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## Contents

<b>Joanna M. ŁUKASIK</b> Introduction	5
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### STUDIES

<b>Gali-Aleksandra BELTRÁN, Elena ANATOLIEVNA ZHIZHKO, Martín BELTRÁN-SAUCEDO</b> Historical and modern aspects of civic-ethical education in technical middle school: Mexican context Historyczne i współczesne aspekty edukacji obywatelsko-etycznej w szkole średniej technicznej: kontekst meksykański	9
<b>Łukasz BUKSA</b> Perspectives on spiritual life during the smartphone age Perspektywy życia duchowego w erze smartfonów	27
<b>Michał PIERZCHAŁA, Alicja KORNICKA, Paweł MARCZAK</b> Masculinity without violence – the application of NVC in the upbringing and education Męskość bez przemocy – zastosowanie komunikacji bez przemocy (NVC) w wychowaniu i edukacji	45
<b>Robert POCHOPIEŃ</b> The evolution of understanding of fatherhood. Attempt at synthesis Ewolucja rozumienia ojcostwa. Próba syntezy	61
<b>Marcin KĘSKA</b> Cash benefits in foster care Świadczenia pieniężne w pieczy zastępczej	77

## RESEARCH

**Karni IIRIZ MIZRAHI**

- Fostering phonological proficiency: the role of educational language games in hebrew kindergarten curricula  
Rozwijanie biegłości fonologicznej: rola edukacyjnych gier językowych w programach nauczania w przedszkolach hebrajskich 95

**Shakira MUKHTAROVA, Marzhangul BAIMUKANOVA,  
Alyona BARIKOVA**

- Research of teachers' professional readiness to work with children with deviant behaviour  
Badanie profesjonalnej gotowości nauczycieli do pracy z dziećmi wykazującymi zachowania dewiacyjne 125

**Victoria STRATAN**

- The role of transformational leadership in increasing the job satisfaction of primary education teachers  
Rola przywództwa transformacyjnego w zwiększaniu satysfakcji zawodowej nauczycieli edukacji podstawowej 147

**Mark John C. PALANCA**

- Lived experiences of tertiary religious education teachers: Basis for a synodal instructional model  
Doświadczenia życiowe nauczycieli wyższego kształcenia religijnego: podstawa synodalnego modelu dydaktycznego 163

**Katarzyna WASILEWSKA-OSTROWSKA**

- The narratives of homeless men on housing support and the role of a social worker in the process of becoming independent  
Narracje bezdomnych mężczyzn na temat wsparcia mieszkaniowego i roli pracownika socjalnego w procesie ich usamodzielniania 187

## Introduction

One of the characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century civilization is the fast development of social life, resulting from the dynamics of the technological advancements. These processes are accelerated by temporary crises, completely new phenomena and tensions in the economic, political and social and moral sphere. This, in turn, influences numerous areas of human functioning as well as institutions which focus on supporting human development, education and preparation to functioning in the unpredictable and constantly changing reality. Changes experienced transform radically the conditions and lifestyle, modify perception of the future self and affect existential situation of contemporary humans (functioning in two opposite poles: the desire to explore and experience the new reality and leverage the benefits of innovations vs. fear of that what is unknown, what can lead to potentially negative consequences and what carries the risk of uncertainty). It means that the dynamics of the changing world require constant adaptation to new situations, understanding of the world and the ability to cope with these new situations. This volume of “Labor et Educatio” joins the discourse about the human experiences outlined above.

The articles divided in two sections: Studies and Research, focus on a widely defined problems of education in the perspective of the new social trends, challenges and tasks. It means that researchers and teachers are sensitive to changes and new social phenomena which influence the subjects of education. It means being vigil and responding to the new and unknown in order to “tame” and present to the readers both, response strategies and the ways of reading and understanding the new phenomena. Education will soon be oriented not only on achieving more knowledge, skills and social experiences. It

will be focusing also on developing the ability to regain control over the events and processes which are increasingly less knowable and manageable. Therefore, researchers and pedagogy experts play an important role in identifying and responding to these changes through research projects and translation of their results into educational practice. Transformations which today take place in every area of human life require a modified approach – the education and upbringing, which will prepare students to function in the world while keeping up with the changes and, at the same time, preserving and following the universal values. The “Labor et Educatio” vol. 12 fits this direction of thinking and reflection.

