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## FATHERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES TALK ABOUT THEIR PLANS, HOPES, AND CHILDREN'S FUTURE. A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT\*

**Introduction:** Exploring people's plans, hopes and perceptions of future can help us understand their inner world, intentions, drives, and meaning ascribed to their lives. Little do we know, however, about this sphere in fathers with intellectual disabilities (ID).

**Research Aim:** The aim of the study was to explore how fathers with ID visualize their children's future, what their plans and hopes are and how these plans and hopes are ascribed with meaning by them.

**Method:** Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to examine plans, hopes and vision of the future as expressed by fathers with ID. The research was conducted using in-depth interviews with twenty fathers with mild to moderate ID (aged 21–54).

**Results:** Three superordinate themes and 10 constituent themes were extracted from the data. The superordinate themes included: (1) vision of the child's future – hopes and fears, (2) objects of plans and hopes, and (3) towards fulfilling plans and hopes.

**Conclusion:** The findings can be used by professionals working in institutions supporting people with ID and for social services to help them raise awareness about plans and intentions of fathers with ID – a group commonly regarded as reluctant to cooperate.

**Keywords:** fathers with intellectual disabilities, plans, hopes, interpretative phenomenological analysis.

### INTRODUCTION

Exploring one's hopes and perceptions of future can help us understand their inner world, intentions, drives, and meaning ascribed to their life (Żuraw, 2018, p. 325).

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Investigating this subject allows a researcher to understand a person and discover the recurrent themes and thoughts that come into their mind (Zimbardo, 2001). In literature there are a number of concepts related to people's desires, future expectations and perception of future. In the field of pedagogy commonly used notions include plans, and dreams. Plans can be defined either as an individual's visions of their future actions (a term equivalent to future expectations) or educational ambitions (Górnicka, 2004, p. 14). In contrast to hopes (also referred to as dreams), which are said to be dictated mainly by emotions and desires and are associated with fantasies and expectations that are not precise, plans are usually connected with valuable goals and a higher probability of fulfilling them (Mądrzycki, 2002; Otrębski, Wiącek, Domagała-Zyśk, and Sidor-Piekarska, 2012; Kijak, 2019; Ćwirynkało, 2020).

Much of the research on plans and hopes has focused on typically developing adolescents and the high school experience. There is little research conducted among adults (O'Malley et al., 2021, p. 79), especially adults with ID (Żuraw, 2018, p. 330). Studies regarding hopes of adults with ID indicate that, although they have difficulty in conceptualizing hopes as perceptually private, non-physical, individuated and potentially fictional entities (Dodd, Hare, and Hendy, 2008), they do dream and there are various objects of their hopes (e.g. Włodek, 2013; Ćwirynkało, Borowska-Beszta, and Bartnikowska, 2016; Ćwirynkało and Żyta, 2019; Ćwirynkało, 2020). Adults with ID might be either positive or uncertain about the future (Żuraw, 2018; Ćwirynkało, 2020) and can have both short-term and long-term plans and dreams (Włodek, 2013; Ćwirynkało, 2020). Some studies (e.g. Włodek, 2013; Żuraw, 2018) suggest that they do not focus so much on tangible goods (e.g. a car or electronic equipment) or developing skills. Above all, persons with ID, similarly to people without disabilities, dream of love, family (e.g. marriage, having a child, living with a partner), friendship, employment, independence and health (e.g. Włodek, 2013; Ćwirynkało et al., 2016; Kijak 2016; Ćwirynkało and Żyta, 2019; Karpińska, 2019; Ćwirynkało, 2020). Their hopes might refer both to everyday life (e.g. maintaining *status quo* or desires to have something more) or social reactions to their disability (Żuraw, 2018). It is worth noting that prior studies on plans and hopes of adults with ID were often gender biased (usually focused on women's plans and hopes) and residents and clients of institutions for people with ID. Rarely did these studies concentrate on men, especially those whose level of independence is relatively high. The lack of research in the area has contributed to the dearth of information on the perception of future, plans and dreams of people who are self-determined, have their families, for example, fathers with ID.

