

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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**EXPERIENCE OF ALIVENESS WITHIN EXPERIENCE OF BEING:  
INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

Summary of the Doctoral Dissertation  
Social sciences, psychology (06 S)

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

Jelena Šalaj

**GYVUMO IŠGYVENIMAS BUVIMO PATYRIME:  
INTERPRETACINĖ FENOMENOLOGINĖ ANALIZĖ**

Daktaro disertacijos santrauka  
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## INTRODUCTION

**The relevance of the problem.** Existential-phenomenological psychology is deeply rooted in philosophy. The source of philosophy that is being referred in this work for the analysis of the experience of aliveness as one of the aspects of the experience of being includes the analytic of *Dasein* (i.e. "Being-There" or "Being-Here") and *Mitsein* (i.e. "being-with") by Martin Heidegger (1992, 2001), the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (2005), the understanding of the corporeity of consciousness developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968, 1982, 2000), and the concept of *Ich-Du* (i.e. "I-Thou" or "I-You") by Martin Buber (1998, 2001).

In this thesis, *being* is defined as an intersubjectively experienced, changeable process of life, which cannot be fully expressed in language and is revealed through specific content of life within daily routine. The nature of being as the process as well as the difficulty to fully feel being through language causes problems while seeking the methodological approach, which would be suitable for the research of this phenomenon. The representatives of phenomenological philosophy (Husserl, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 1982, 2000) claim that the most adequate approach towards the living world of a human being and all its unique meanings is the research on *experience*. In this thesis, *the experience of being* is defined as the consequence of the structuring of self-being performed by an individual. The structuring of being takes place while reflecting or trying to express being in words.

The differences of being and the experience of being in this work are analysed with the help of the theory of Ernesto Spinelli (2007), where the author introduces two new concepts of *worlding* and *worldview*. Worlding is defined as a constantly moving, shifting process of life, which cannot be fully expressed through speaking; whereas worldview is a consequence of structuring the worlding. Having analysed the differences of being and the experience of being according to the concept of selfhood by E. Spinelli, the conclusion has been drawn that the experience of being is a twofold phenomenon. On the one hand, while speaking of the experience of being, it is possible to have in mind *something* that is being reflected, i.e. something that an individual refers to as the experience of being. On the other hand, the understanding of the experience of being as a phenomenon is inevitably linked to the question *in what way* an individual experiences

his or her own being, i.e. in what way the structuring of the process of being takes place as well as in what way the meanings are attributed to the experience of self-being.

In order to present a more precise concept of the experience of being with reference to existential literature (May, 1983; Spinelli, 2007, 1997; Binswanger, 1946; Frankl, 1998, 2007; van Deurzen, 1998; Yalom, 2005), a preliminary theoretical model describing the experience of being has been offered. The following three aspects of the experience of being have been singled out:

- The experience of vitality;
- The experience of aliveness;
- The experience of authenticity.

*The experience of vitality* or, in other words, the physical experience of own vitality includes biological, physiological, and physical aspects.

*The experience of aliveness* is a broader phenomenon. Apart from physical aspects it embraces social, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the experience of being.

*Authenticity* is related to greater personal integration, inner harmony, and the experience of self-identity.

The function of the model being offered is to bring more theoretical clarity into the concept of the experience of being. Nevertheless, it should only be estimated as preliminary and it should be revised according to the research findings.

The thesis focuses mainly on one of the aforementioned aspects of the experience of being, i.e. the experience of aliveness. The following aspect has been chosen due to its relevance in clinical practice, especially for the psychotherapy of people, who complain of apathy and decreased sense of aliveness. Another motive is based on the presumption that the experience of aliveness could serve as the basic experience allowing the experience of authenticity.

The concept of intersubjectivity is an important theoretical presumption, on the basis of which the theoretical analysis of the experience of aliveness within the experience of being as well as the research of the thesis have been prepared.

*Intersubjectivity* is a psychological field, which takes shape when one individual reacts to another and influences the experience of both of them. The concept of

intersubjectivity is based on the ideas of such philosophers as M. Heidegger (1992), M. Merleau-Ponty (1968, 1982), and M. Buber (1998, 2001) as well as on the ideas of the following authors of different theoretical paradigms of psychology: Robert D. Stolorow (1992, 1998), Donna Orange (1998), Jessica Benjamin (2004), and Daniel Stern (2004). While interpreting human nature, all authors indicate interpersonal relations as one of the main sources of any kind of experience.

Having analysed the experience of aliveness through the prism of the concept of intersubjectivity, the conclusion has been drawn that interpersonal relations constitute one of the most significant sources of the experience of aliveness. Yet, their meaning should be revised further.

With the help of critical analysis of literature, the following problematic fields have been distinguished:

1. The phenomenological structure of the phenomenon of being has not been described clearly;
2. The problem of unified terminology arises when discussing such concepts as “aliveness,” “vitality,” “being,” “existence,” “experience of being,” “feeling that I am,” and etc.;
3. The offered theoretical model of the experience of being needs further revision and correction according to the research findings;
4. While analysing the experience of being according to the concept of selfhood by E. Spinelli (2007), it has become evident that the following questions must be answered: *what* the experience of aliveness is and *in what ways* an individual experiences it;
5. The questions concerning the impact of interpersonal relations as well as sensual experience on the experience of aliveness have not been answered thoroughly.

Following the generalisation of all these aspects, the broadest problem and more specific aims of the research have been formulated. The broadest problem is the lack of clarity within the concept of the experience of aliveness, which is related to the lack of attempts to reach an agreement concerning the terminology, the difficulties in relation to the methodological approach, and the lack of examples of psychotherapeutic work as well as the integration of theory. More specific aims of the research include the striving to describe the structure of the phenomenon of the experience of aliveness in more detail

and to reveal the process of how meanings are attributed to the experience of aliveness.

### **Relevance and novelty of the research**

- The experience of aliveness within relations is analysed. Although much attention is being paid to interpersonal relations and their analysis within the science of psychology and its practise in particular, scientific research on relations is still very scarce;
- The chosen research method, i.e. interpretative-phenomenological analysis, allows the analysis of the experience of aliveness taking into consideration the data from two different source – the content of the story told by a research participant, and the observation as to how aliveness is experienced within a specific relation towards the researcher;
- The selection strategy of the research participants enables the comparison of two different attitudes towards one and the same phenomenon, which is rather unusual in phenomenological studies;
- The understanding of the phenomenon of the experience of aliveness could offer new insights, which could be applied while consulting apathetic, depressive patients within the therapy of patients ill with depression.

### **Research aims**

1. To describe the phenomenological structure of the experience of aliveness.
2. To reveal the regularities of the attribution of meanings to the experience of aliveness.

### **Research tasks**

1. To examine three directors who work in companies and three people who suffer from depression.
2. To describe the phenomenological structure of the experience of aliveness of each research participant.
3. To formulate a common definition of phenomenological experience of aliveness or to ground the impossibility of formulation of a unified definition.



