

Parental attitudes of fathers serving the penalty of imprisonment

Postawy rodzicielskie ojców odbywających karę więzienia

Summary: The author presents the results of research aimed to show parental attitudes of fathers serving the penalty of imprisonment in the penitentiary unit. In the research two questionnaires were used: Questionnaire of the Parental Attitudes by M. Ziemska and the authorial questionnaire. Inclusive there were 153 imprisoned and 137 without criminal records fathers. The analysis of the scientific research revealed that imprisoned fathers typify statistically higher level of helplessness and emotional concentration than control group consisting of fathers without criminal records. In terms of distance there was no difference. Furthermore, it was revealed that in the field of predominance, concentration, distance and helplessness both research groups evince educationally unwanted intensity of particular attitudes. This research acknowledges the problem of parental attitudes of imprisoned fathers but also, they can be the encouragement for undertaking another research projects connected with this issue.

Keywords: *rehabilitation pedagogy, parental attitudes, imprisoned fathers*

Introduction

Parental attitudes remain in the interest of many researchers. They are important in shaping the mechanisms of social adjustment of the child. Parental attitudes determine the climate of upbringing in the family, affect the formation of the emotional bond between its members and the atmosphere in the family (Cudak, 2004). According to the definition of M. Ziemska (1973, p. 33), "the parental attitude is an acquired cognitive-aspirational-affective structure that directs the behaviour of parents towards the child. This tendency to react in a certain way towards the child must be somehow fixed in order to be called a parental attitude. Parental attitudes are usually artistic and are

subject to change as their subject changes, i.e. the child, who goes through different stages of development”.

The importance of parental attitudes in the child's life is confirmed by many authors who deal with this issue. Here is the overview of selected research results.

B. Bishop during the observation of mothers and preschool children during play found that in the absence of mother's acceptance of the child's actions, the child showed the tendency to aggressive reactions and negativism. When the mothers intervened and acted on the child's actions, the child reacted by a lack of cooperation or refusal to cooperate (Bishop, 1952, p. 65, acc. to: Ziemska, 1973, p. 35).

Other studies revealed that too much parental interference in the child's play resulted in resistance of the children and hostility towards the parent. In a situation where a parent punished a child, threatened or reprimanded the child, the child reacted with increased screaming (Lafore, 1945, acc. to: Ziemska, 1973, p. 35). Studies conducted by A.L. Baldwin, J. Kalhorn, F.H. Breese (acc. to: Ziemska, 1973, p. 36) emphasized the impact on intellectual development of children of certain types of parents' attitudes. The democratic style of parental behaviour was the most stimulating for the mental development of the child. Children raised in a democratic style were distinguished by a higher IQ and thinking was characterized by originality, planarity, perseverance and curiosity. While children of indulgent parents were characterized by the lack of originality, a lower degree of perseverance, curiosity and fantasy. The attitude protecting the child and treating him as a younger one limited his abilities and did not favour intellectual development. The children of rejecting parents were characterized by a tendency to lower the IQ. In addition, these children are not very original, persistent and curious.

Another issues raised by researchers concerned the correlation of parental attitudes and the child's achievements in school education. The authors, M.C. Shaw and B.E. Dutton said that some negative attitudes of parents towards children may lead to the development of negative attitudes towards themselves, which in turn may affect the weakening of progress in learning. Moreover, it was hypothesized that in the early school years, the mental level of children is stimulated by the attitude of acceptance on the part of the parents, and inhibited by the attitude of rejection (Shaw, 1960, p. 103-108 and 1962, p. 203-208; Hurley, 1965, acc. to: Ziemska, 1973).

The already mentioned authors A.L. Baldwin, J. Kalhorn, F.H. Breese (acc. to: Ziemska, 1973, p. 38-39) have detected a relationship between parental attitudes and the emotional life of children. In rejected children, high emotionality was found with low affective control. These children exhibited emotional instability, aggression and rebellion. While the children of parents with democratic attitudes were characterized by gentleness and cheerfulness. In addition, the aforementioned authors stated that in children of parents with democratic attitudes social development was initially slower, but with time (in school age) they reached full social maturity. They were characterized by a sense of humour, friendliness and ingenuity. They were often chosen as leaders in the group. The children of indulgent parents in school age were less socialized, uncertain and timid, non-aggressive and not very active. In the children of rejecting parents, already in the pre-school age, there was opposition to adults, and in the school age they were quarrelsome and rebellious.

