

MARLENA KAŻMIERSKA

"THE EXPERIENCE OF ENDOMETRIOSIS AS A CHRONIC ILLNESS IN THE BIOGRAPHIES OF FEMALE STUDENTS."

*Endometriosis is an incurable chronic disease that affects around 2 million girls and women in Poland, and approximately 180 million individuals worldwide. It is referred to by some researchers as a hellish disease or a chameleon among illnesses.*

*It has a broad range of symptoms, affecting nearly every area of psychosocial functioning, including the direction and pace of self-development, education, and psychophysical well-being.*

*For this reason, nowadays endometriosis is increasingly becoming a subject of scientific research not only in the field of medicine but also in social and humanistic sciences. The interdisciplinary approach to endometriosis has only been noticeable in the last 20 years, when psychological, sociological, anthropological, and pedagogical studies on this topic emerged.*

*It is worth mentioning that there is the limited amount of pedagogical analyses concerning the issue of endometriosis during adolescence. It occurs during the realization of the main developmental tasks of youth and 'emerging adulthood,' involving pivotal life choices.*

*Experiencing endometriosis at such a young age carries a series of consequences and impacts the future of the affected individual. For this reason, it should be a subject of interest within the field of pedagogy.*

*The aim of the doctoral thesis is to present the experience of endometriosis as a chronic disease in the context of illness trajectories within the biographies of young women, self-perception in various social roles, and daily functioning within micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosocial structures.*

*To achieve this, a narrative-biographical method was used to examine 23 female students diagnosed with endometriosis. The thesis consists of four parts: theoretical, methodological, analysis of research results, and recommendations. It was demonstrated that endometriosis constituted a category of 'disrupted life of adolescents and young adults' and had an impact on nearly all the areas of life and functioning quality of the respondents as outlined in the research project.*

*It's worth mentioning that the experience of the disease determined their educational path and professional career. The impact of endometriosis on self-perception in social roles, feelings of self-attractiveness, femininity, and sexuality was also indicated, along with the occurrence of psychological disturbances. Furthermore, the illness also altered the quality of family and interpersonal relationships.*

*It was also found that the disease, its symptoms, associated feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, as well as coping strategies adopted, shape the values system embraced by individuals and the assigning of meanings to the surrounding reality and experiences. The dissertation also formulated needs, issues, expectations, demands, and gaps in the healthcare and support system for individuals with endometriosis in Poland. It's important to emphasize that a lack of systemic support for this group of patients has been revealed, highlighting the urgent need for changes in this area. These and many other studies confirm the low societal awareness of endometriosis in the public space, including educational institutions. Therefore, there is a need for disseminating knowledge on this topic, which should be a subject of extensive analysis within pedagogy, especially in health pedagogy.*