4. To single out the main spheres of life (e.g. circumstances, context), that are being mentioned most frequently by the research participants while talking about their experience of aliveness.
5. Having analysed the similarities and differences of the experience of aliveness among the research participants:
  - 5.1. To reveal the regularities of the experience of aliveness within the sphere of physicality;
  - 5.2. To reveal the regularities of the experience of aliveness within interpersonal relations on the basis of the analysis of the experience of aliveness within interpersonal relations;
  - 5.3. To reveal other regularities of the experience of aliveness that will emerge during the research.
6. To reveal how the process of the attribution of meanings to the experience of aliveness takes place, i.e. what its nature is, or on the basis of what presumptions the research participants structure their experience of aliveness.

**Defensive statement.** The experience of aliveness is a subjective status of emotional involvement of varying intensity, which is felt through the search for optimal physical, social, psychological and spiritual stimulation

## **METHOD**

**Research scheme.** A pilot as well as the main research has been done. Following the pilot research, the formulation of the instruction has been revised, certain requests for the research participants (e.g. not to hurry, to speak as broadly as possible) have been introduced.

**Research participants.** 2 men and 4 women took place in the research. The age group of all participants is 35-63.

General requirements for research participants:

- The ability to reflect and verbalise their ideas.

- A consent confirmed in writing to participate in the research and to allow the usage of the received data for scientific purposes.

**Selection principles of research participants.** The selection procedure of the research participants was based on the peculiarities of interpersonal relations, i.e. the aim was to select the participants with varying quality of interpersonal relationships.

A part of the research participants (i.e. 2 women, 1 man) was comprised of the leaders who were studying at ISM University of Management and Economics and also holding managing positions in the sphere of business at the time of the research. During the research, they maintained active and rather successful interpersonal relations. The other participants (i.e. 2 women, 1 man) were being treated for depression at Psychiatric Inpatient Department at the time of the research. Their interpersonal relations were weaker; contacts with other people were rare, tense and/or unsatisfactory for the participants of the research.

Formally, all research participants were divided into two groups; however, while analysing the results, they were all evaluated as experts of the phenomenon under investigation, i.e. the experience of aliveness. The aim of the research was to contribute to the more common problem – the interpretation of the structure of the phenomenon of the experience of aliveness.

**Research progress.** A certain part of the research participants was selected during the seminar of the Leadership Programme held at the ISM University of Management and Economics. People who led an active way of life, were not afraid of making risky decisions, and preferred a position that promised a more interesting and more full-fledged life rather than safe existence were encouraged to respond.

Another stage of selection consisted of the interviews carried out at one of the psychiatric hospitals of Vilnius following the consent of the head of the institution in writing. During the research, the participants were being treated for depression at the Inpatient Department but they could already take part in the research (i.e. expressed their agreement to participate, were able to maintain contacts, and showed sufficient concentration of attention). The researcher was introduced to each participant

individually by the supervising doctor. The researcher had an opportunity to study case-histories of all the patients taking part in the research.

**Research procedure.** The data were collected while employing the unstructured interview method with the same initial question for all the participants. All interviews were conducted at the time and place convenient for both a participant and the researcher, taking into consideration the main principles of qualitative interviewing. There were two meetings with each participant. During the first meeting, the initial contact was established, whereas an interview was conducted during the second one.

***The instruction for the research participants:***

The participants are warned that the interview is going to be recorded and have to express their agreement to that.

*I am a postgraduate student at Vilnius University. Currently I am writing my thesis paper and doing a related research. The research is confidential. I have one broad question for you to answer. Could you, please, share your ideas on what it means for you to feel alive? Please, take your time and answer this question calmly, considering it fully. I would like to ask you to start speaking and continue developing your ideas as broadly as possible until you feel you've said what you wanted. Later, if there are some uncertainties, I'll ask additional questions. So, the main question I'd like you to answer is "What does it mean for you to feel alive?"*

The end

*Do you have any questions or remarks concerning this interview?*

**The procedure of data analysis.** The received data were analysed on the basis of the method of interpretative-phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2009). The philosophical origins of the methods go back to the phenomenological, hermeneutical and idiographical philosophy (i.e. the ideas of E. Husserl, M. Heidegger, P. Ricœur). The phenomenological IPA component manifests itself through the attention devoted to the experience of a research participant at the primary stage of the analysis. A patient is interpreted and described from the perspective of an experiencing human being. At this particular stage, the researcher sets two main goals, i.e. *to understand* the experience of a research participant, and *to describe* how it looks like.

The interpretative IPA component reveals itself during the second stage of the analysis, when the researcher seeks to disclose what it means for a research participant to experience and feel the things he or she experienced in a specific situation taking into consideration his or her life context. The objective of the interpretative analysis is to reveal the ways how a research participant contributes meaning to the experience. At this stage, particular attention is paid to language. Both the content of the language and the peculiarities of expression of a research participant are analysed.

### **Procedure of data analysis**

1. Interview selection;
2. Interview transcription;
3. Careful text reading;
4. Reflexive remarks, their identification;
5. Descriptive and interpretative analysis;
6. Combining themes into general themes or clusters;
7. Organisation of work with additional case researchers;
8. Supervisions of described cases;
9. Generalisation of cases;
10. Presentation of final distinguished case themes during the writing stage.

Additional documents used for the analysis:

- Reflexive diaries;
- Case histories of the research participants treated for depression;
- Descriptive case statistics.

**Validity of the research.** Lucy Yardley (2000, in Smith, 2009, p.180) indicates 4 criteria, on the basis of which the quality of a qualitative research can be judged, i.e. sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour of a researcher, transparency and coherence of research, impact and importance of research. The first and the last criteria are rather general; therefore, in order to validate the research, the criterion of commitment was mainly taken into account and other procedures ensuring the reliability of the analysis were applied.

The competence of the researcher to carry out qualitative research is based on the psychological consultancy practice as well as participation in specialised trainings including a special course on IPA analysis.

The procedures ensuring the reliability of the research data analysis:

- *Transparency of analysis procedure*, i.e. the presentation of the analysis in such a way that a potential, independent external auditor would be able to understand the entire sequence of logical steps that led from the initial material to the drawing of conclusions in the final research results;
- *Participation of additional case researchers* during cases analyses in order to insure the validity of the themes distinguished by the researcher as well as the conclusions on each case;
- *Case supervisions*.

## **RESULTS**

The chapter on the research results consists of the following two main divisions:

1. Case analysis results;
2. Generalised research results.

### **Case Analysis Results**

The results of interpretative-phenomenological analysis of each case study are presented in the thesis. Due to the limited scope of the summary, only the results of two research participants are included. In order to present a broader range of the topics of experience of aliveness by the research participants, one of the cases has been chosen from those being treated for depression and the other from the group of business managers.

