotypes, which will make it possible to change patterns of action. At the same time, the analysis of life goals and values important for YEC pupils gives a chance to take effective corrective actions in the process of upbringing and social rehabilitation.

In the limited scope of experiences and social skills of young people, he sees the causes of a faulty or inaccurate assessment of the interaction partner, as well as planning activities in a narrow time perspective and incomplete role assumption, resulting from imperfect generalization, insufficient generalization and attribution. This may pose threats to socio-moral development or encourage interaction with people with similar experiences of social incompetence, which in turn causes the formation of peer groups at risk of risky behaviors or criminalization. Such a state is conducive to the creation of an "existential vacuum" that makes it impossible to give meaning to one's own life and reduces it to the dimension of quick and easy consumption. This promotes behaviors characterized by selfishness, irresponsibility and the inability to properly form life goals. Adolescents may present various forms of risky behavior and show passive, defensive attitudes, and lack of interest in social reality. As a consequence, it may result in coming into conflict with the law. From this point of view, it is important to undertake research on the processes of shaping the life goals of young people and to identify factors directing their moral development and the ability to use mature evaluation criteria. Getting to know and then stimulating the development of socially accepted life goals of YEC pupils can significantly contribute to the effectiveness of their social rehabilitation.

Discussion of the results of research on life goals, obtained by examined self-reliant pupils in relation to the total group of minors at YECs in Masovian Voivodeship - Characteristics of the sample group

Quantitative research provides information allowing to compile data in a way that allows finding answers to questions that require estimation and construction of probabilistic models. The measurement made using these methods allows obtaining multifactorial statistical characteristics enabling exploration, description and explanation of the problem in parametric-index analysis of data. Therefore, the quantitative survey is an index-important method of gathering information. The study requires a suitably selected research sample that ensures the representativeness and correctness of the conclusions drawn.

The study covered 456 people aged 17 to 20 years (M = 17.3, SD = 0.68) staying in YECs in Masovian Voivodeship. In the group of respondents, women accounted for 59.2%, while men accounted for 40.8%. Therefore, the selection of individuals for the study should be treated as a purposeful choice. At the study stage, a possible representative youth sample was sought. Gender, age and period of stay in the YEC were controlled. For the purposes of this article, a separate group of self-reliant pupils residing in protected flats or branches of the centers was created, and then the results were compared with the results of the general population of pupils, in order to verify the pedagogical impact of YECs. The results of 35 individuals (n = 35), 17 girls and 18 boys, who are becoming independent in Youth Educational Centers in Masovian Voivodeship were analyzed. The average age in the studied group of self-reliant pupils was 17.5 years (with SD = 1.02). Most pupils stayed at YEC for the first time (51.5%) or for the second time (36.4%).

The conducted interviews show that nearly 58% of self-reliant pupils benefited from only one social rehabilitation program while 25% - from three or more programs. 66% of respondents can count on family help both during their stay at the YEC and after leaving the center (although 69% of the respondents claim that they can talk to someone other than their family about their problems). Approximately 78% of the respondents additionally maintain contact with people from outside the family and with relatives. Most of the respondents talk to a parent (31%) or a friend (28%) about their problems. In the opinion of 69% of the respondents, psychological therapy and social rehabilitation programs influenced their attitude towards themselves and their own life, and allowed them to change their life goals.

Research questions

1. What is the assessment of the importance of the life goals of YEC pupils?
2. What is the hierarchy of life goals depending on the gender of YEC pupils?
3. What is the relationship between the hierarchy of life goals of all the YEC pupils and the hierarchy of life goals of self-reliant pupils?

Research tools

1. Aspiration Index Questionnaire

The Polish adaptation of the Aspiration Index questionnaire [Kasser, Ryan, 1993, pp. 410] conducted by Ewa Wojtowicz was used to measure life goals. The questionnaire measures how important for the respondent are the individual life goals, which in accordance with the assumptions of the self-determination theory are treated mostly as intrinsic goals (with the

exception of financial goals). The questionnaire can be used in both individual diagnosis and research. The questionnaire consists of 22 items; the task of the respondents is to determine on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1- I do not care at all, 6 - I really care), how much they want to achieve a given goal. According to the original version, four items were related to *self-acceptance* goals, seven test items characterize interest in activity for the world and society (*community feeling*), the next five items describe the interest of the respondents in material goods and focus on acquiring money (*Financial success*) and seven items measure goals related to the expectation of love and the desire to be surround by close people (*Affiliation*). Results of the factor analysis carried out by Ewa Wojtowicz partially confirmed the factor structure adopted by the Questionnaire Authors. The existence of factors such as self-acceptance, financial success and society was confirmed, while the "affiliation" factor was divided into two independent scales: permanent relationship and friends. In addition, for all factors, with the exception of the "permanent relationship" scale, satisfactory Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients were obtained [Wojtowicz, 2009].