The problem of parental attitudes has been the subject of Polish research for many years. As reported by numerous studies of this issue, Polish authors have managed to discover and develop many threads concerning parental attitudes.

The first research on maternal attitudes began at the Department of Social Paediatrics at the Medical Academy in Warsaw. The research was conducted by I. Bielicka, H. Olechnowicz. In 1962, M. Ziemska started her research on maternal attitudes. Under the direction of the author, a dozen or so works on intergroup comparisons in the field of parental attitudes were carried out. The results of these studies are as follows:

- incorrect parental attitudes are associated with poor adaptation to the child's school conditions,
- mothers of mentally handicapped children are overly concentrated on the child and helpless in terms of upbringing,
- greater educational helplessness characterizes parents of children poorly adapted to school conditions,
- mothers of children delayed in school education showed a high level of educational helplessness and excessive emotional concentration,
- working mothers showed a higher level of educational helplessness than intelligent mothers,
- in pathological families, mothers more often displayed inappropriate parental attitudes,

- fathers of the sick children showed a greater distance in contact with them and a tendency to tower over them,
- divorced mothers can often experience educational helplessness (Ziemska, 1973).

Apart from reports of M. Ziemska, the studies of G. Makiełło-Jarża should also be noted. The author said that “the formation of parental attitudes is influenced by, among others:

- behaviour patterns provided by parents
- emotional relations between parents and children
- degree of intellectual development conditioning the formation of more complete and better organized patterns of dynamic personality and the ability to adapt to the environment” (Makiełło-Jarża, 1970, p. 24).

The studies of M. Jurga (1975, p. 716) confirmed the thesis that girls from orphanages, due to the lack of patterns, may have difficulties in fulfilling the future role of the mother. On the other hand, among the factors that determine the behaviour of children, inappropriate parental attitudes and the predominance of the authoritarian style of education are also mentioned (Urban, 2000). In addition, research indicates that parental attitudes determine the climate of family upbringing. They affect the formation of the emotional bond between its members and the atmosphere in the family (Cudak, 2004).

In turn, the studies by B. Ostafińska-Molik and E. Wysocka (2014, p. 131) showed that the quality of the family origin (indexed by its type) determines to a small extent the variation in the range of adaptation disorders. However, some important trends have been observed, which allow to conclude that specific forms of disorders are associated with specific features of the family origin (taking into account the differences resulting from parental roles: mother and father). Other studies (2015, p. 97) of the authors revealed that internalizing disorders are significantly related to the father's educational attitudes, causing intensification of problems in interpersonal functioning. Mixed disorders are significantly associated with the mother's upbringing attitudes, triggering withdrawal, anxiety-depressive disorders and maladjusted behaviours. Externalizing disorders are associated with the educational attitudes of both parents, triggering mainly somatic complaints and depressive-anxiety disorders.

The aforementioned M. Ziemska (1973, p. 57-59) developed a typology of parental attitudes, including the main types of attitudes that already existed, but required modifications and developed and refined the types of attitudes

basing her analyses on reliable scientific research. The author divides parental attitudes into correct and incorrect. The correct parental attitudes include:

1. "Acceptance of the child, that is, accepting him as he is, with his physical features, dispositions, and his mental capabilities.
2. Cooperation with the child, proving the positive involvement and interest of the parents in the play and work of the child, as well as engaging parents in the affairs of parents and home – in accordance with the development opportunities.
3. Giving the child, appropriate to his age, reasonable freedom. As he grows up, the parents give the child a wider range of freedom, they can maintain their authority and manage the child to the extent that is desirable.
4. Recognition of the child's rights in the family as equal, without overestimating and underestimating his role. Parents respond to manifestations of child's activity in a free, non-formal and non-intrusive or dictatorial manner, adapting to the level of his developmental phase".

Among the incorrect parental attitudes, the author mentions four main incorrect attitudes, and each of them consists of a number of partial attitudes.

1. With an excessive emotional distance and parents' domination, we are dealing with an attitude that rejects the child. The child is felt as a burden. They do not like the child and do not wish for him, they have feelings of disappointment, discontent and resentment towards him.
2. With an excessive emotional distance of parents towards the child, their submission and passivity, there is a type of incorrect avoiding attitude. This attitude is characterized by a poor emotional relationship between parents and the child, or even parents' emotional indifference. Spending time with the child does not make them happy, and sometimes it is felt as difficult.
3. Another type of incorrect attitude is the over-protective type. The approach to the child is then uncritical, and it is considered to be the model of perfection. Parents treat the child as a baby, they look over him too much and are excessively latent.
4. As with the previous type, parents are overly focused on the child, but have the characteristics of domination. An overly demanding, compelling, corrective attitude arises" (Ziemska, 1973, p. 61-63).

