*Intro:*

*The aim of the study was to test a theoretical model which described the causes of constraining a child’s activity. The study involved 319 parents of preschool children. The model was tested with the help of structural equations. Cluster analysis was used to check how many clusters, i.e. groups of individuals similar to one another (due to variables described in the model), exist in the population. An artificial neural network was used to construct a prediction model for constraining children's activity. The results revealed that the theoretical model cannot be rejected as incorrect. The cluster analysis results revealed the existence of four groups of people. The neural network had a good prediction on constraining the activity of children.*

Some authors predict that constraint of activity may also be associated with a decline in children's competence in the constrained areas [2] as research has confirmed. It turns out that constraining children's social activity is linked with the decline of social competence [3] and physical activity with increases of physical inactivity.

*Types of constraining a child's activity:*

When speaking of constraining the activity of a child we refer to the types of constraining activity and to the way in which it is constrained. The types of constraining children's activity comprise: a) constraint of manual activity, b) socio-relational, c) kinesthetic, d) musical, e) cognitive, etc. The methods of constraint include bans, criticism, ridiculing a child .

*The problem of ethics in research on constraining children's activity:*

Constraining a child’s activity requires an analysis of the ethical aspects of this phenomenon. Some aspects of restraining have been banned legally; others, as research has revealed, have shown that they harm the child’s development.

*The alternative to constraining a child's activity:*

Gurycka pointed to behaviors which may be an alternative to constraining children's activity. These behaviors are not associated with the increased likelihood of a mistake but, on the contrary, may have positive effects on the child’s development. Gurycka termed these behaviors as directioning the children's activity. They are defined as creating conditions for the development of the child's own activity; agreeing on a substitutionary activity with the child negotiating. Directioning the child's activity is behavior on the part of the parent which creates situations that direct the child's activity and does not constrain it.

*Cluster analysis*

The results of cluster analysis revealed that there are four clusters in the set . The first profile, which is the least frequently represented in the population, comprises 18% of the sample tested (**Table 1**), i.e. those who had the highest values in terms of discrepancies, experienced difficulties, children's representation, withdrawal, and constraining of children's activity. This group also has some of the highest scores in terms of pressure. Persons with

this profile used cognitive distancing the least often as a reaction to stress. The profile analysis provided new and valuable information. Approximately 54% of Polish parents does not experience the inability to meet educational goals; therefore, they do not experience difficulties and are not exposed to parental stress. About 27% of parents have a moderate level of difficulty in achieving their parental goals, and in this situation, they are characterized by a fairly diverse response to stress, including pressure, seeking help, and cognitive distancing. About 18% of parents, however, are exposed to higher stress in the parental situation due to the impossibility of achieving their parental goals. The profiling analysis also revealed that the greatest chance of obtaining positive reactions to stress, such as cognitive distancing or seeking help, occurs at low levels of stress. When stress increases, less positive forms of stress coping, such as pressure and withdrawal, also occur. With high levels of difficulty, unfavorable forms of stress coping continue to strengthen while positive forms such as distancing and seeking help become weaker.

*Table

Description automatically generated*

*Conclusion:*

In conclusion, it should be noted that the formed latent variables showed very good reliability along with the percentage of variance extracted. Apart from the latent variable of the representation of the child, the reliability and percentage of variance extracted for the other variables had very good psychometric parameters. The model presented here has many degrees of freedom. This means that it is complex in the sense that it has many free parameters, not calculated. The value of the most important fit statistic RMSEA (<0.08) indicates that the model fits the data well. The value of the test was, and thus the measurement model can be considered as fitting the data well. The value of CFI, which is slightly lower than 9, also shows that the model fits the data well.