Assessment of the importance of the life goals of YEC pupils

Among the life goals (values) that they value in their lives, YEC pupils most often mentioned having a family, love, work, friendship, home and honesty. For about 21%, money is a vital goal in life. When asked directly whether the money is important - nearly 49% answered in the affirmative. A good education is indicated as a life goal by only 10% of the respondents (see Figure 1). Only 5% believe that starting a family and faith in God are important values. Although many of them declare the will to have a family.
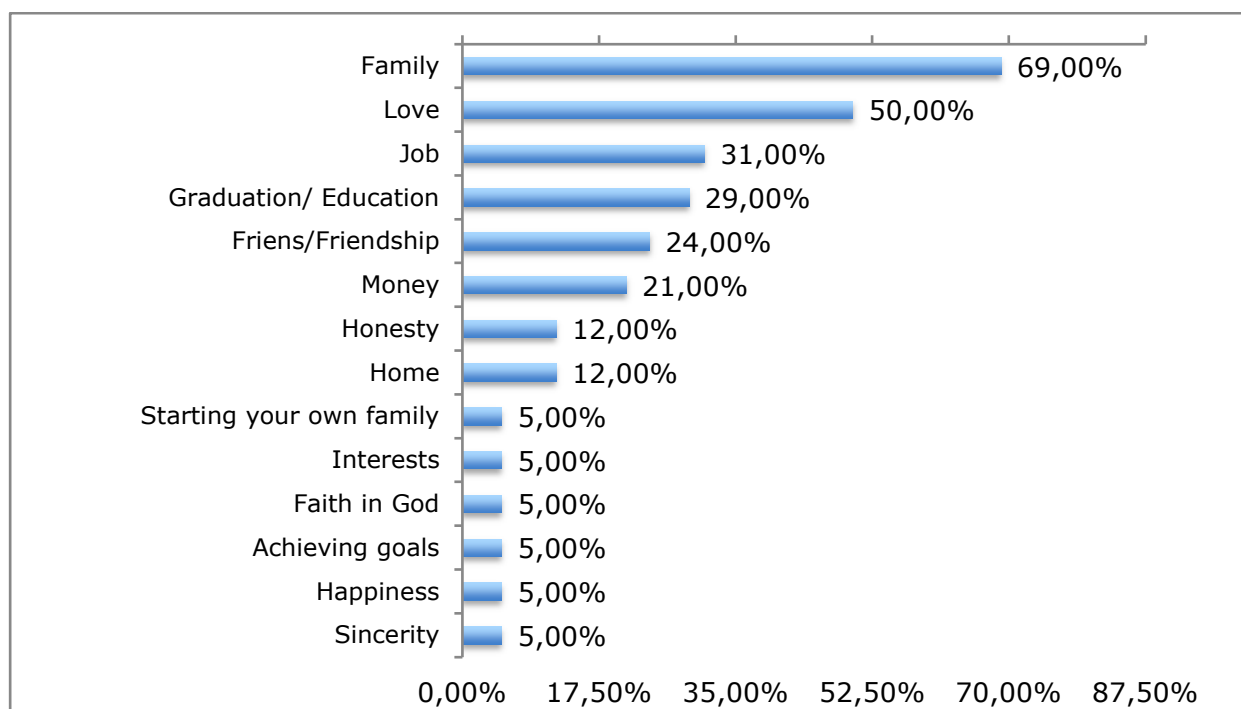
Figure 1. Values important for YEC pupils in life.

Source: own study

The obtained results indicate that getting a profession and having a job is important for 65.9% individuals while love and being in a relationship is the most important value for 86.8% of YEC pupils.