Parenthood is an important aspect of life for most people, including persons with ID. Nonetheless, many people with ID still experience limited access to parenting due to discriminatory practices (Mayes and Sigurjónsdóttir, 2010; Zarem-

ba Bielawski, 2011). It is clear that some parents with ID, similarly to other parents, experience various problems (see e.g. Emerson et al., 2015). Furthermore, father's role in parenting is often limited, in favour of mothers and grandparents of children taking responsibility for the parenting process (Wos and Baczała, 2021; Ćwirynkało, 2021b). However, various studies indicate that a large number of parents, including fathers with ID, with adequate support and their own resources, successfully cope with difficulties they encounter (McConnell, Aunos, Pacheco, and Hahn, 2021), form long-term, stable relationships (Booth and Booth, 2002; Ćwirynkało, 2021a) as well as love and care for their children (Karpińska, 2019; Ćwirynkało, 2021b; Wołowicz, 2021). The sphere that remains unexplored are these parents' plans, dreams and perception of future.

## METHOD

The study described in this paper is a part of larger research project regarding the lived experiences and meanings ascribed to fatherhood by fathers with ID (Ćwirynkało, 2021b). The overarching aim of this part of the research was to explore how fathers with ID visualize their children's future, what their plans and hopes are and how these plans and hopes are ascribed with meaning by them.

Due to the uniqueness of the research aim, the research procedure was embedded in an interpretative paradigm (Husserl, 1989) and a qualitative approach, based on interpretative phenomenology (Parahoo, 2014) was used. Phenomenology is conceptualized as qualitative research focusing on an individual's life experiences (Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio, 2019). The method of data collection was an interview, which is a recognized method of collecting data consisting of the thoughts, experiences and perspectives of research participants (including parents and people with ID) on topics of concern in the area of interest of the researcher (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

The method of analyzing the qualitative data gathered during the interviews was Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). IPA acknowledges that the researcher is never able to have direct access to the lived experience of individuals (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). Instead, in this dynamic process (double hermeneutics in practice), firstly, participants make meaning of their world and secondly, the researcher tries to decode that meaning (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012, p. 362). The process of data analysis included four steps: (1) multiple reading and making notes; (2) transforming notes into emergent themes; (3) seeking relationships and clustering themes, and (4) writing an IPA report (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012, pp. 366–368).

## SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

The sampling, as in any IPA study, was deliberate (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012, p. 364). Participants were chosen based on the following criteria: a diagnosed ID, communication skills sufficient to take part in an interview, having at least one child who is still in need of care, giving an informed consent to be involved in the study. Overall, 20 fathers aged 21–54 with mild to moderate ID participated in this research. All participants (Table 1) maintained contact with their children and 12 had full parental rights towards all of their children. 10 fathers had at least one child diagnosed with a disability (overall 43.6% of participants' children had a disability).

Table 1.  
*Participants' profile*

| Pseudonym  | Age | Number and age of children | Marital status | Living situation  | Level of ID |
|------------|-----|----------------------------|----------------|---|-------------|
| Artur      | 48  | 2: 18, 23                  | Married        | Living with wife and younger son                              | Moderate    |
| Bartosz    | 35  | 5: between 1 and 9         | Married        | Living with wife and children                                 | Mild        |
| Damian     | 22  | 1: 3 months                | Partnered      | Living with partner, child, partner's parents and sisters     | Mild        |
| Dariusz    | 47  | 1: 15                      | Married        | Living with wife  | Moderate    |
| Dawid      | 39  | 6: between 1 and 13        | Married        | Living with wife and 5 children (1 child placed for adoption) | Moderate    |
| Franciszek | 40  | 1: 1                       | Partnered      | Living with 2 brothers  | Moderate    |
| Janusz     | 32  | 1: 4                       | Married        | Living alone  | Moderate    |
| Kazimierz  | 54  | 10: between 5 and 18       | Divorced       | Living with 8 children  | Mild        |
| Konrad     | 27  | 3: 5 months, 4, 8          | Married        | Living with wife and 3 children                               | Mild        |
| Krystian   | 32  | 2: 3, 5                    | Partnered      | Living with partner and children                              | Mild        |
| Marian     | 41  | 7: between 4 and 17        | Partnered      | Living with partner and 6 children                            | Mild        |
| Mateusz    | 36  | 1: 10                      | Partnered      | Living with partner and child                                 | Mild        |
| Paulina    | 51  | 2: 20, 21                  | Single         | Living with children  | Mild        |
| Piotr      | 32  | 5: between 1 and 10        | Married        | Living with wife and 3 children                               | Mild        |
| Radosław   | 51  | 2: 20, 23                  | Married        | Living with wife, children and grandson                       | Mild        |
| Robert     | 44  | 1: 8                       | Single         | Living with cousin and her daughter                           | Mild        |
| Stefan     | 21  | 1: 1                       | Partnered      | Living alone  | Mild        |
| Szymon     | 22  | 1: 2                       | Single         | Living with sister and her family                             | Mild        |
| Waldemar   | 41  | 1: 7                       | Married        | Living with wife and child                                    | Mild        |
| Wiktor     | 29  | 1: 4                       | Single         | Living with mother  | Moderate    |

Source: Author's own study.