All cases are presented in the following identical order:

1. *General information* on the research participant;

2. *Tables of generalised topics*, where the topics are listed in hierarchical order, i.e. several smaller themes and a broader topic embracing everything. The topics given in the final tables have been divided into the following three categories:
  - a. The topics related directly to the experience of aliveness;
  - b. The topics related to the experience of aliveness in interpersonal relations;
  - c. General topics revealing psychological characteristics of the research participants.
3. In order to illustrate the process of topic determination, *a more thorough analysis of several topics* has been given at the bottom of the table. Also, authentic quotations taken from actual interviews have been presented at the bottom of the page so as to illustrate certain statements (the numbers indicated in brackets (e.g. 2, 4, or 47) are the line numbers of the transcribed text). The following quotations should be interpreted merely as illustrations and should not be treated as the main arguments, on the basis of which the topics have been determined.

### **Rasa's case**

*General information.* Rasa is a 58 year-old specialist of public relations. Throughout her professional career she has been working according to the speciality. Rasa divorced her husband many years ago. During the research, she was living alone. She has a grown-up son and granddaughters. Rasa is weak physically and mentioned numerous unsuccessful attempts to consult psychologists and psychotherapists. In her youth, she experienced a miscarriage. She has also attempted to commit suicide and the risk of suicidal tendencies has remained. During the research, Rasa was being hospitalized with the diagnosis of a recurrent average depressive episode. This manifested itself with typical tearfulness and frequent mood swings. The language is rich, coherent, and full of facts. The interview was special in that having heard the research question the participant mostly spoke in a monologue with just a few additional questions asked by the researcher.

Table 1. Hierarchically grouped topics of Rasa's case.

<b>The topics related to the experience of aliveness</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attraction to death – an obstacle to the experience of aliveness.</li> <li>2. Predominance of physical pain in experience – an obstacle to the experience of aliveness.</li> <li>3. Lack of emotional involvement - an obstacle to the experience of aliveness.</li> <li>4. Experience of meaninglessness.</li> <li>5. Concentration on experience of personal suffering.</li> </ol>	
<b>The experience of aliveness in interpersonal relations</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Lack of active emotional involvement in the interview.</li> </ol>	
<b>The most general tendencies</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Striving for normality – work as one of the main criteria of adaptation.</li> <li>8. Fixation on the past, emphasis on continuous flow of time.</li> <li>9. Reification of the illness.</li> <li>10. Importance of social roles – efforts to perform them properly.</li> <li>11. Difficulties of interpersonal relations:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Uneasiness while being open with others;</li> <li>b. Experience of self-otherness;</li> <li>c. Lack of communication with others;</li> <li>d. Difficulties with the distribution of responsibility in relations;</li> <li>e. Ambivalent feelings in respect of surrounding people;</li> <li>f. Guilt and shame against own self as well as the others and the experience of a mental illness as stigma;</li> <li>g. Communication as the means of loosing personal feelings and emotions;</li> <li>h. Difficulty with telling others about emotionally significant experience.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

The topics related directly to the experience of aliveness

**Predominance of physical pain in experience – an obstacle to the experience of aliveness.** Rasa identified the experience of aliveness primarily with vitality and physical health. Physical pain was predominant in her experience. It overwhelmed all

other kinds of experience<sup>1</sup>. At that time Rasa claimed she felt like an animal, that she was encompassed by pain and the thoughts came only when the pain went away. Rasa tried to understand in what way that physical pain was related to mental condition. Physical activity (especially in combination with socialisation) is considered to be a supportive factor, which helps to forget physical pain. Rasa noticed that sometimes physical activity had an impact on her condition and she felt better after physical exercise<sup>2</sup>. However, she has not exhausted this method sufficiently. She mainly forced herself to move when spending time with other people.

### **Lack of emotional involvement - an obstacle to the experience of aliveness.**

The lack of emotional involvement manifested itself through such statements made by Rasa as, “it seems as though I live with one foot in the other world,” “not fully engaged.” She described death as an abstract, theoretical concept even though she actually had been very close to death when she had tried to commit suicide. A certain suspension has been observed, i.e. the inability to fully “integrate” neither in life (“most probably I would never feel fully alive“ (77)), nor in death (“... and I’m as if with one foot in the other world” (57)). Rasa’s constant way of living on the verge is further expressed by her own typical phrases such as, “and so you balance on the verge all the time” (82), “and so you live all your life just on one foot” (217). Rasa always balances on the verge between life and death, herself and the others, the efforts to stay healthy and the illness, openness and the fear to be open, responsibility for her own self and the transfer of responsibility on the surroundings, the wish for close relationship and fear.

### The topic related to the experience of aliveness in interpersonal relations

**Lack of active emotional involvement in conversation.** The speech of the research participant was “disconnected” from any emotions whatsoever and the lack of emotional connection with the content of the story was observed. A typical story

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<sup>1</sup> When you get up.. but here again, when you have that physical pain it’s, well, impossible to feel absolutely normal. Because you still, and there’s this pain so strong that you notice you’re no longer capable of working (201-203). As long as there’s physical pain, you cannot think of anything. You’re like an animal. Pain encompasses you, and those thoughts come only afterwards, when you recover after the pain (395-396).

<sup>2</sup> And, and as long as I am there, I really, well, do my best to move, move, play, talk. I can’t say that my behaviour is unnatural. I behave naturally. And as long as I’m with them, I manage, at least I think I do, to control myself (162-164).



“disconnected” from any emotions whatsoever and the lack of emotional connection with the content of the story. Rasa showed reluctance to open up, and revealed her life events as mere facts. At the beginning of the conversation, a typical specific style of narration has been observed, i.e. detailed factual information such as numbers, dates and names were given, whereas personal importance of events was revealed at the minimum.

The following sentence could be considered as a typical example of impersonal speech: “Now that you’ve asked what it means to be alive, I think you cannot feel fully alive, when you constantly live with that death programme” (93-94). Rasa spoke of herself in the second person, used the masculine and the phrases, which created a distance from immediate experience (e.g. “I think,” “Now that you’ve asked”). She often switched to the past tense although research questions did not necessarily encourage focusing on the past. This is especially notable when the past was used while speaking about aliveness, whereas the present tense emerged when considering death, even though both sentences were uttered one after the other<sup>3</sup>.

The lack of aliveness and emotions was also noticed during the research. It was evident that the research topic was important to Rasa – she said so herself, she spoke a lot and willingly, there were almost no additional questions. However, the attempt to have a dialogue and to establish a “here and now” relation practically failed.

### *Linas’s case*

*General information.* Linas is a 37 year-old businessman and has been working in the same private company for about 10 years. He divorced his first wife and got married for the second time. He had no children during his first marriage. During the research, together with his second wife Linas was taking care of his two-year old daughter and was expecting the birth of the second child. Also, during the research, he was studying at ISM University of Management and Economics. During the interview, Linas was rather straightforward and direct.

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<sup>3</sup> I always lived on the verge. I’m attracted to death. (56)

Table 2. Hierarchically grouped topics of Linas’s case.

