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## Fatherly Values in the Process of Raising Children – Research Report

### Ojcowskie wartości w procesie wychowania dzieci – doniesienie z badań

**ABSTRACT:** In contemporary Polish society, the family, regardless of the understanding of this concept, is still a value. The position and role of fathers changes from the absent person, who makes the effort to support the family, often far from home, to the father who takes care of the child. He is also a father whose position has been shaken due to the importance of women in the economic sphere, he is lost and uncertain, and in the common opinion, on the one hand, he is supposed to be strong and ambitious, and on the other hand, tender and sensitive. After all, he is a committed father, caring about his children's affairs. The world of values represented by contemporary fathers It often determines the view of the world of their children, who grow up and copy the patterns present in their families. The text of the article contains fragments of a broader study on the importance of fathers in the lives of children of early school age. In this analysis, which brings this issue closer, the opinions of the oldest and youngest fathers regarding the values they pass on to their children at early school age are subjected. A total of 699 fathers aged 30 to 50 took part in the study. The research was conducted in Polish in 2021–2022 using a diagnostic survey.

**KEYWORDS:** father, fatherhood, family, child.

**STRESZCZENIE:** We współczesnym polskim społeczeństwie rodzina, niezależnie od rozumienia owego pojęcia, stanowi nadal wartość. Pozycja i rola ojców zmienia się, poczynając od osoby nieobecnej, podejmującej trud utrzymania rodziny, często daleko od domu, po ojca przejmującego opiekę nad dzieckiem. To także ojciec, którego pozycja, w związku ze znaczeniem kobiet w sferze ekonomicznej, została zachwiana. Jest zagubiony i niepewny, a w powszechnym mniemaniu, z jednej strony ma być silny i ambitny, z drugiej natomiast,

czuły oraz wrażliwy. W końcu to ojciec zaangażowany, troszczący się o sprawy dzieci. Świat wartości, który reprezentują współcześni ojcowie niejednokrotnie determinuje spojrzenie na świat ich dzieci, które dorastając powielają wzory obecne w ich rodzinach. Artykułu zawiera fragmenty szerszego opracowania dotyczącego znaczenia ojców w życiu dzieci w wieku wczesnoszkolnym. W niniejszej analizie, która przybliży to zagadnienie, poddano opinii ojców najstarszych i najmłodszych wiekiem dotyczące wartości przekazywanych przez nich dzieciom w wieku wczesnoszkolnym. W badaniach wzięło udział ogółem 699 ojców w wieku od 30 do 50 lat. Badania przeprowadzono na terenie Polski w latach 2021–2022 za pomocą sondażu diagnostycznego.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: ojciec, ojcostwo, rodzina, dziecko, wartości.

## Introduction

In the 20th century due to the intensification of industry, urbanization and migration processes and rapid development of education and science, family ties became weaker and father's position and functioning in the family changed. The result of industrial revolution, first of all, was the role of father as the family breadwinner not a guardian or a decision-maker. Two world wars supported the absence of fathers and women were forced to take over traditional fathers' functions. Women cared for their children, trying to prevent any everyday troubles. On the contrary, fathers tried to show the children how to overcome the hardships of life. The image of father was also weakened, among other things, by intensifying feminist movement. Traditional features of the roles of the husband and father have been effaced because of partner family lifestyles. A man is becoming a post-modern father, so he mothers his children. Contemporary father should manage this challenge. Sometimes it causes many distress and a sense of loss. Everything in the family is shared between father and his children, who occupy a central place in a family. The management theory is no longer the basis of father's position. The egotism that has prevailed in families causes a change in the system of values that parents pass on to their children. The lack of an ordered world that operates according to a specific system of values is no longer valid. Flexibility in interpreting the regulation of interpersonal relations causes chaos not only moral. The ability of children to function in the postmodern world forces parents to pass on values that, on the one hand, will allow them to cope with everyday situations, and on the other hand, will shape the right moral backbone.

## Images of modern fathers

Parents are the most important source of information about the world for children, a role model, and later an object of identification. The family is the first educational environment that supports and helps in satisfying basic

needs. The nature and quality of experiences provided by parents to a child in the first years of life plays an important role in the process of acquiring important competences that determine the course of his or her further development and quality of life not only in preschool and school age, but also in adulthood [Harwas-Napierała, 2009, pp. 11–23].

The presence of the father in the family is a value that cannot be questioned. Bożena Matyjas describes a father as a person who provides a sense of security, and at the same time the child derives joy from being with him. He is a close and cordial friend, a companion on the road, a guide and a life advisor who shows children the true picture of the world [Matyjas, 2016, p. 32]. Being a father is about constantly building relationships in a changing social reality, it is about following the child, starting from the prenatal period through each stage of family development, taking into account the subsequent stages of the child's [Błasiak, 2019, p. 13].