The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland (Decision no. 11/2018). In

the process of recruitment, the snowball sampling method was applied (Creswell, 2013). The author contacted 27 institutions supporting people with ID. They provided contact to several potential interviewers. Then these men recommended other potential participants who were recruited.

## RESULTS

In order to gain nuanced and in-depth accounts of various aspects of interviewee's vision and plans and dreams for the future, questions that participants were asked were most often of a general nature, for example, "What do you think the future holds for you/your family?", "Do you have any plans for the future?", "What is your dream?". In this way the researcher offered interviewees space to develop their own ideas. A visual depiction of the superordinate and constituent themes is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

*Superordinate and constituent themes*

|  |
|--|
| Vision of children's future – between hopes and fears  |
| Hopes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development/achievements of child,</li> <li>- child's career and financial well-being in the future,</li> <li>- child's happiness.</li> </ul>  |
| Fears and uncertainty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- non-independence of child in their adulthood,</li> <li>- uncertain fate of child after father's death.</li> </ul>  |
| The unknown – difficulties in conceptualizing the vision of future   |
| Objects of plans and hopes   |
| Personal and family life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joint activities, e.g. a family trip,</li> <li>- marriage – wedding,</li> <li>- having more children,</li> <li>- thinking about old age – between obligations (responsibility for children) and hopes (certainty that they will receive care from children).</li> </ul> |
| Education and work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- finding a job,</li> <li>- changing a job,</li> <li>- graduating from school or a course,</li> <li>- gaining qualifications.</li> </ul>  |
| Socioeconomic situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improving financial situation,</li> <li>- home ownership,</li> <li>- apartment renovation / improvement of living conditions,</li> <li>- housing help from social services.</li> </ul>   |

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 Towards fulfilling plans and hopes
 

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Feeling lack of confidence about the fulfillment of plans and hopes

Faith in the fulfillment of plans and hopes

Barriers standing in the way of fulfilling plans and hopes

Moving forward to fulfill plans and hopes:

- saving,
  - active support searching,
  - active job searching,
  - determination in the field of self-development and care for the family.
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Source: Author's own study.

As indicated in Table 2, the first superordinate theme is "Vision of children's future – between hopes and fears". Fathers presented various visions of this future, more or less optimistic, more or less precise. Most often they talked about such issues as: what their children would be like in the future (their career or family), to what extent they would be independent, fulfilled, and where they would live. Sometimes they reported empathy and hope as illustrated by the following excerpts:

Maybe he [my son] will have a better life. I don't know. I wish he would live a better life than I did. (Robert)

I hope she won't be going to any parties or anywhere. I want her to be decent, and to go to school all the time, not to miss lessons. [...] Career? I don't really know. The best career for her? Oh! I know! Stars! Stars so that she could look at them all. That would be her job – you know, an astronaut!. (Damian)

I just want her to be happy when she's an adult... (Waldemar)

Ideas about the future of children often fell within the realm of hopes. Some of them were very specific and applied to possible professions that the child could perform, achievements (e.g. in school) and character traits of the child (e.g. being decent). In other cases, the ideas were less precise and fathers simply talked about their hopes for a happy life for their children, a life that, as several of them stated, would be better than theirs.

Some participants expressed concern and worry when discussing the future of their children. This related mostly to fathers with ID who had children with severe disabilities (e.g. profound ID or autism spectrum disorder):

I doubt if he [son] will be able to work physically in life. That's difficult. Because of the disease. (Marian)

As long as I live, we will get by somehow. They [sons] will be with me. [...] And when I die, well, then the social care will send them somewhere. Into a nursing home, you know. [...] Because they won't survive all by themselves. (Paulina)

Fears and concerns that children might not be able to gain competencies and become independent were more acute in case of these fathers who could not count on support from their close family members, like Paulina – a single transgender father/mother who was raising her two sons with disabilities.

Few participants did not conceptualize a vision for the future of their children. These men did not talk about what their children's future might look like, or preferred not to share this vision.