<b>The topics related to the experience of aliveness</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level of physical experience – one of the main sources of the experience of aliveness.</li> <li>2. Experience of aliveness while balancing between spontaneity and control.</li> <li>3. A more intense experience of aliveness in the face of continuity and completion of time.</li> <li>4. Efforts to reflect on the experience of aliveness.</li> </ol>
<b>The experience of aliveness in interpersonal relations</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Relations with the close people – one of the main sources of the experience of aliveness:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A clearly detectable intense emotional connection with the relatives.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>The most general tendencies</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Tendency to the dominance of reflection.</li> <li>7. Positive thinking.</li> <li>8. Difficulty with speaking about feelings.</li> <li>9. Striving for explicitness and control:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Self-control:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Efforts to control personal feelings:                       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Efforts to control personal feeling during the research;</li> </ol> </li> <li>ii. Reification of personal experience;</li> </ol> </li> <li>b. Striving for explicitness and control in interpersonal relations:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Striving to clearly understand and correspond to social roles;</li> </ol> </li> <li>c. Lack of self-confidence during the interview.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

The topic related directly to the experience of aliveness

**Level of physical experience – one of the main sources of the experience of aliveness.** Linas associated the experience of aliveness primarily with physical

sensations and physical movement<sup>4</sup>. The research participant believed that the necessary condition for being alive was, first of all, the ability of your body to move and sense. Having paraphrased the initial research question for himself, Linas used the concepts of “sense of life” and “being alive” rather than the original phrase of “feeling of aliveness,” which further emphasized the physical aspect of aliveness. Later on, he named it directly, i.e. the most important thing and the basis of everything were a physical body and life.

Linas revealed a slightly disassociated perception of a body and physiology, i.e. a partly mechanistic understanding of a body as an object that enclosed and indicated direction. A body was conceived as a certain vessel, which contained your own self<sup>5</sup>; as something that enclosed and limited experience.

#### The topic related to the experience of aliveness in interpersonal relations

**Relations with the close people – one of the main sources of the experience of aliveness.** The other people (i.e. the closest relatives) were necessary for Linas as the force of life that both guaranteed safety and motivated. Linas experienced his power through his ability to have children and to take care of them. Within the scale of his declared values, priority was given to stability, peace and safety. The family and his children were of greatest importance. Money was important inasmuch as the comfort of the family was guaranteed. Friends also played a significant role.

From the point of view of the content and linguistic expression, the way Linas talked about his children clearly reflected great significance attributed to them. He started speaking about them on his own initiative at the very beginning of the conversation. Although he claimed to have understood that this was the research on the world outlook of active people, he suggested focusing more on the sphere of personal life rather than work. While talking about his children, Linas used diminutive suffixes and a warm, emotional tone of speaking. In terms of content, he declared openly their importance in his current life and, most likely, in the future. His children gave sense to his own life, served as momentum in his professional career, and provided him with the possibility to take care of others.

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<sup>4</sup> Being alive means moving, means swaying, means mmm, (p), ahh, that is movement. (23-24)

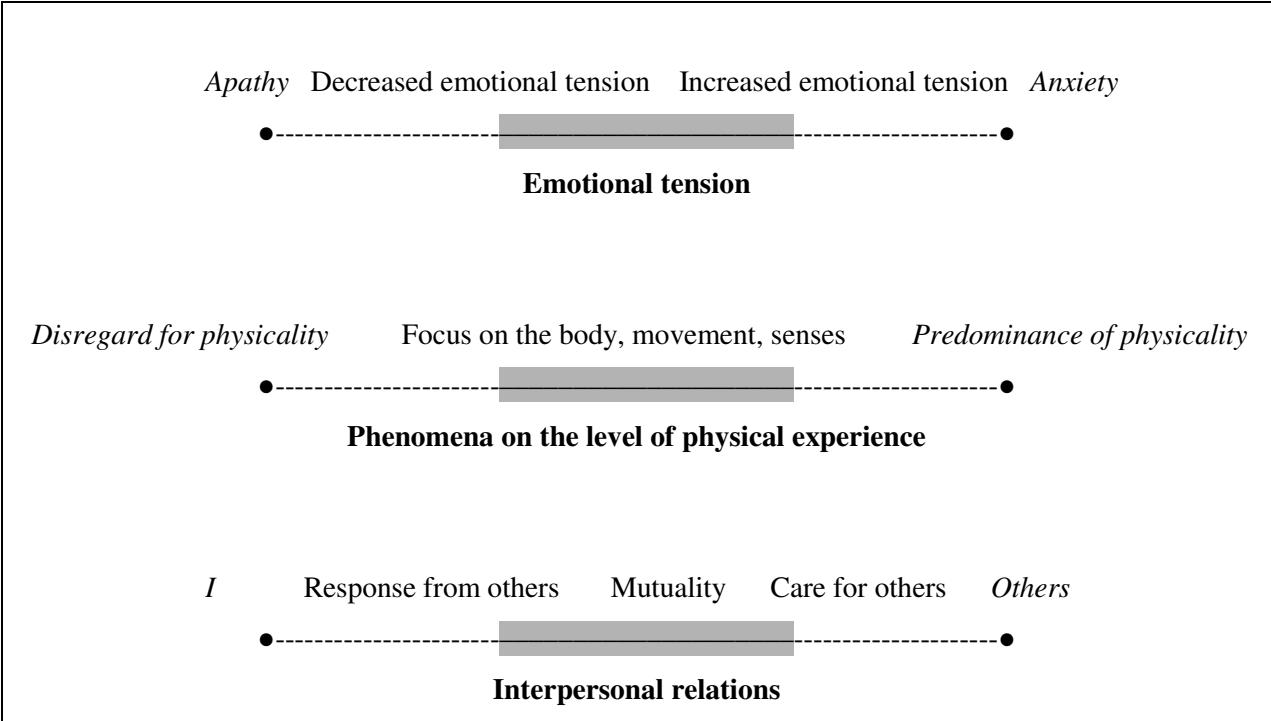
<sup>5</sup> Well, a human being is a body, and life within the body is, ahh, your own self. (106-107)

It is evident that children, love and happiness were mostly associated with aliveness by Linas<sup>6</sup>. Feelings were mostly detectable in the sentences where Linas spoke about love and children. Emotional narrative tone switched from a distant, abstract discourse to close, personal and emotionally loaded.