Images of modern man are diverse, starting with an absent person, undertaking the task of supporting his family, doing the professional job, often far away from home, ending with a father taking care of his child. This is also a father who left his family (a divorce) but his contacts are limited to alimony payments. This is also a father whose position, in connection with the importance of women in the economic sphere, was shaker. Therefore, he is confused and insecure. At last, it is a dedicated father – participating in childbirth, caring about children's things. This is a man, who fights, after the divorce, for the right to participate in children's upbringing. The common perception is that, on one hand, he should be strong and ambitious, on the other hand – caring and sensitive [Musialik, 2005, pp. 169–176].

According to Barbara Wojciechowska-Charlak there are several images of a father's attitude. They both comprise a child acceptance, which has a positive impact on his/her socialization and an attitude excessively demanding, making establishing contacts more difficult. This is also an attitude of child rejection, which causes troubles in the adaptation to his/her environment, excessive nervous excitability, a lack of concentration and weakened mental immunity. Father's attitude, avoiding the contact with the child, can be the cause of his/her problems with emotional bonding, mistrust, lack of persistence pursuit of the goals and focusing on studying or excessive aggression. Father's attitude, which is excessively protecting, can cause excessive nervousness and obstinacy. They can lead to lack of resourcefulness, independence and self-reliance. Excessive concentration on the child can cause infantilism, the delay of social maturity, passivity, a lack of initiative, dependence on his/her father, compliace, or, on the contrary – overconfidence and a selfish attitude [Wojciechowska-Charlak, 2002, pp. 15–50].

Tomasz Sosnowski identifies additionally three father's images in metropolitan areas. The first one is the model of conscious and responsible father, who is like a mother. Such fathers take part actively in the process of care and upbringing of their children from an early age and support a family is not an obstacle in acting caring and educational roles. They involve in domestic work, but their relationships between family members are of subjective and partner in nature. In this family situation, fathers are understanding and they respect the needs of the child. They use a reward system, such as: endorsement, approval, cordiality, the prize money or gifts, pleasure and additional attractions. The second one is the pragmatic model of a father, in which the most important is material security and personal professional career. Material things are a priority and they overshadow the realization of care and upbringing functions. Such fathers provide very good material conditions to their children but their involvement in children's upbringing is on a non-regular basis and it is dependent on professional activity. In this model, fathers use the prize money or gifts as means of education. The last model is a father who is emotionally absent. Such fathers do not maintain material safety of their children, they are not involved in the process of upbringing. In this model fathers use penalty system, e.g. shouting, name-calling, humiliating [Sosnowski, 2011, pp. 56–78] All the above mentioned models do not appear in a pure form but they penetrate each other, depending on stage of man's life.

Contemporary fatherhood is more like the service to the children. It requires, not like in tradition – severity and distance, but emotional involvement, dealing with own experience and answers, which are being brought by a new children's generation

### **Decalogue of the contemporary father**

Parents are the most important people in children's lives. They are an important source of value for them in the complex process of upbringing. Whereas in the contemporary family pluralism of values dominates. The postmodern family has often lost the role of a transmitter of social, moral and historical values in favor of creating its own, which often causes chaos in the life of a young person. Value is dignity (in German) is beliefs about desired target states or behaviors that guide choices and evaluations and are ordered by relative importance [Wojciszke, 2012, s. 546]. The hierarchy of traditional values has been modified in favor of the possibility of choosing the values that suit us. The presence of the father in the process of passing on values that will allow the child to function in the world around him is not only important and

necessary, but impossible to replace. The father provides the child with those stimuli and models in his social and moral development which complement the models presented by the mother. When a man fully accepts fatherhood, he is obliged to become a model for his children [Białek, 2020, pp. 13–22].

Decalogue, which is suggested by Józef Augustyn SJ, includes advice how to be a good father. Security and love in a complete family, which are passed on to children, is a very important task of a father. First, he faces the challenge of building a loving marriage, and then a full and loving family, in which there is an atmosphere of harmony, family love, a sense of security and devotion. Trust in children is the foundation of true fatherhood. A father can only trust his child if he trusts himself. Trust is a good The child needs this authority and has a right to it. When a father does not have an authority in his children's eyes, he cannot give them a sense of security and support and will not be able to teach them the life wisdom. When a father does not have authority in the eyes of his children, he cannot give them a sense of security and support, and he will not be able to teach them life wisdom and thus pass on a value system that will become a compass pointing to the right solutions. Fatherly love allows you to cope with the problems of everyday life by giving support and the right example. The author points out that it begins with an internal fight with one's own weaknesses, perfecting the process of being a father in order to move on to the fight for a dignified and honest life for oneself and one's loved ones. It should be remembered that the ability to accept defeats is even more an indicator of a young person's strength than his or her victory [Augustyn, 2008, pp. 279–300].