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that specific parental attitudes guide the child's behaviour. With correct attitudes, the child establishes a lasting emotional bond, learns trust in parents, willingly interacts with parents, is persistent and capable of effort, can express emotions, is cheerful, kind, compassionate, bold, clever, smart, confident, adaptable to social situations, is loyal and solidary towards other family members, undertakes activities on its own initiative. On the other hand, the incorrect attitudes of parents, especially the rejection attitude, are conducive to shaping the child's, among others, aggressiveness, disobedience, disputation, anti-social behaviour, helplessness. With an avoiding attitude, children are unable to have higher emotions and make permanent emotional bonds, so they are emotionally unstable, antagonistic to the environment, unable to make objective judgments. They may be unable to persevere and concentrate in science, distrustful, aggressive, get into conflicts with the environment. An overly protective attitude can cause child infantilism, delay in social maturity, dependence of a child on the mother, passivity, lack of initiative, cockiness, quarrelsome, selfish and demanding attitude. The attitude of excessive demands favours shaping such features as the lack of faith in one's own abilities, uncertainty, timidity, submission, excitability lack of ability to concentrate (*ibid.*, p. 66-68).

The subject of parental attitudes of convicted fathers is not very often raised by researchers. The author of this study, managed to reach the research of Katarzyna Nawrocka (2018), who examined the parental attitudes of fathers serving the penalty of deprivation of liberty. The conducted research has shown that convicted fathers most often present a high level of concentration and predominance. The obtained result can be interpreted as the inability to properly fulfil the role of the father. Interestingly, the research of Piotrów (2009) showed that 1/3 (30.2%) of convicted mothers obtained high scores, indicating the occurrence of irregularities in the scope of educational interactions.

The presented analysis of the research results allows to conclude that, in principle, research projects within the discussed issues rarely relate to the parental attitudes of fathers serving the penalty of imprisonment. Therefore, the author of the study undertook a general analysis of this issue.

Method

The main purpose of the research is to present the parental attitudes of fathers serving a prison sentence in a penitentiary unit. In order to fully

present and consider this main goal, the following specific objectives was formulated: examining the differences between fathers serving imprisonment and fathers who are not punished in terms of parental attitudes.

Guided by the above-mentioned goals, the main research problems included in the following questions were formulated:

P₁ What is the severity of parental attitudes among fathers serving the penalty of imprisonment in such dimensions as: predominance, concentration, helplessness, distance.

P₂ What are the differences in terms of parental attitudes between fathers who serve a prison sentence and fathers who are not incarcerated.

In connection with the research problems outlined above, research hypotheses have been formulated:

H₁ It was assumed that the severity of parental attitudes (predominance, helplessness, concentration, distance) in convicted fathers is moderate and high, that is, indicates their undesirable character.

H₂ Parental attitudes differentiate the examined groups of fathers. The fathers serving a prison sentence have a higher level of: predominance, concentration, helplessness and distance.

In order to verify the above research hypothesis, the following research tools were used:

1. Questionnaire of parental attitudes of Maria Ziemska
2. Author's survey questionnaire.

Questionnaire of parental attitudes of Maria Ziemska

A standardized Parental Attitudes Questionnaire of Maria Ziemska was used to assess the parental attitudes of the examined fathers. The scales of this questionnaire measure the attitude of: predominance over the child, emotional concentration over him, distance towards the child and helplessness towards his upbringing. The scale contains 41 statements (items), including 39 diagnostic ones, and the first two, so-called buffer (have to counteract the attitude to permanent approval or disapproval of subsequent statements in the surveyed parents). The questionnaire can be used to study the attitudes of mothers and fathers of children aged 0-18.

High absolute stability coefficients (0.86) allow us to assume that the results of the parental attitudes survey are relatively constant, they are not subject to random fluctuations in time. The results of the façade, internal and

theoretical analysis allow for a positive assessment of the Questionnaire for Parents. Standards have been expressed on a standard ten scale, separately for mothers and fathers. The standard ten scale consists of 10 different units. 1-2 testify to very low results, 3-4 to low scores, 5-6 to moderate average results, 7-8 high results, and 9-10 very high results. People who have received results within 1-4 range, present the desirable educational attitudes. The results at the 7-10 level, in other words within the high scores, indicate an undesirable intensification of the given attitude in terms of upbringing. The results within 506 range indicate a moderate severity of the unwanted educational attitude (also undesirable).