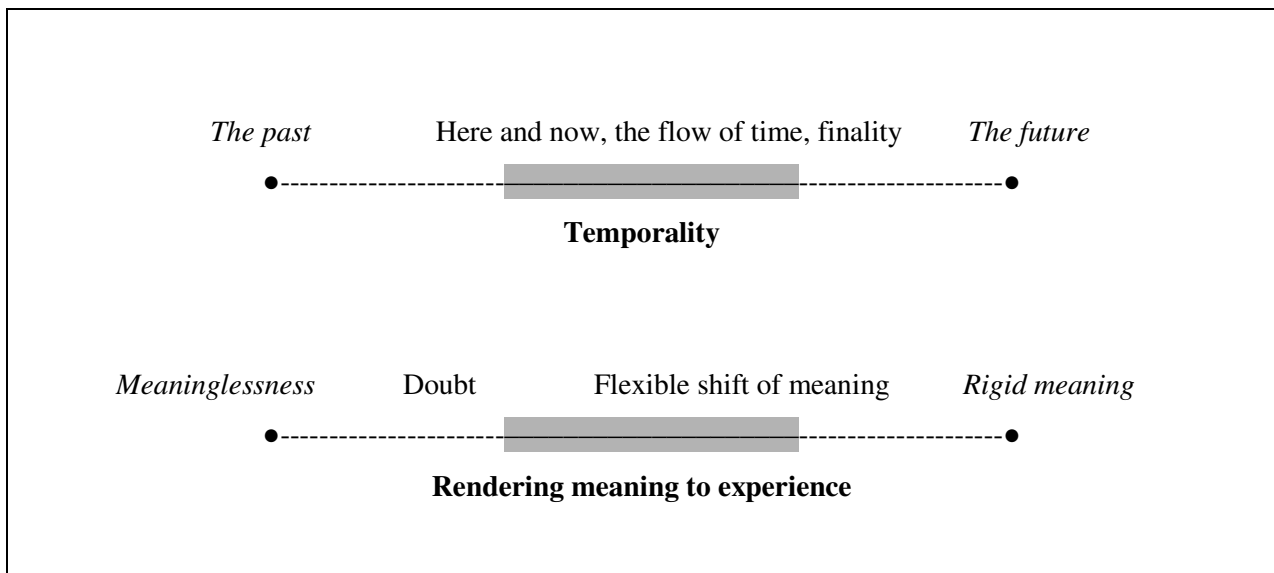
**Generalised research results**

The obtained generalised research topics have been illustrated graphically. The scheme should be interpreted as preliminary. While presenting the following model there have been no pretensions to theoretical completeness or unity. To begin with, this scheme simplifies slightly the reality of life just like any other theoretical scheme does. Graphical possibilities to depict the complexity of the received data as well as topic interrelations are rather limited. Secondly, the following scheme is based solely on the data of specific research.

Table 3. The generalisation of research results



<sup>6</sup> I think that being alive is being happy, so, I would place them together as two inseparable things. (149-150) And I've known, well, I've known my wife for about five years and and it still feels like this euphoria, like we only met each other yesterday. We're happy, and in love, and and we love our child, and we can't wait for our second baby to be born. It's that... honestly speaking, I am a very happy person. (60-63)



The following most important result tendencies can be identified from the presented main research topics as well as the generalising scheme:

1. While carrying out the research on the experience of aliveness the following five topics important to the majority of the research participants have crystallized: a) emotional tension, b) the level of physical experience, c) interpersonal relations, d) temporality and finality, and e) reflection and giving meaning to experience.
2. The results have shown that personal experience of aliveness is a subjective status changing within certain limits (i.e. the grey zone). During different stages of life or when put in different situations, people feel changes in the experience of aliveness, i.e. they feel certain liveliness or are psychologically less alive. Therefore, the experience of aliveness can be a status of shifting intensity. The intensity is determined by emotional tensions, the level of physical experience, interpersonal relations, or the alternations of time experience and reflection.
3. Aliveness was felt during the search for optimal physical, social, psychological and spiritual stimulation. The research participants normally felt the experience of aliveness as a changing status, however, it grew more intense only to a certain critical limit (i.e. the grey zone limit), which differed subjectively with each of the participants. If the limit was trespassed (i.e. the zone of a dotted line was entered), the experience of aliveness decreased (a dotted line) rather than increased or switched to a qualitatively different condition (the right and left scale poles).

4. The research revealed the significance of *emotional tension* for the experience of aliveness.

The majority of research participants felt a fairly stable feeling of aliveness while experiencing certain emotional tension or involvement. Up to a certain extent both positive and negative emotional tension encouraged a more intense experience of aliveness. In other words, the participants associated the experience of aliveness with the experience of feelings and emotions of *differing* modality.

Nevertheless, when a certain subjective critical limit of emotional tension was reached, the experience of aliveness grew less intense rather than increased or simply transformed into other conditions such as anxiety or apathy.

5. The research has revealed that *the phenomena on the level of physical experience* served as one of the most important sources of the experience of aliveness. Stable experience of aliveness was felt only by those research participants who remained active physically and focused on the physical level of the world. Excessive tendency to extremities in this sphere (e.g. predominance of physicality or its disregard) was also related to the decrease of the experience of aliveness.

6. The research has shown the significance of *interpersonal relations* for the experience of aliveness. It turned out that the experience of aliveness was related closely to the nature of interpersonal relations among the research participants. Those research participants who maintained meaningful interpersonal relations experienced the feeling of aliveness almost all the time.

More intense experience of aliveness was felt in the situations that involved admiration or erotic relations, the feedback from the others, and in similar situations that involved the reaction of another person. Stronger experience of aliveness was also felt by those research participants who took more care of others than themselves (i.e. were raising their children, taking care of their relatives, etc.).

Yet here a certain limit and balance are also important. The research participants who focused too much on themselves or the others felt a decreased experience of aliveness through interpersonal relations.

7. The research results have shown that the peculiarities of the understanding of time are extremely important for the experience of aliveness. The research participants who managed to feel the time “here and now” showed stable experience of aliveness.

The research participants claimed that the feeling of the flow of time, the realisation of their own age and finality encouraged them to feel the experience of aliveness more intensely. Nevertheless, excessive concern about the future and inevitable death in the future were frequent obstacles for the experience of aliveness. Too much attention on the past also encouraged the same tendencies, i.e. weak emotional involvement into a “here and now” situation and the related consequence – reduced experience of aliveness.

8. The research has revealed the significance of rendering meaning to experience for the experience of aliveness. Those research participants, who were typically flexible and doubtful, felt fairly stable experience of aliveness. Excessively fixed ways of attributing meanings to experience determined great, “dead” rigidity; whereas the inability to give meaning to personal experience gave rise to the condition of meaninglessness.
9. Having analysed the importance of each topic separately, the following common tendency has been observed: *emotional involvement* is the most important criterion for the experience of aliveness. Everything that encouraged emotional involvement of the research participants into a certain situation, activity or relations enabled them to feel more alive.
10. Taking into consideration the subjective definitions of the experience of aliveness by the research participants as well as the obtained generalised results, the following phenomenological definition of the experience of aliveness has been formulated:

*The experience of aliveness is a subjective status of emotional involvement of varying intensity, the main sources of which are the phenomena on the level of physical experience and interpersonal relations.*

## DISCUSSION

In the Discussion chapter of the thesis the following topics have been discussed and interpreted in the literary context:

1. A phenomenological definition of the experience of aliveness;
2. The importance of the phenomena on the level of physical experience to the experience of aliveness;
3. The significance of activity for the experience of aliveness;
4. The significance of interpersonal relations for the experience of aliveness;
5. The significance of temporality and completion for the experience of aliveness;
6. The significance of reflection and rendering meaning for the experience of aliveness;
7. Limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.