The Father points out boundaries between good and evil. It shows the world of values that become a signpost on the further path of the young generation. Even if they do not duplicate them, they remain in their hearts and minds. Guidance and norms of behavior presented by the father should be a source of life wisdom for children. Proper communication in the mutual father-child relationship is important in this interaction, which is the basis of the bond between them. It is the foundation of mutual trust, and thus a kind of guarantee of the child's sense of security. This increases the possibility of passing on values to the young generation. The father, as a friend, guide and advisor of life, shows his children the image of the world [Lipowicz, 2014, p. 134].

Fatherhood is a process that is related to the need for continuous improvement in building relationships in a changing social reality, it is following the child through each stage of family development, taking into account subsequent developmental stages. Its task is particularly difficult due to the functioning of the individual in the postmodern era, that it is characterized by

conformism and pragmatism, manifested in the maximization of benefits, also in interpersonal relations, from the perspective of the guarantee of freedom and self-fulfillment of partners – without the need to make any obligations to each other [Jankowska, 2000, pp. 103–135].

## **Methodological basis of research**

The presented research results are part of a broader study. The aim of this analysis was to indicate possible differences in the opinions of the youngest and oldest fathers regarding their preferred values. The research problems have been formulated in the form of questions that refer to two research streams: comparative and correlational. The detailed tasks included answers to the following questions: What values do the youngest and oldest fathers prefer?, What values do the respondents pass on to their children?, Are fathers an authority for their children? The study used a diagnostic questionnaire together with a research tool – a questionnaire. Open Office spreadsheet version 4.1.7 enabled the design and analysis of data obtained from respondents.

Research was made in 2021–2022 in Poland. The study covered 669 fathers: 270 from big cities and 399 from medium-sized ones. The age of a study fathers' population was: 30–35 years – 175 respondents, 35–45 years – 414, 45–50 years – 29. The group of 7 respondents did not specify the age. The number of children in a family is as follows: 135 parents had 1 child, 403 respondents – 2 children, 131 – 3 and more. Only 7 fathers did not indicate the number of children in the family.

## **Analysis of own research results**

According to the research (Tab. 1) obtained from both groups of respondents (the youngest and the oldest), the greatest value is the family (4.94; 4.98). Age or place of residence do not determine those opinions that indicate that family is (at least in declarations) an important value for respondents. This may indicate that despite many changes in modern families, in times of uncertainty and instability, it is this that gives a sense of security. The next place in the hierarchy of values of the surveyed population is occupied by professional work. It is particularly important for the oldest respondents from large and medium-sized cities (2.66; 3.21). Material goods and social status are not priorities for modern fathers. It is worth noting, however, that education is an important factor differentiating the results of research in this matter.

Respondents from large cities with higher education more often indicated economic goods as important. It is a definite change in the image of the father, who from a person fighting for prosperity and high social status has changed into a person who devotes his time and energy to his family.

Table 1. Values preferred in the life of early school childrens' fathers

The whole by age		Family	Professional work	Material possessions	Social status	Other
30	35	4,94	2,66	2,28	1,66	0,35
45	50	4,98	3,21	2,20	1,64	0,32
A medium-sized city		Family	Professional work	Material possessions	Social status	Others
30	35	4,98	2,68	2,28	1,63	0,41
45	50	5,00	3,32	2,05	1,73	0,27
A big city		Family	Professional work	Material possessions	Social status	Others
30	35	4,89	2,62	2,29	1,70	0,27
45	50	4,95	3,00	2,47	1,47	0,42
The whole by education		Family	Professional work	Material possessions	Social status	Others
Vocational		5,00	3,01	2,46	1,56	0,13
Secondary		4,95	2,60	2,22	1,55	0,28
higher		4,91	3,04	2,17	1,75	0,55
The whole by number of children		Family	Professional work	Material possessions	Social status	Others
1		4,97	2,65	2,03	1,51	0,23
2		4,97	2,94	2,36	1,68	0,36
3		4,77	2,99	2,13	1,69	0,65

Source: own research.

The next question concerned the values that fathers pass on to their children, building the basis (Tab. 2) for their later functioning both in society and in the family. The age variable of the respondents significantly differentiates the results of the survey in this case. Honesty is a value that respondents appreciate and pass on to the youngest generation. This is especially done by the oldest fathers from medium-sized cities, with secondary education (17.24%; 30.36%), with two children. Respect and, most interestingly, love are not particularly important for the youngest generation of fathers, who declared that family is an important value for them. As it follows, the image of a loving father is rather declarative. The ethos of hard work is disappearing, as indicated by the opinions of the respondents, especially the youngest, and is not a value that, according to the surveyed fathers, will be useful to the young generation.