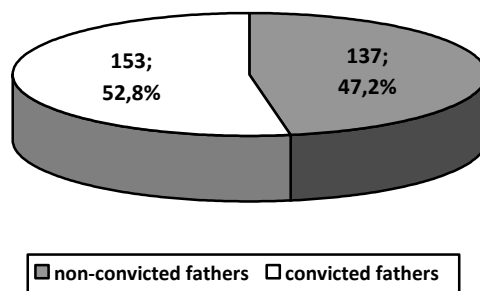
Two hypothetical dimensions: excessive concentration-excessive distance and dominance – submission, in which both extremes characterized the undesirable behaviour of parents, and the centre of optimism, were used for creating four scales. Each of them contains a pole referring to extremely undesirable behaviours and a pole referring to the desirable behaviours of parents towards the child. At the same time, the term dominance was replaced by the term of predominance, and the term submission with helplessness. The scales of this questionnaire measure the attitude of: predominance over the child, emotional concentration over him, distance to the child and helplessness towards his upbringing (Ziemska, 1981).

Author's survey questionnaire

In order to obtain basic socio-demographic data, the author's questionnaire was used. The survey questions concerned only a few basic dimensions, such as: age, marital status, education, gender.

Study group

The studies of parental attitudes of convicted and non-convicted fathers took place in 2018. Two study groups participated in the study: the criterion group consisted of fathers serving the penalty of imprisonment (N=153), and the control group were fathers who were not imprisoned (N=137) – figure 1. In total, 290 fathers were surveyed.



Source: own study

Fig. 1. Number of surveyed fathers

The most numerous group among the imprisoned fathers are men in the age group 31-40 (47.7%), and the least numerous aged 61-70 (3.3%). In the group of 41-50 years of age, there are 22% of convicted fathers. In the case of the control group, the most numerous group are fathers aged 31-40 (46.7%) and the least numerous aged 61-70 (1.4%). In turn, fathers aged 41-50 amounted to 35% of the study (table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the surveyed groups in terms of age

Age	Convicted fathers		Non-convicted fathers	
	N	%	N	%
22-30	29	18,5	6	4,4
31-40	73	47,7	64	46,7
41-50	34	22,2	48	35,0
51-60	13	8,5	17	12,4
61-70	5	3,3	2	1,4
total	153	100	137	100

Source: own study

Research results

Convicted fathers, in the scope of the scale of predominance, achieved an average score of 11,5 and non-convicted fathers 12,8. Regarding helplessness, the convicted fathers received the average result of 12,8 and non-convicted fathers 11,5. In the group of convicted fathers, the concentration is at the level 15,5 and in non-convicted fathers at 13,6. When it comes to the distance scale, the result in the group of convicted men was at the level of 4,1 and in non-convicted at 4,4.

Standards have been expressed in the ten scale. Data included in table 2 inform that in the group of convicted and non-convicted fathers, the level of predominance is at the same level – 5. Helplessness in the group of convicted and non-convicted men is at the level of 10. When it comes to concentration, the group of convicted fathers is at the level of 7, and in non-convicted fathers – at the level of 6. Distance in the group of convicted and non-convicted fathers is at the level of 7.

In the field of **predominance**, both convicted and non-convicted fathers obtained a moderate result, which indicates the undesirable predominance by parents, in terms of upbringing, over the child and their clear inclination to disregard the signals they receive from the child. **Helplessness** in the convicted and non-convicted fathers remains at the level of 10, which means very high. The sense of educational helplessness is at a high level and means significant educational helplessness, i.e. lack of coping skills. The conducted research shows that convicted fathers obtained a high score (7) in terms of **concentration**. The result shows that there is excessive emotional concentration on the child. This attitude is characterized by a relation to a child full of anxiety and tension, exaggerated care and excessive protection. Non-convicted fathers exhibit excessive emotional concentration on the child, with a tendency to exaggerated care, but moderate intensity. In terms of **distance**, it turns out that the results in both groups are high and indicate excessive distance in contact with the child, withdrawal from direct contact, lack of warmth and sensitivity in interactions (table 2).