The second superordinate theme applies to “Objects of plans and hopes”. The analysis of participants' statements indicates that the content of their plans and hopes is associated with three basic areas: (1) family and personal life, (2) education and work, and (3) socioeconomic status.

The most widely discussed plans and hopes applied to the first category. These were both short-term and long-term plans and hopes. The first included a variety of plans related to family occasions (e.g. organizing a party, child's first communion), trips, going on holidays, buying gifts, teaching children new skills (e.g. cycling) or ways of spending time:

Hopes? Peace and quiet [laughs]. But you can get used to it. [...] Well, I need to buy another fishing rod and I'd like to teach him [son] fishing. (Marian)

The latter (long-term plans and dreams) were usually associated with interviewees' relationships with others: partners/wives or children. Many expressed hope that their relationship with their current partners would be maintained, stable and that they could fulfill the father's role well:

I would like everything to be like this forever. I don't want to change anything... My wife and children, and everything. (Dawid)

Some interviewees were planning or dreaming of some changes in the scope of their family life. For example, several men dreamt of living together with their partners and children. Other fathers – those who lived together with their families (partners and children) but were not married – were planning to legalize the relationship and/or have more children. As one of them described:

We are still not married. We live in cohabitation for now, well... Because... I work hard, work hard all the time, but it's practically difficult to have a wedding, isn't it? [...] We want to get married, but it's just because of the costs – they are really high. Who could afford it? But the parish priest said to me, “I will not take anything from you Matthew, not even a penny” [laughs]. But it's not so easy, because Magda doesn't have [the sacrament of] Confirmation yet and she has to do it. But we're planning to... And we're saving money. There will be a wedding and one more child. (Mateusz)

Getting married or having more children were not conceptualized as a priority and a plan for the near future by most participants. Instead, fathers often pointed to barriers which made them postpone this decision (e.g. saving money, no time for organization, preparing for confirmation, negative attitudes of relatives towards marriage).

Interestingly, some participants made conscious decision not to have more children:

My mum had a lot of kids and it was really difficult for us all later with time. Because, you know, children get sick. [...]. Well, I don't want any more children. (Krystian)

Others, on the other hand, indicated that they did not mind having another child and – at the same time – did not plan one:

Researcher: Have you thought about having another child?

No. But it's still possible [laughs]. Because we don't use contraception. If we have more, what's the problem?. (Dariusz)

There were various reasons why interviewees wanted or, on the contrary, did not want to have more children: financial situation (anticipation of increased expenses and deterioration of financial situation after the birth of another child vs. having a sufficiently good financial situation), living conditions (good vs. poor housing conditions), health (no worries vs. fears of illness or disability in a child) or the need to take care of children they already had (especially if these were children with disabilities).

Few participants (especially those who were not involved in relationships) considered the possibility of meeting someone else with whom they could arrange their lives:

One day maybe I would like... to have a new girlfriend... [...] It's hard... [...] You need to know where [to go to meet someone]... I don't like going out in the evenings at all... To the disco, to have fun... I'm afraid... They can kill or suffocate and what?. (Franciszek)

For Franciszek, finding a new partner appeared to be unreachable. Getting to know someone, as he convinced, would require courage and taking actions. Ultimately, he felt pessimism and, with a sense of hopelessness, accepted life as it was.

A few fathers also talked about their senility. In some cases they expressed fears about their own future, in others they seemed positive they would have someone (i.e. children) to take care of them when they needed it.

She [daughter] will get married, no one knows to whom... Maybe she won't want to keep in touch with me. [...] You never know what her husband's family will be like.

You know, a person can change. [...]. And [...] if there is a need and we [my wife and I] grow old, they [children] may not help at all. (Radosław)

We haven't talked about it yet. [...] Maybe Asia will stay with us or she will move out somewhere. On the one hand, [...] I would like her to be with us, but on the other... There are some people (and we don't get on with them any more) who said that we'd decided to have a child to be taken care of by them when we grow old and this child would be unhappy. And I don't want her [daughter] to feel such burden just because she has disabled parents [both parents have cerebral palsy and physical disability]. (Waldemar)

In both narratives, the men talked about a possibility of role reversals (exchanging duties and responsibilities between a child and a parent) but they looked at this situation from different perspectives (Radosław – parent's perspective, Waldemar – child's perspective). Radosław assumed that he had raised his daughters well – in respect for his parents, but he shared doubts about his own future. He was not certain whether children would maintain good relations with him and his wife in the future, which might result in him being left without support when needed. Waldemar's concerns were clearly related to his status of a person with a disability – he seemed not to worry about being left alone in senility but about his daughter who would be burdened with the duty of caring for him.