The obtained research results have been analysed with reference to the works by theoreticians of existential psychology. The research results correspond completely with the theoretical model of the four dimensions of experience (i.e. physical, social, psychological and spiritual) described by E. van Deurzen (1997). This is one of the most important models, on the basis of which the experience of aliveness through interpersonal relations as well as the significance of the phenomena on the level of physical experience have been analysed. The concept of “courage to be” by Paul Tillich (1999) has also been employed in order to reveal the significance of the phenomena on the level of physical experience for the experience of aliveness. With reference to the latter author, the discussion on the mutual relation between vitality and aliveness has been developed, and the statement that vitality of a human being is not merely a biological function that could be explained separately from intentionality and consciousness has been made. As the result, the research has shown that vitality and aliveness are closely interconnected. The significance of interpersonal relations has been analysed with the help of the ideas of representatives of the theory on psychological intersubjectivity (Stolorow, 1992; Stern, 2004). The results of the performed research have somewhat expanded the understanding of the experience of aliveness through interpersonal relations. Certain interpersonal relations that encouraged the experience of



aliveness have been indicated. Mutual relationship and the importance of the relationship to an individual have been listed as the two main criteria. The significance of activity and rendering meaning to the experience of aliveness have been analysed on the basis of logotherapy by Viktor Frankl (1998). The discussion as to whether the usefulness of activity could be identified with the experience of aliveness has been carried out. The ideas by Medard Boss (1971) have been employed for the analysis of temporality. The differences among varying ways of experiencing temporality (i.e. of linear, cyclic or cellular nature) and their relation to the experience of aliveness have been discussed. While discussing the results, attention has been paid to the analysis of the nature of the phenomenon of emotional involvement by placing greater emphasis on the importance of optimal emotional tension and the ability to feel the moment of “here and now.” Verbalisation difficulties experienced by the research participants while speaking about their feelings, emotions, and the experience of temporality and completion have been discussed. The question has been raised as to whether the fact that the research participants found it difficult to put psychological and spiritual phenomena in words could have had an impact on the emphasis of the phenomena on the level of physical experience.

### **Limitations of the research and recommendations for further research**

Generalisation and application possibilities of the results of the performed research are restricted by the peculiarities of the applied method, i.e. a small number of research participants and the uniqueness of the research group.

Dependant on the set research goals, it is highly recommended that further research should be carried out with a) a more homogeneous group of research participants or b) that a different research participant selection strategy be employed, with the help of which the results obtained during this research could be further developed and revised.

Although certain factors that have a significant impact on the experience of aliveness of an individual (i.e. emotional tension, the phenomena on the level of physical experience, interpersonal relations, the experience of temporality, and the ability to

render meaning to personal experience) have been highlighted during the research, their importance as well as their link to the experience of aliveness need further revision.

The research has emphasized the basic and hardest to overcome difference between process and structure. It is possible to feel alive through the relationship that has been established during a certain research situation and it is possible to speak *about* the experience of aliveness as structural consequence. However, this research has posed many issues concerning the limits of scientific knowledge, the possibility of adequate methodological access and reduction of rich life experience, when attempts to feel phenomena verbally are insufficient. All these questions need to be discussed further.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The experience of aliveness is a subjective status of emotional involvement of varying intensity, the main sources of which are the phenomena on the level of physical experience and interpersonal relations.
2. Aliveness is experienced through the search for optimal balance between insufficient and excessive physical stimulation.
3. The experience of aliveness was instigated by open, mutual and emotionally significant relations with other people.
4. The experience of aliveness is related to the ability of an individual to feel the wholeness of all temporality dimensions (i.e. the past, the present, and the future), which is experienced through the feeling of the flow of time and the ability to feel the moment of “here and now” more fully.
5. The understanding of finality is one of potential sources of the experience of aliveness. Aliveness is felt through the search for optimal balance between the understanding of personal completion and the power of an individual to discover possibilities of life irrespective of inevitable threat of nothingness.
6. The ability to render to meaning to personal experience is one of potential sources of the experience of aliveness. Aliveness is experienced through the search for optimal balance between flexible and rigid ways of giving meaning to the world.

7. The experience of aliveness is felt through the search for optimal physical, social, psychological, and spiritual stimulation.

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## REZIUMĖ

**Problemos aktualumas.** Disertacijoje nagrinėjama tema remiasi egzistencine fenomenologine psichologijos paradigma.

Disertacijoje *buvimas* apibrėžiamas kaip intersubjektyviai patiriamas, kintamas ir kalba iki galo neišreiškiamas gyvenimo procesas, kuris atsiskleidžia per konkretų gyvenimo turinį kasdienybėje. Buvimo kaip proceso prigimtis ir sunkumas iki galo užčiuopti jį kalba kelia keblumų ieškant metodologinės prieigos, tinkančios šiam fenomenui tirti.

Fenomenologinės filosofijos atstovai (Husserl, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1982, 2000) teigia, kad būtent *patyrimo* analizė būtų adekvati prieiga prie žmogaus gyvenamojo pasaulio su jo unikaliomis prasmėmis. Disertacijoje *buvimo patyrimas* apibrėžiamas kaip subjekto atliekamo savo buvimo struktūravimo padarinys. Buvimo struktūravimas vyksta reflektuojant ir mėginant įvardyti buvimą žodžiais.

Šiame darbe buvimo ir buvimo patyrimo skirtumai nagrinėjami pasitelkiant E. Spinelli (2007) savasties teoriją, kurioje autorius įveda dvi naujas sąvokas: „worlding“ (pasaulėbūtis) ir „worldview“ (pasaulėvaizdis). Išanalizavus buvimo ir buvimo patyrimo skirtumus pagal Spinelli savasties koncepciją, padaryta išvada, kad buvimo patyrimas yra dvilypis reiškinys – jis nusako, *ka* ir *koku būdu* patiria subjektas.

Siekiant pateikti tikslesnę buvimo patyrimo sampratą, remiantis egzistencine literatūra (May, 1983; Spinelli, 1997, 2007; Binswanger, 1946; Frankl, 1998, 2007; van Deurzen, 1998; Yalom, 2005), disertacijoje pasiūlytas preliminarus teorinis buvimo patyrimo modelis. Išskirti trys aspektai:

- gyvybingumo išgyvenimas;
- gyvumo išgyvenimas;
- autentiškumo išgyvenimas.

Šio modelio funkcija – teoriniu požiūriu padaryti buvimo patyrimo sampratą aiškesnę. Tačiau jis turėtų būti vertinamas kaip preliminarus ir tikslinamas remiantis tyrimų rezultatais.

Disertacijoje koncentruotasi į vieną iš išvardytų buvimo patyrimo aspektų – gyvumo išgyvenimą. Jis pasirinktas dėl aktualumo klinikinei praktikai, taip pat dėl to,

kad gyvumo išgyvenimas galėtų būti bazinis patyrimas, sudarantis sąlygas autentiškumui išgyventi.