Table 2. Values submitted by fathers to early school children

The whole by age		Honesty	Respect	Love	Hard work
30	35	17,24%	16,55%	5,52%	5,52%
45	50	30,36%	23,21%	14,29%	7,14%
A medium-sized city		Honesty	Respect	Love	Hard work
30	35	15,85%	13,41%	6,10%	4,88%
45	50	35,14%	24,32%	10,81%	2,70%
A big city		Honesty	Respect	Love	Hard work
30	35	19,05%	20,63%	4,76%	6,35%
45	50	21,05%	21,05%	21,05%	15,79%
The whole by education		Honesty	Respect	Love	Hard work
vocational		21,51%	7,53%	7,53%	7,53%
secondary		24,77%	16,36%	9,81%	4,67%
higher		19,58%	18,40%	6,23%	7,72%
The whole by number of children		Honesty	Respect	Love	Hard work
1		17,78%	23,70%	9,63%	6,67%
2		22,33%	15,14%	6,95%	5,96%
3		20,16%	12,10%	6,45%	8,87%

Source: own research.

The image of the modern father (Tab. 3) completes the question of whether fathers feel like authorities for their children at early school age. The majority of respondents (71.03%; 78.57%) answer in the affirmative. This group is dominated by the oldest respondents with higher education and 1 child. A small group of respondents have some doubts on this subject. They are the youngest fathers, coming from large cities, with vocational education and three children. It can be assumed that the experience of raising more children and the awareness of technological progress makes this group of fathers doubt being an authority in the world of rapid change.

What to do to be able to be an authority for your children. The opinions of the surveyed fathers regarding the need to acquire competences in the field of being a father are encouraging (Tab. 4). The vast majority (68,0%;62,5%) claim that these skills do not belong to men, but should be acquired. These opinions are not particularly differentiated by the age of the respondents, although it can be noted that the youngest generation, from large cities, with higher education, more often presents such a view. Domicile. The results indicate changes in the respondents' awareness of the process of becoming a father. As the respondents indicate, they require reflection and self-improvement.



Table 3. Fathers' feelings about being an authority for their early school children

The whole by age		Yes	No	Don't know
30	35	71,03%	2,07%	26,90%
45	50	78,57%	0,00%	21,43%
A medium-sized city		Yes	No	Don't know
30	35	71,95%	2,44%	25,61%
45	50	75,68%	0,00%	24,32%
A big city		Yes	No	Don't know
30	35	69,84%	1,59%	28,57%
45	50	84,21%	0,00%	15,79%
The whole by education		Yes	No	Don't know
Vocational		62,37%	2,15%	35,48%
Secondary		68,69%	1,87%	29,44%
Higher		74,18%	0,30%	25,52%
The whole by number of children		Yes	No	Don't know
1		80,74%	2,22%	17,04%
2		68,98%	0,99%	30,02%
3		67,74%	0,00%	32,26%

Source: own research.

Table 4. Fathers' opinions on the need to learn fatherhood

The whole by age		Yes	No
30	35	68,28%	24,83%
45	50	62,5%	26,79%
A medium-sized city		yes	no
30	35	70,73%	23,17%
45	50	75,68%	13,51%
A big city		Yes	No
30	35	65,08%	26,98%
45	50	36,84%	52,63%
The whole by education		Yes	No
Vocational		63,44%	25,81%
Secondary		66,82%	26,17%
Higher		72,70%	19,88%
The whole by number of children		Yes	No
1		66,67%	24,44%
2		69,48%	22,58%
3		68,55%	26,61%

Source: own research.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the research material allows us to conclude that family is the highest value for the respondents, regardless of age, education, place of residence or the number of children. Material goods are generally not a priority for the surveyed paternal population, although their value is generally recognized by men with higher education from urban agglomerations. This builds the image of a modern father as a person for whom family values are the most important. In the process of educating the young generation, this is not always justified, because respect and love are not the basis of the canon of values. The work ethos, which is associated with effort and sacrifice, is also collapsing. A trend can be observed based on the belief that we do not live to work, but work to live.

The majority of respondents believe that they are a priority for their children. This group is dominated by the oldest respondents with higher education and 1 child. A small group of the youngest fathers, coming from large cities, with vocational education and three children, have some doubts in this regard. It can be assumed that the experience of raising more children and the awareness of technological progress makes this group of fathers doubt being an authority in the world of rapid change. The results of the study also indicate changes in the respondents' awareness of the process of becoming a father. As the respondents indicate, they require reflection and self-improvement.

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