Hierarchy of life goals of YEC pupils depending on the gender

Significant differences were also obtained in the case of the importance indicators of life goals. Girls obtained significantly higher scores than boys on the internal and external goals importance scale, and lower scores on the fulfillment scale (the differences turned out to be statistically significant at the level of at least p <0.05). It seems to be a consequence of the different way of raising girls and their different way of socialization. The lower score on the scale of fulfillment goals means that girls will be less active, motivated and less creative in fulfilling themselves in various areas of life. The graphically obtained result is presented in the diagram below.
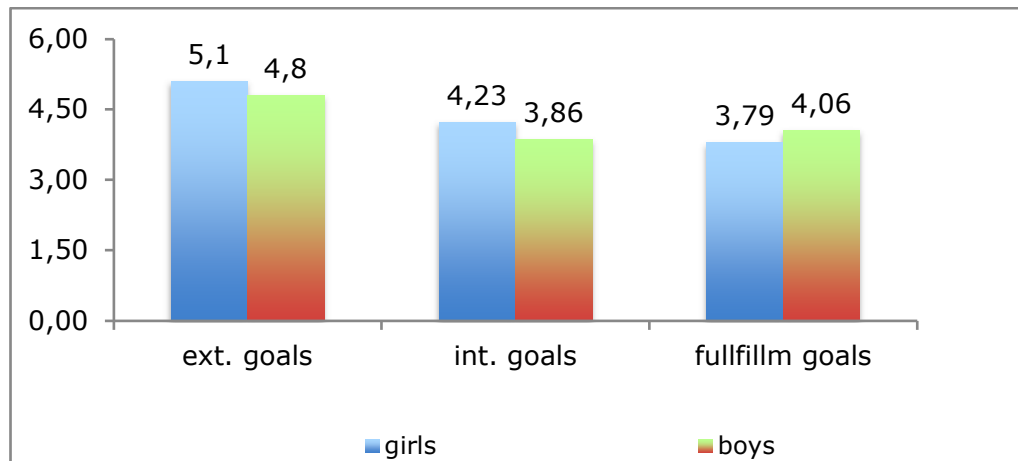
Figure 2. Average scales of importance of life goals (calculated on the basis of factor analysis) depending on the gender of the YEC respondents.

Source: own study

YEC pupils do not differ in their basic life goals from their peers who do not have problems with social adaptation. It seems that satisfying the needs of a stable relationship / having a family and financial stability is the basic condition for functioning in the society. The results are also confirmed by research conducted by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) [Boguszewski, 2016], which found that the most important goals and aspirations of young people are love, friendship and a successful family life and having children. It is worth noting, however, that the obtained results are inconsistent with the research conducted by Kozaczuk [Kozaczuk, 2005] . He showed that maladjusted youth most appreciated the will to dominate others, maximize their pleasure and ensure themselves an appropriate financial position. The obtained discrepancies may result from the fact that a smaller group of pupils staying at YEC was examined and the period in which the study was conducted - in recent years a change in the social rehabilitation approach to socially maladjusted youth can be observed. Perhaps the current study indicates the effectiveness of selected rehabilitation techniques, and thus the lack of clear differences in the assessment of the importance of life goals in relation to adolescents who do not have problems with social adaptation. However, at this stage it is worth replicating the study, which would additionally focus on the connection between the applied social rehabilitation techniques and the perception and hierarchy of values of the life goals of pupils. Perhaps an interesting idea would also be to perform a comparative analysis with a control group (adolescents who have no problems with social adaptation).

When comparing the results concerning the life goals of the group of self-reliant youth with the results of the remaining group of youth staying at the YEC, it was found that in terms of most life goals, the self-reliant youth obtained much higher results (differences significant at the level of $p < 0.05$). Only in the case of the goals related to the society, the difference was at the level of the statistical trend ($p = 0.056$). Graphical results obtained are presented in Figure 3. These results confirm a certain effectiveness of social rehabilitation activities carried out in YEC centers.
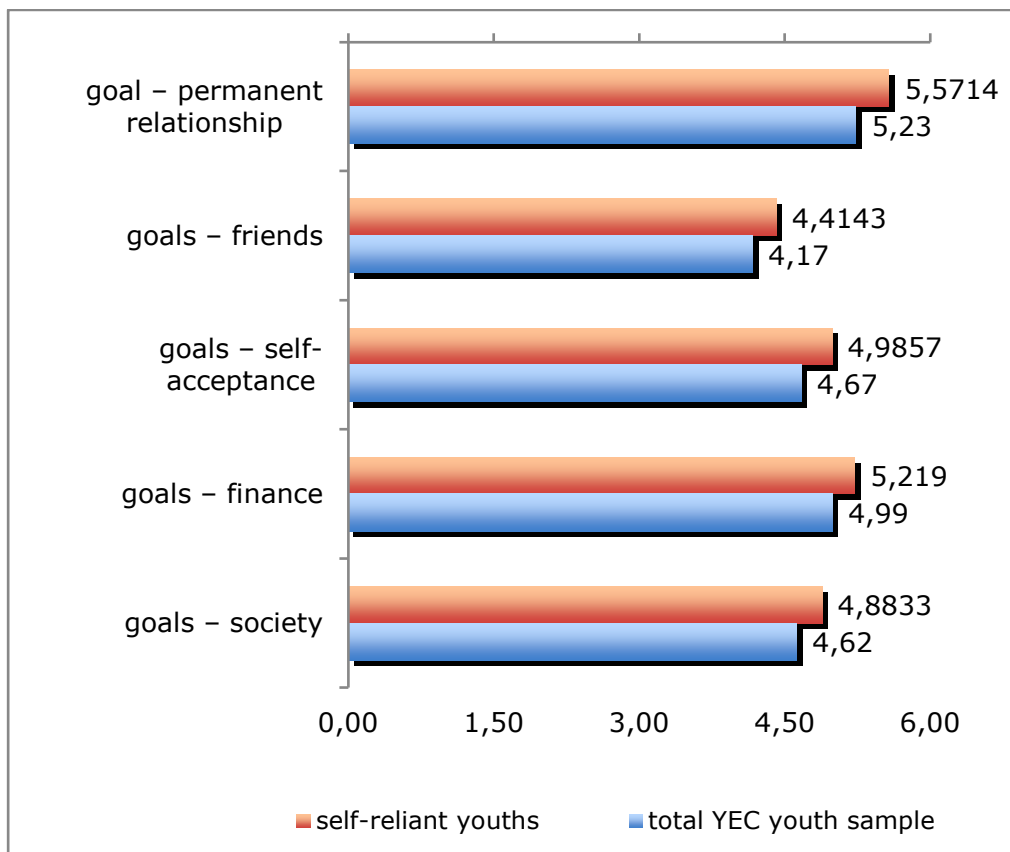