The first part titled “Studies” is comprised of five articles. The authors address issues relevant to the process of education in the global perspective. The opening article presents a discussion on the contemporary contexts of civic and ethics education, based on some historical comparisons ( GALI-ALEKSANDRA BELTRÁN; ELENA ANATOLIEVNA ZHIZHKO; MARTÍN BELTRÁN-SAUCEDO, *Historical and modern aspects of civic-ethical education in technical middle school: Mexican context*). The topic is particularly important since it refers to individuals whose citizenship and ethical attitudes are already developed (early youth). Considering the dynamically changing world and socio-moral values, the issues discussed in the paper are important, for example, from the perspective of care to preserve and protect these values from devaluation.

The article *Perspectives on spiritual life during the smartphone age* by ŁUKASZ BUKSA has been written in the spirit of care for the spiritual life of modern young adults and appreciation of this dimension of life in the constantly changing reality. By referring to the increasingly dominating tendency to spend time with smartphones and in the virtual world, the Author asks how to educate in such a way so that the aspect of spiritual growth and functioning does not disappear from the life of individuals.

The perspective of viewing modern life with regards to roles played in it is presented by ROBERT POCHOPIEŃ in the article titled *The evolution of understanding of fatherhood. Attempt at synthesis*. The Author points out to the meaning and the value of fatherhood in raising children and adolescents, especially when all the relevant diagnoses indicate the absence of fatherhood and its destructive consequences for the young people.

MICHAŁ PIERZCHAŁA; ALICJA KORNICKA; PAWEŁ MARCZAK are the authors of the article titled *Masculinity without violence – the application of*

*NVC in the upbringing and education*, in which they present youth education in the perspective of building the image of man as someone who is strong, decisive but does not use the advantage of power in the upbringing process. Education based on breaking the stereotypes and using communication tools facilitates the development of positive masculinity or fatherhood patterns.

The first section ends with the article referring to the assistance areas (MARCIN KEŚKA, *Cash benefits in foster care*). The Author presents opportunities to obtain and allocate financial means dedicated to foster care from the legal and economic perspective.

The second section of this volume (Research) consists of research-based papers. Among them are studies into children in pre-school education (KARNI IIRIZ MIZRAHI, *Fostering Phonological Proficiency: The Role of Educational Language Games in Hebrew Kindergarten Curricula*) and teachers working in different types of schools, at different levels of education and within different contexts of functioning: from educators who have to confront challenging student behavior (SHAKIRA MUKHTAROVA; MARZHANGUL BAIMUKANOVA; ALYONA BARIKOVA, *Research of teachers' professional readiness to work with children with deviant behavior*), through leaders who strive to feel satisfied from their work (STRATAN VICTORIA, *The Role of Transformational Leadership in Increasing The Job Satisfaction of Primary Education Teachers*), to academic teachers and the nature of their workplace (MARK JOHN C. PALANCA, *Lived experiences of tertiary religious education teachers: basis for a synodal instructional model*). The closing article has been authored by KATARZYNA WASILEWSKA-OSTROWSKA and is titled *The narratives of homeless men on housing support and the role of a social worker in the process of becoming independent*. This text can be located within the area of social assistance but viewed from the perspective of the dynamics of social changes and new social phenomena. It also discusses an important aspect of education connected with the process of learning others to cope with difficult or traumatic experiences (preparation to deal with problems in order to avoid some extreme consequences of life problems e.g. homelessness).

The texts presented in this volume of "Labor et Educatio" will surely provide the readers with some valuable insights and encourage discussions, reflections and new research activities that will further fill the gaps in the existing knowledge and practices.



