

**REVIEW OF A BOOK SOCIAL PROBLEMS
OF THE FUNCTIONING OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL
IMPAIRMENT IN THE OPINION OF INHABITANTS
OF THE BIALSKI DISTRICT BY DOROTA TOMCZYSZYN,
WYDAWNICTWO PWSZ IM. PAPIEŻA JANA PAWŁA II
W BIAŁEJ PODLASKIEJ, BIAŁA PODLASKA 2009, P. 144.**

Dorota Tomczyszyn is a Doctor of Humanist Sciences in the major of sociology and has been working at the Institute of Sociology, State School of the Higher Vocational Education in Biała Podlaska, for three years. She is an author of about forty scientific manuscripts and a co-author of a book entitled "Studenci pogranicza polsko-białoruskiego wobec problemów współczesności" („Students of the Polish-Belarusian borderland against Problems of Contemporary Times”). In most of the works published so far, Dr. Tomczyszyn was addressing problems of disability and family in the social and educational context.

In the reviewed work, the author has undertaken an attempt to introduce a reader the opinions of the inhabitants of the Bialski District on the functioning of persons with mental impairment. Statistical surveys indicate that in Poland there are ca. 5.5 millions of disabled persons, including ca. 10% of those with mental impairment. It is a considerable, yet often neglected in scientific research, group of inhabitants of our District. Usually, their issues are investigated by a narrow group of experts of psychology, medicine or pedagogy. The hereby presented book extends the scope and range of interests in those issues with opinions of a representative of social sciences.

The reviewed book is a monograph based on empirical research conducted in May 2007 in the Bialski District. It consists from ten chapters, references and an annex compiling comprehensive statistical data. In such type of work, it would be advisable to complete the annex with a survey questionnaire containing detailed questions, that could be applicable to the beginners in research on the problems linked with the mentally-impaired persons. Generally, the outline of the work is clear and logic, with three distinct sections, *i.e.* theoretical, methodological and analytical one, the latter additionally providing interpretation of the results obtained.

The aim of the study, established by the author of the reviewed book, was to recognize opinions of inhabitants of the Bialski District on the functioning

of persons with mental impairment in various sectors of social life (p.43). It is undoubtedly the just, but a very wide and extensive objective, which may pose a problem of focusing on specific scopes of these issues already at the stage of conducting the study. Those issues pointed out by the author refer, among other things, to defining the mentally-impaired persons, indicating traits that are typical of them, determining emotional attitudes towards the mentally-impaired persons, showing educational and occupational problems linked with that group of people as well as the possibility of establishing families by them (p.43-44).

Owing to such an extensive problematic scope of the study, the author provides very general answers to those problems, without in-depth explanation of particular issues. All analyses are presented only in qualitative perspective, which naturally impairs more elaborate interpretation of results. Though, the theoretical section partly introduced a reader into the problems of mentally-impaired persons, operationalization of basic terms and detailed description of a research procedure are clearly missing.

The chapter referring to research methods is very enigmatic and comes down to the description of study scheme, providing – but not explaining – the objective of the study and presentation of detailed problems, without explicit determination of the major research problem.

In contrast, the chapters providing results obtained in the study and their interpretation are written clearly and comprehensibly. Worthy of notice is the logical description of the presented data. While elaborating on the study, the author skillfully utilizes graphical forms and makes accurate observations. The book contains 41 figures and 21 tables. Its contents are logically arranged and related, and the problems addressed in particular chapters focus around the established aim of the study.

The author accurately drives her analyses towards a family. As it results from the study, it is the family and the state that are clearly holding the responsibility over mentally-impaired persons. This view is shared by 67.37% of the respondents. Yet, as little as 14.4% of the inhabitants of the Bialski District claimed that the total care over those persons should be taken by the family (p. 65).

The value of the work is significantly affected by accurately and interestingly formulated conclusions.

As observed by the author, some inconsistency exists amongst the respondents from the Bialski District in the determination of their own attitude towards persons with intellectual deficit. Though the respondents pointed mainly to negative personal traits of the mentally-impaired persons, yet they determined their emotional attitude to those persons in positive categories. Most frequently, the inhabitants of the Bialski District would try

to accept their presence (22%) and to treat them as they treat other people (21%). This, however, raised some doubts while analyzing results on the possibility of establishing friendly relationships with a mentally-impaired person. The smallest reservations were observed upon the possibility of establishing a friendship with a person affected by limb paralysis, a blind person, or a person with heart failure, whereas persons mentally ill and mentally impaired would be chosen as a friend the least frequently (p.127).

The respondents turned out not to be supporters of educational integration with the mentally-impaired persons. They supported placing the intellectually-disabled children in special schools and classes (opinions of half the respondents). Less than half the inhabitants were approving the education of those children in the system of mass school (p. 127).

Some unfavorable opinions towards persons with intellectual deficit still occur in declarations of the respondents. In part, the study demonstrated also a lack of knowledge on the functioning and social possibilities of mentally-impaired persons (p. 130).

It is fitting to agree with the author that in the educational process of a society, extending knowledge on disability and persons affected with is necessary, especially amongst the young generation. From the perspective of integration processes, diversified and even negative opinions do happen in many fields. It seems that the model of segregation education and an attitude of isolation against the act of friendship with a mentally-impaired person still exists in the awareness of a too high number of the respondents. Some of the respondents would never give the intellectually-impaired person the right to establish a family and to have children (p.135).

The entire work represents a valuable contribution into the depiction of opinions of the Bialska community on the functioning of persons with mental impairment. The author should be praised for the idea and effort of conducting a field survey as well as for the presentation of the results obtained in the form of a book. I think that this work will receive a positive reception from experts of various fields of social sciences and will enrich literature to be used in the didactic work with students. I am also convinced that it will become an inspiration to other investigators to direct their research efforts into the problems of disabled persons.