Figure 3. The relationship between the life goals of self-reliant youth and the total sample of youth from YEC.

Source: own study

During the analysis of goals according to the second criterion (with the division of life goals into external, internal and self-fulfillment), differences were observed ($p < 0.05$). The biggest differences were related to the goals of self-fulfillment, and the smallest - to internal goals (cf. Figure 3). The existence of these differences may prove the effectiveness of pedagogical and psychological impact in these areas during the stay of the pupil in the center.
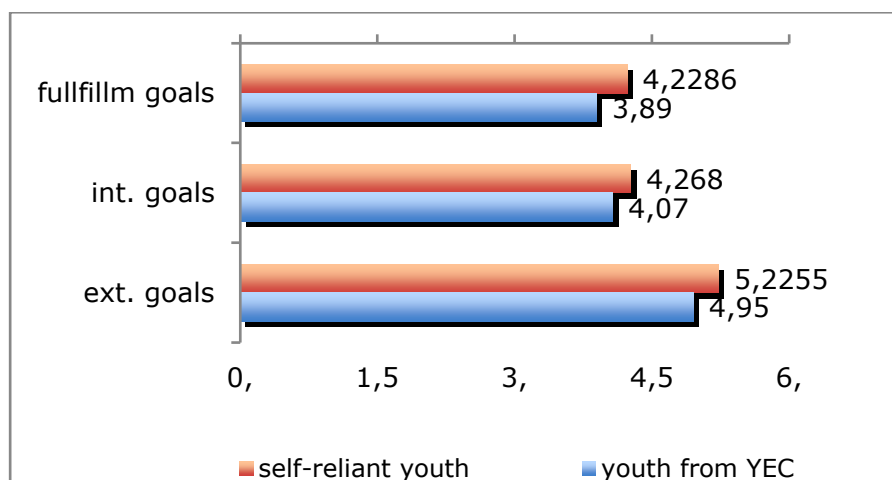
Figure 4. The relationship between life goals (internal, external and related to self-fulfillment) of self-reliant youth and to total sample of YEC youth.
Source: own study

Youth Educational Centers operate within the education system and are run for minors who require special organization of learning, methods of work, raising and social rehabilitation. Pupils of these institutions may be children and adolescents within the developmental standard (but also slightly disabled ones, if it is a rehabilitation and revalidation center), placed in centers under a court decision. In recent years (since 2004), the Ministry of Education, together with local government units, has taken steps to increase the number of places and shorten the waiting time for a place in these institutions. The participation of local government units in these activities results from the fulfillment of legal obligations not only in the field of establishing and running YECs, but also the development and implementation of strategies for solving social problems by local government units at various levels. In recent years, the number of the centers has increased significantly and now it is 95 YEC centers. Youth Educational Centers relatively well perform their re-educational tasks, which allows minors to compensate for educational deficiencies [Greczuszkin, Ostrihanska, 2005], and gives them opportunities for educational and professional development during their stay in the center or after leaving it. The analysis of the life goals of YEC pupils, due to the important role and multiple functions of the generally understood life plans of adolescents, is an important element of pedagogical research, because in the dreams formulated by YEC pupils, visions of their own future, as well as life goals, the results of educational impact can be seen and in a way they allow to verify the effectiveness of social rehabilitation.

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