Some participants also pointed to very personal hopes. For Paulina, it was finishing the process of gender transitioning and sex characteristics:

Hopes? Well, to change the sex for good. (Paulina)

Another group of plans and hopes objects was related to education, training and gaining new qualifications, e.g. graduating from school or taking a course. Several fathers dreamt of getting a driving licence. For them, the licence seemed to open the door to new possibilities: opportunities for employment, gaining autonomy for themselves and their families and making life easier. Unfortunately, the hope seemed unreachable due to skills deficits (memory deficits, insufficient writing and reading skills) or external decisions of transport departments which did not allow people with ID to take driving tests.

Some fathers also referred to plans regarding their career. The analysis of data shows that these plans applied to:

- finding employment after school graduation or after a break without work,
- changing a job to another one, i.e. with better working conditions, better-paid, guaranteeing greater stability,
- keeping a present job for a some (shorter or longer) time.

Some fathers also talked about plans and hopes related to their socioeconomic situation. A vast majority of them lived in apartments/houses too small in relation

to needs, with inadequate sanitary conditions, poorly equipped and/or in need of renovation, and their income was insufficient to fulfill even basic needs of families. Their hopes were closely linked to material comfort: finances and living conditions. Participants' reflections are illustrated by the following excerpts:

We live in a rented flat. [...] I've always dreamt of having my own house. It doesn't have to be a super house with a garden, but just a tiny place, such an asylum, so that you have somewhere to go back. [...] Just a small, cosy flat, so that the children could have a place to come and visit us in adulthood. (Krystian)

Right now? I have only one dream – to have a bigger apartment, because this one's too small for me and eight kids. (Kazimierz)

Owning an apartment/house was important for a number of reasons for participants. As they convinced, it could give a sense of independence from others (parents or other family members), comfort (especially if a large number of people live in a small space) or provide children with the feeling that they had their place on earth to which they would be able to return in adulthood.

The last superordinate theme is called "Towards fulfilling plans and hopes". The current study indicates that fathers differed from one another both in how much they believed in making their dreams come true and in attempts they were making to carry out their plans. Some participants had little sense of self-efficacy in matters important to their personal, family and professional lives. They felt pushed away from key decisions and eventually gave up or were close to giving up the fight to implement their plans and hopes. The following excerpt provides an example of a sense of external control, disappointment and lost hope in fathers:

It's just impossible [to live with a fiancée and son]. She [fiancée's mother] will not allow. [...] Yes, it's hard... (Janusz)

On the other hand, some men, despite the fact that they felt ostracism of the environment, were determined to complete their plans (e.g. create a well-functioning family). As one participant described,

Well, I'm striving for that [so that my partner with children lived with me]. And she would like that too. [...] I have my rights and no one will change it. (Stefan)

It is worth noting that Janusz's and Stefan's dreams were the same (living together with their partner and child/children) and both of them experienced negative attitudes/actions of their partners' family. However, their situation is different due to their degree of independence and commitment to the relationship and fatherhood, as well as perceived chances to make the dream come true. Stefan copes

well in everyday life, works on the open labour market and rents an apartment that he renovates to adapt it to the needs of the family. He sees his daughter and partner relatively often and takes care of the child. In turn, Janusz, although he has a part-time job, requires the support of his assistant and other people in various activities, e.g. managing expenses or cooking. His contacts with fiancée and son are very rare due to poor public transportation. These factors as well as other reasons, related, for example, to partners (Stefan's partner did not have a disability and was willing to live with Stefan, and Janusz's partner was a person with a moderate ID and had decided to live at her parents', not Janusz's house) were certainly important for determining their chances of achieving the intended goal. Stefan was convinced that he would be able to fulfill his dream eventually, while Janusz was aware that he would not manage to do it.

Interviewees were either proud when, thanks to their own determination, they managed to fulfill their plans and hopes or bitter when, despite their attempts, they failed to get what they had been striving for. However, in many cases it would be difficult to determine whether someone's self-efficacy was high or low. Instead, participants had a feeling of being somewhere on the continuum between high and low levels, depending on a particular plan/hope. For example, Krystian felt proud that he had managed to pass a driving test or save enough money to buy a new bicycle, but he was upset and distraught that he was not eligible for social housing and could not afford to buy his own apartment.