Table 2. Average and scale results and interpretation of the result for each scale

Scale	Convicted fathers			Non-convicted fathers		
	M	Result	Result interpretation	M	Result	Result interpretation
Predominance	11,5	5	moderate	12,8	5	moderate
Helplessness	12,8	10	very high	11,5	10	very high
Concentration	15,5	7	high	13,6	6	moderate
Distance	4,1	7	high	4,4	7	high

Source: own study

The H_1 hypothesis was confirmed because the convicted fathers revealed a high level of emotional concentration and distance, and in the case

of hopelessness, very high. On the other hand, in the dominance scale range, the level of severity of this attitude is moderate. Even moderate severity of a given attitude indicates its undesirable character. To some extent, the research results coincide with the results of studies by Nawrocka (2018) that convicted fathers present the attitude of predominance and concentration.

Subsequent analyses concerned establishing differences between research groups in the field of parental attitudes. In order to determine whether there are differences between the groups of fathers in the scope of parental attitudes, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied. The Mann-Whitney U-test is used to test differences between two independent groups. It is considered a good non-parametric counterpart of the t test for independent tests (Brzeziński, 2007).

The analysis of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that in the range of predominance, the differences between groups are statistically significant $U=8815,50$; $p<0,019$. Non-convicted fathers ($R=134,62$) declare a lower level of **predominance** than non-convicted fathers ($R=157,65$). The differences between the studied groups on the statistically significant level in the scope of the **concentration** variable were also disclosed $U=7436,50$; $p<0,000$. Convicted men ($R=165,40$) achieved a higher level of emotional concentration than non-convicted men ($R=123,18$). Differences between the studied groups were found at a statistically significant level in the **helplessness** variable range $U=8338,00$; $p<0,003$. Convicted men ($R=159,50$) achieved a higher level of emotional helplessness than the non-convicted men ($R=129,86$).

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that statistically significant differences between convicted fathers and those non-convicted were revealed in the areas of predominance, helplessness and concentration. However, in the case of predominance, the higher level of this attitude is shown by non-convicted fathers. In turn, in terms of concentration and helplessness, the higher level of these attitudes is shown by convicted fathers. The statistical analysis did not show statistically significant differences in terms of distance (table 3).

*** C.F-convicted fathers; NC.F-non-convicted fathers**

The H_2 hypothesis was partially confirmed, as the differences between the groups were shown only in the case of three scales: predominance, helplessness and concentration. The convicted fathers display a higher level of helplessness and emotional concentration. In turn, in the area of predominance, the

non-convicted fathers revealed higher results. The distance does not differentiate the surveyed groups. It is hard to relate the results of the study to other studies, because the author failed to reach comparative studies between the criterion group and the control group in the parental attitudes of convicted fathers.

Table 3. Differences in parental attitudes between the convicted and non-convicted fathers

Attitude	P	U Manna Whitney	Convicted fathers (O.S) (Rang 1)	Non-convicted fathers (O.NS) (Rang 2)	Differences
Predominance	,019	8815,50	134,62	157,65	C.F<NC.F
Hopelessness	,003	8338,00	159,50	129,86	C.F>NC.F
Concentration	,000	7436,50	165,40	123,18	C.F>NC.F
Distance	n.i	9804,50	141,08	150,43	None

Source: own study

Discussion

The aim of the research was to present the parental attitudes of fathers serving the penalty of imprisonment. The analysis of the research results indicated that the convicted fathers revealed a high level of emotional concentration and distance, and in the case of helplessness, very high. In the field of predominance, the level of intensity of this attitude is moderate (this level of severity also indicates its undesirable character).

The results of the research partially confirmed the assumption that there are differences between convicted and non-convicted fathers in the area of parental attitudes. Differences between the examined groups were found in three scales: predominance, helplessness and concentration. The convicted fathers exhibit a higher level of intensity if helplessness and emotional concentration. In turn, in the field of predominance, non-convicted fathers have a higher level of this attitude. In terms of distance, these differences are not disclosed.

It is astonishing that no surveyed group of parents obtained a score of 1-4, in terms of predominance, concentration, helplessness and distance, which would indicate a desirable attitude. These results of particular attitudes prove that fathers from both research groups exhibit undesirable upbringing intensification of attitudes. It should be added that the statements contained in the

questionnaire were formulated in such a way that respondents' answers can be declarative in nature.

Diagnosis of parental attitudes of convicted fathers is important for undertaking appropriate resocialization and therapeutic actions towards fathers who use abnormal parental attitudes.

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