Teorinė gyvumo išgyvenimo buvimo patyrimo analizė ir disertacijos tyrimas remiasi intersubjektyvumo koncepcija. Išanalizavus gyvumo išgyvenimą per intersubjektyvumo koncepcijos prizmę, padaryta išvada, kad tarpasmeniniai santykiai yra vienas svarbiausių gyvumo išgyvenimo šaltinių. Tačiau jų reikšmė dar turėtų būti tikslinama.

Kritinė literatūros analizė leido išskirti šias problemines sritis:

1. Nėra aiškiai aprašyta fenomenologinė buvimo fenomeno struktūra.
2. Iškyla bendros terminologijos problema kalbant apie sąvokas „gyvumas“, „gyvybingumas“, „buvimas“, „būtis“, „buvimo patyrimas“, „jausmas, kad esu“ ir kt.
3. Pasiūlytas teorinis buvimo patyrimo modelis turi būti tikslinamas ir tikrinamas, remiantis tyrimais.
4. Analizuojant buvimo patyrimą pagal E. Spinelli savasties koncepciją, išryškėjo būtinybė atsakyti į klausimą, *kas* yra gyvumo išgyvenimas ir *kokiu būdu* subjektas jį patiria.
5. Nėra iki galo atsakyta į klausimus apie tarpasmeninių santykių reikšmę gyvumo išgyvenimui bei apie juslinio patyrimo svarbą gyvumo patyrimui.

Apibendrinus šiuos aspektus, darbe suformuluota bendroji problema ir konkretesni tyrimo tikslai. Bendroji problema – gyvumo išgyvenimo sampratos neaiškumas. Jis susijęs su mėginimų susitarti dėl sąvokų stoka, metodologinės prieigos keblumais, psichoterapinio darbo pavyzdžių ir teorijos integracijos trūkumu. Konkretesni tyrimo tikslai: siekis detaliau aprašyti gyvumo išgyvenimo fenomeno struktūrą ir atskleisti, kaip gyvumo išgyvenimui yra priskiriamos reikšmės.

### **Tyrimo naujumas ir aktualumas**

- Nagrinėjamas gyvumo išgyvenimas santykiuose. Nors apskritai psichologijos moksle ir ypač praktikoje skiriama daug dėmesio tarpasmeniniams santykiams analizuoti, jų mokslinių tyrimų vis dar reta.

- Pasirinktas tyrimo metodas – interpretacinė fenomenologinė analizė – leidžia nagrinėti gyvumo išgyvenimą remiantis dviejų skirtingų šaltinių duomenimis: tyrimo dalyvio pasakojimo turiniu ir stebėjimu, kaip gyvumas išgyvenamas esant konkrečiam santykiui su tyrėja.
- Tyrimo dalyvių atrankos strategija leidžia sugretinti du skirtingus požiūrius į tą patį fenomeną, o tai fenomenologiniuose tyrimuose gana reta.
- Gyvumo išgyvenimo fenomeno samprata galėtų suteikti naujų išvalgų, kurias būtų galima pritaikyti konsultuojant apatiškus, depresija sergančius pacientus, atliekant jų terapiją.

### **Tyrimo tikslai**

3. Aprašyti gyvumo išgyvenimo fenomenologinę struktūrą.
4. Atskleisti reikšmių gyvumo išgyvenimui priskyrimo dėsningumus.

### **Tyrimo uždaviniai**

1. Ištirti tris verslo įmonėse dirbančius vadovus ir tris depresija sergančius asmenis.
2. Aprašyti kiekvieno tyrimo dalyvio gyvumo išgyvenimo fenomenologinę struktūrą.
3. Suformuluoti bendrą fenomenologinį gyvumo išgyvenimo apibrėžimą arba pagrįsti, kodėl negalima to padaryti.
4. Išskirti pagrindines gyvenimo sritis (aplinkybes, kontekstą), kurias tyrimo dalyviai, kalbėdami apie savo gyvumo išgyvenimą, akcentuoja dažniausiai.
5. Išanalizavus tyrimo dalyvių gyvumo išgyvenimo panašumus ir skirtumus:
  - 5.1. Atskleisti gyvumo išgyvenimo juslinėje sferoje dėsningumus.
  - 5.2. Atskleisti gyvumo išgyvenimo tarpasmeniniuose santykiuose dėsningumus, remiantis gyvumo išgyvenimo tarpasmeniniuose santykiuose analize.
  - 5.3. Atskleisti kitus gyvumo išgyvenimo dėsningumus, kurie išryškės tyrime.
6. Atskleisti, kaip vyksta reikšmių gyvumo išgyvenimui priskyrimo procesas: koks jo pobūdis, kokiomis prielaidomis vadovaudamiesi tyrimo dalyviai struktūruoja gyvumo išgyvenimą.

**Ginamasis teiginys.** Gyvumo išgyvenimas yra subjektyvi, kintamo intensyvumo emocinio įsitraukimo būseną, patiriama optimalios fizinės, socialinės, psichologinės ir dvasinės stimuliacijos paieškos procese.

## **METODAS**

**Tyrimo schema.** Atlikti bandomasis ir pagrindinis tyrimai.

**Tyrimo dalyviai.** Tyrime dalyvavo 2 vyrai ir 4 moterys. Dalyvių amžius 35–63 metai.

Tyrimo dalyvių atranka buvo grindžiama tarpasmeninių santykių specifika – siekta atrinkti dalyvius, kurių tarpusavio santykių kokybė ryškiai skirtųsi.

Dalis dalyvių (2 moterys, 1 vyras) – tai ISM Vadybos ir ekonomikos universitete studijuojantys ir vadovaujantį darbo verslo srityje dirbantys vadovai. Atliekant tyrimą jie palaikė aktyvius ir gana sėkmingus tarpasmeninius santykius. Kiti tyrimo dalyviai (2 moterys, 1 vyras) atliekant tyrimą gydėsi psichiatrinės ligoninės stacionare nuo depresijos. Jų tarpasmeniniai santykiai buvo susilpnėję, kontaktai su kitais žmonėmis reti, įtempti ir (arba) jų netenkinantys.

Formaliai tyrimo dalyviai gali būti suskirstyti į dvi grupes, tačiau analizuojant rezultatus visi jie buvo vertinami kaip tiriamo fenomeno – gyvumo išgyvenimo – ekspertai. Siekta, kad atliktas tyrimas prisidėtų prie bendresnės problemos – gyvumo išgyvenimo fenomeno struktūros aiškinimo.

**Tyrimo procedūra.** Duomenys surinkti naudojant nestruktūruoto interviu su visiems dalyviams vienodu pradiniu klausimu metodą.

Su dalyviais susitikta du kartus – pirmąkart užmegztas kontaktas, antrąkart atliktas interviu.

### ***Instrukcija tyrimo dalyviams:***

Perspėjama, kad interviu bus įrašomas į diktofoną, gaunamas sutikimas.