Fathers experienced various difficulties and barriers in the implementation of plans. These barriers included insufficient finances (e.g. for gender transition, buying a flat or other needs), negative attitudes and decisions of clerks (not willing to allow a person with ID to take a driving test or refusing to grant social housing or necessary support), potential employers (reluctant to employ a person with disabilities) or close relatives (unwilling to accept participants' relationships or fatherhood). Nonetheless, the analysis also showed that despite the barriers experienced, fathers often put a lot of effort to be able to implement their plans. The activities they took included:

- saving money: both short-term and long-term, the men saved money for cheaper (e.g. some household appliances, bicycle, birthday or Christmas gifts) and more expensive things (e.g. wedding, car, renovation),
- using active ways of seeking the support: writing applications to the mayor asking for social housing, requests for support to social welfare centers, looking for sponsors who could finance the gender transition, asking for a loan in a bank,
- seeking employment: some unemployed fathers looked for a job, those who already worked sometimes looked for better-paid job or worked overtime to be able to support their family,

- self-determination in the field of gaining qualifications and competences (e.g. training courses), care for the family, performing various activities for the benefit of the family, including providing the family with appropriate living conditions (buying necessary appliances, renovations).

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data allowed to distinguish three superordinate themes: (1) vision of children's future, (2) objects of plans and hopes, and (3) towards fulfilling plans and dreams.

Drawing a vision of children's future, fathers who took part in the present study expressed hopes for their future achievements, development and professional career. This vision was not always precise. Some fathers talked about hope for children's general happiness or pointed to their own uncertainty about their future, making it dependent on various factors. Others, especially those with children with deeper disabilities, shared their concerns about their children's future – in particular, children's chances of becoming independent and about their fate after father's death. Previous research on parents with ID did not concern this subject, but the results of other studies with parents without disabilities (e.g. Irwin and Elley, 2013) are similar.

In this study the objects of participants' plans and dreams related to family and personal life, education and work as well as their socioeconomic status. As far as the first area is concerned, some fathers planned or dreamt about changes in their lives, thinking – depending on the stage of their relationship with their partners – about living together with their partner and child/children, marriage or having another child. There were also participants who wanted stability, hoping that their relationship would be long-lasting. Some made conscious decisions not to have more children. Few participants (especially those fathers who were not in a relationship) considered meeting a new person with whom they could form an intimate relationship. Similar plans and hopes have also been indicated in prior studies with people with ID (e.g. Kościelska, 2000; Healy, McGuire, Evans, and Carley, 2009; Kelly, Crowley, and Hamilton, 2009; Rushbrooke, Murray, and Townsend, 2014; Azzopardi-Lane and Callus, 2015; Ćwirynkało and Antoszevska, 2015; Ćwirynkało et al., 2016; Kijak, 2016, 2019; Schaafsma, Kok, Stoffelen, and Curfs, 2017; Ćwirynkało and Żyta, 2019; Ćwirynkało, 2020). It is worth noting, however, that in the current study some plans were often described as reachable which may result from a relatively high level of functioning of a large part of participants and being in a stable relationship.

Regarding plans and hopes in the next sphere – education and profession – participants focused mainly on the area of employment, planning either to find

a job or change their current workplace. Some fathers who were employed also expressed their hope for stability in the professional sphere (e.g. in terms of employment contract). Plans in this area of life were usually, in the opinion of participants, realistic and achievable, which is in line with the results of research conducted among people with mild ID by Górnicka (2004) and participants of occupational therapy workshops (Włodek, 2013; Ćwirynkało et al., 2016).

The last of the distinguished areas of plans and hopes applies to the socioeconomic status. For some fathers – especially those who expressed satisfaction with their family – this was the main sphere of hopes, which might derive from the fact that both participants and their families often experienced difficult living conditions, e.g. lack of their own apartment – sharing an apartment or a room with parents or siblings, living in an apartment too small for the needs of a large family, poor sanitary conditions in the apartment, apartment in need of renovation (Ćwirynkało, 2021b). The poor socioeconomic situation of parents with ID is also indicated in other studies (e.g. Lizoń-Szłapowska, 2009a, 2009b; Bartnikowska, Chyła, and Ćwirynkało, 2014; Emerson et al., 2015; Karpińska, 2019; Slayter and Jensen, 2019), so it is not surprising that this area occupies an important place among the priorities in terms of life plans and hopes (Kijak, 2019; Ćwirynkało, 2020).

It is worth noting that, similarly to the results of Kijak (2016, 2019), plans and hopes of fathers in this study were often associated with their aspirations to achieve a certain life stability and standard of living, considered normal. They did not concern (or concerned rarely) – in contrast to Żuraw's (2018) research – the current realities of life and basic life needs (e.g. security, finding love, closeness or having an interesting job). This may result from the specificity of the study group, which in this project consisted mostly of high-functioning people.

An interesting result of the study was also the indication of a high sense of confidence of many participants (especially the ones who were more independent and did not rely on support from others) that it is highly plausible that they will fulfill their plans and hopes. This finding does not align with the results of prior research (Żuraw, 2018; Ćwirynkało, 2020). Again, one of the reasons why the differences occurred, may relate to a relatively high level of self-determination and independence of the study group in this project.

Although sometimes participants believed that it would be possible for them to fulfil their plans and dreams, they saw various obstacles standing in the way of such an implementation. These were mostly financial barriers, less often the attitudes of others or internal fears of fathers. These types of barriers were also indicated in other studies (e.g. Healy et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2009; Grütz, 2011; Az-zopardi-Lane and Callus, 2015; Kijak, 2016; Rojas, Haya, and Lásaro-Visa, 2016; Ćwirynkało, 2020) conducted with people with ID. However, this research shows that despite the difficulties experienced by fathers with ID, they often managed to take actions that were aimed at fulfilling plans and dreams: they worked, looked

for a job, saved money, renovated their apartments, actively sought support, as well as showed determination in the field of self-development (e.g. education, training) and care for the family. This is in line with Kijak's (2019) study conducted with parents with ID and Aronson, Wilson, and Akert's (1997, p. 92) observation that most people are willing to make a huge effort to get what they want.

There are certain limitations to purposive sampling in that participants were self-selected and may hold particular views that they wish to air. Also, as in any study of qualitative character, the present results cannot be generalized to the whole population of fathers with ID. However, the method allowed for the collection of data pertinent to the aims of this study, its methodology and epistemological position. The study also gave fathers with ID a voice, to tell their stories and to have their experiences understood in a safe environment where they could express their true feelings through their interaction with the researcher. Last but not least, the findings can be used by professionals working in institutions supporting people with ID and for social services to help them raise awareness about plans and intentions of fathers with ID – a group commonly regarded as reluctant to cooperate (Sigurjónsdóttir, 2004).

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OJCOWIE Z NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNOŚCIĄ INTELEKTUALNĄ MÓWIĄ O SWOICH  
PLANACH, MARZENIACH I PRZYSZŁOŚCI DZIECI. RAPORT Z BADAŃ  
JAKOŚCIOWYCH

**Wprowadzenie:** Badanie planów, marzeń i postrzegania przyszłości może pomóc nam zrozumieć wewnętrzny świat człowieka, jego intencje, motyw i znaczenia przypisywane im w życiu. Niewiele jednak wiemy o tej sferze u ojców z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną (NI).

**Cel badań:** Celem badania było zrozumienie, w jaki sposób ojcowie z NI wyobrażają sobie przyszłość własną i swoich dzieci, jakie są ich plany i marzenia oraz jakie znaczenia przypisują swoim planom i marzeniom.

**Metoda badań:** Do zbadania planów, marzeń i wizji przyszłości wyrażanej przez ojców z NI została wykorzystana interpretacyjna analiza fenomenologiczna. Badanie przeprowadzono na podstawie pogłębionych wywiadów z dwudziestoma ojcami z NI w stopniu lekkim i umiarkowanym w wieku 21-54 lat.

**Wyniki:** Analiza materiału pozwoliła na wyodrębnienie trzech tematów nadrzędnych i dziesięciu tematów podrzędnych. Nadrzędne tematy obejmowały: (1) wizję przyszłości dziecka – nadzieje i lęki, (2) obiekty planów i marzeń oraz (3) dążenie do realizacji planów i marzeń.

**Wnioski:** Wyniki mogą być wykorzystane przez profesjonalistów pracujących w instytucjach wspierających osoby z NI oraz opieki społecznej, aby podnieść świadomość na temat planów i intencji ojców z NI – grupy powszechnie uważanej za niechętną współpracy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ojcowie z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną, plany, nadzieje, interpretacyjna analiza fenomenologiczna.