*Esu Vilniaus universiteto doktorantė. Šiuo metu rašau disertaciją ir atlieku su ja susijusį tyrimą. Jis yra konfidencialus. Turiu vieną platų klausimą, ir norėčiau, kad į jį atsakytumėte. Prašau pasidalyti savo mintimis apie tai, ką Jums reiškia jaustis gyvam (-*



ai). *Prašyčiau neskubėti ir ramiai, pasvarstant atsakyti į šį klausimą. Norėčiau, kad pradėtumėte ir kalbėtumėte kuo plačiau, kol jausitės baigęs (-usi). Vėliau, jeigu bus kas nors neaišku, užduosiu papildomų klausimų. Taigi, pagrindinis klausimas, į kurį prašau atsakyti, yra toks: „Ką jums reiškia jaustis gyvam (-ai)?“*

Pabaiga

*Gal turite kokių nors klausimų ar pastabų, susijusių su šiuo interviu?*

**Duomenų analizės procedūra.** Gauti duomenys analizuoti remiantis interpretacinės fenomenologinės analizės (*Interpretative phenomenological analysis*) metodu (Smith, 2009).

Analizuojat tyrimo duomenis, atlikti šie žingsniai: interviu atranka; interviu transkribavimas; atidus teksto skaitymas, supratimas; refleksyvios pastabos, jų identifikavimas; aprašomoji ir interpretacinė analizė; konkretesnių temų apjungimas į bendras temas, arba klasterius; darbo su pagalbinais tyrėjais organizavimas; atveju supervizijos; atveju apibendrinimas; aprašomoji atveju statistika; rašymo etapu pristatomos galutinės išskirtos atveju temos.

Papildomi dokumentai, naudoti analizėje: refleksyvieji dienoraščiai, depresija sergančių tyrimo dalyvių ligos istorijos ir aprašomoji atveju statistika

**Tyrimo pagrindumas.** Siekiant pagrįsti tyrimą, remtasi tyrėjos pasirengimu atlikti fenomenologinius tyrimus, taip pat taikytos kitos tyrimo duomenų analizės patikimumą užtikrinančios procedūros: pagalbinių atveju tyrėjų dalyvavimas analizuojant ir atveju supervizijos.

## **SVARBIAUSI REZULTATAI IR IŠVADOS**

1. Gyvumo išgyvenimas yra subjektyvi, kintamo intensyvumo emocinio įsitraukimo būseną, kurios pagrindiniai šaltiniai – fizinio patyrimo matmens fenomenai ir tarpasmeniniai santykiai.
2. Gyvumas išgyvenamas ieškant optimalios pusiausvyros tarp nepakankamos ir perdėtos fizinės stimuliacijos.

3. Gyvumo išgyvenimą teikė atviri, abipusiai ir emociškai reikšmingi santykiai su kitais žmonėmis.
4. Gyvumo išgyvenimas yra susijęs su subjekto gebėjimu patirti visų laikiškumo matmenų – praeities, dabarties ir ateities – visumą kaip laiko tėkmės pojūtį, bei gebėjimu kuo visavertiškiau gyventi „čia ir dabar“ momentu.
5. Baigtinumo įsisąmoninimas yra vienas iš potencialių gyvumo išgyvenimo šaltinių. Gyvumas išgyvenamas ieškant optimalios pusiausvyros tarp savo baigtinumo įsisąmoninimo ir subjekto galios atskleisti savo gyvenimo galimybes nepaisant neišvengiamos nebūties grėsmės.
6. Gebėjimas įprasminti savo patyrimą yra vienas iš potencialių gyvumo išgyvenimo šaltinių. Gyvumas išgyvenamas ieškant optimalios pusiausvyros tarp lanksčių ir rigidiškų pasaulio įprasminimo būdų.
7. Gyvumo išgyvenimas patiriamas ieškant optimalios fizinės, socialinės, psichologinės ir dvasinės stimuliacijos.

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## TRUMPA INFORMACIJA APIE DOKTORANTĘ

Jelena Šalaj – psichologijos magistrė (2004m.), psichologijos doktorantė (2004-2011m.). Doktorantūros studijų metais doktorantė aktyviai domėjosi kokybinių tyrimų metodais psichologijoje. Ji dalyvavo tarptautiniuose šiai temai skirtuose mokymuose ir konferencijose, kuriuose susipažino su fenomenologine, fenomenologine-interperacine analize, video analize bei kitomis kokybinių tyrimų taikymo psichologijoje galimybėmis. Nuo 2004m., dirbo psichologe įvairiose insitucijose: konsultacinėje firmoje „ELM projektai“, Lietuvos Raudonojo Kryžiaus draugijos (LRKD) paramos prieglobsčio prašytojams ir pabėgėliams skyriuje, Vilniaus universiteto Psichologinių tyrimų ir inovacijų mokymo centre (PTMC). Nuo 2011m., dirba tyrimų veiklos grupės vadove „Kūrybinių partnerysčių“ projekte. Doktorantė yra publikavusi mokslinių straipsnių, taip pat rašo psichologiją populiarinančius straipsnius bei straipsnius kultūros tematika.

Mokslinių interesų sritys: egzistencinė psichologija, kokybinių tyrimų metodai psichologijoje, kūrybiškumo psichologija.

## PUBLIKACIJOS DISERTACIJOS TEMA

1. Šalaj, J. Kočiūnas, R. (2011). Fenomenologinė gyvumo išgyvenimo struktūra: verslo įmonėse dirbančių vadovų patyrimas. *Socialinis darbas*, Nr. 10 (2).
2. Šalaj, J. (2011). Buvimo patyrimas: sampratos problematika egzistencinėje-fenomenologinėje psichologijoje. *Tarptautinis psichologijos žurnalas: biopsichosocialinis požiūris*, 8, 115-126.

## **BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT POST-GRADUATE STUDENT**

Jelena Šalaj was granted the Master's degree in Psychology in 2004. From 2004 until now, she has been studying in the post-graduate (Doctoral) programme. During the years of post-graduate studies, Šalaj has shown great enthusiasm about qualitative research methods in psychology. Moreover, she has participated in various international trainings and conferences on the subject, where she has had an opportunity to learn more about the phenomenological as well as interpretative-phenomenological analysis, video analysis, and other means of qualitative research applicable in psychology. Also, since 2004, Jelena Šalaj has worked as a psychologist in various institutions, such as the consultancy agency *ELM projektai*, the Department of Assistance for Refugees and Asylum Seekers of the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, and the Psychological Innovations and Research Training Centre of the Vilnius University. Since 2011, Šalaj has been employed as the head of the research group of the project "Creative Partnerships." The student has already published both scientific and cultural articles and has written numerous articles to popularise the subject of psychology.

The main scientific spheres are the following: existential psychology, qualitative research methods in psychology, psychology of creativity.

## **RELEVANT SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS**

1. Šalaj, J. Kočiūnas, R. (2011). Phenomenological Structure of Feeling of Aliveness: Head-Managers' Experience. *Social Work*, Nr. 10 (2).
2. Šalaj, J. (2011). The Concept of Experience of Being in Existential-Phenomenological Psychology. *International Journal of Psychology: a Biopsychosocial Approach*, 8, 115-126.