Gali-Aleksandra BELTRÁN<sup>1</sup>

ORCID 0000-0001-7186-332X

Elena ANATOLIEVNA ZHIZHKO<sup>2</sup>

ORCID 0000-0001-9680-8247

Martín BELTRÁN-SAUCEDO<sup>3</sup>

ORCID 0000-0002-9460-1936

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## Historical and modern aspects of civic-ethical education in technical middle school: Mexican context

## Historyczne i współczesne aspekty edukacji obywatel-sko-etycznej w szkole średniej technicznej: kontekst meksykański

### Introduction

The current war initiated aggressively and unreasonably stressful by the Russian Federation against Ukraine (that are resenting indirectly all

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<sup>1</sup> Gali-Aleksandra Beltrán, EDD, Associate Professor: Department of Geophysics, Technologic University of Durango, Mexico, e-mail: gali.beltranzh@gmail.com.

<sup>2</sup> Elena Anatolievna Zhizhko, Dr. hab., Full Professor: Academic Unit of Humanistic Studies, Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Mexico, e-mail: eanatoli@yahoo.com.

<sup>3</sup> Martín Beltrán-Saucedo, PhD, Full Professor: Faculty of Juridical Sciences, Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, Mexico, e-mail: martin.beltran@uaslp.mx.

European and other countries) mobilized, on the one hand, society, united the Ukrainian and many other nations against the enemy and, on the other, incited insecurity, vulnerability, hopelessness, restlessness, stress and anxiety that people experience and that, unfortunately, is not comparable to that of the great economic and health crises that the world has suffered throughout our recent history. In response to the need to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for the students to adapt to an increasingly complex and changing world, to form civic-minded individuals, strengthen their community-oriented instruction, it is necessary to introduce in middle school, high school and higher education the topic of civic and ethical training. In this sense, it is important to know the experience of other countries, in particular, Mexico, which is suffering similar processes due to the war against organized crime and drug cartels, a crisis that involves social decomposition and is one of the most critical and dramatic in its history.

The civic-ethical education in Mexico is a fundamental part of the community-oriented axis which problems were studied by: Almond and Verba, 1963; Apud, 2007; Blanco, 2008; Conde, 2005; Chávez-Romo, 2011; Fierro and Carbajal, 2003; García-Salord and Vanella, 1992; Hart, 1993; Kazuhiro-Kobayashi, 1973, 1992; Sánchez-Regalado, 2012; Segovia, 1977; Staples, 2010; Tanck-de-Estrada, 1985, 2005; Vázquez-de-Knauth, 2012; Verdeja, 2012; and Yurén, 2004, 2022 among others.

According to the Mexican authors, in Mexican technical middle schools, in general, civic-ethical education and the developing of community-oriented skills in students, includes the understanding of certain contents related to law, government, rights, democracy and the administration of justice, but it is especially important to consider that the formation of democratic subjects has a strong link with the improvement of morality.

The objective of this work was to present the historical and modern aspects of civic-ethical education in Mexican technical middle schools through a documentary-bibliographic study.

### **Historical development of the civic-ethical education: colonial and post-colonial period**

The foundations of civic and ethical training in Mexico were laid by the ideologies implanted by Catholic missionaries (the 16th-18th centuries), who

governed the educational advances, in the sense of teaching topics related to behaviour in colonial society. Education in the colonial era was a faithful reflection of the New Spain society where there was great control of the rulers (the lords) over the governed (the servants), and where individuals were linked by the authority of the one and the obedience of the other (Kazuhiro-Kobayashi, 1973, pp. 437–464).

In schools, a division of the students was made to differentiate the sons of the lords and, in this way, to give them the privileges that the common students did not have. However, it must be made clear that it was never intended to replace the lifestyle of the Indigenous community with one of the Spanish, but rather it was intended to preserve it in its entirety, with all its hierarchy of traditional authorities. The missionaries proposed to the Indigenous chieftains to leave the order of their social and political organization as it existed in pre-Hispanic civilizations, except for religion, which was replaced by Christianity. The aim was to “redeem the Indian republic with the faith of Christ”.

At the time of implementing their pedagogical model, the Franciscans developed four branches: education for the children of the minority; catechetical teaching in the courtyard; practical teaching with a view to professional training; and the education of Indian girls. From this moment on, the inclination of the educators to implement a model of individual with certain moral, ethical and civic principles, based on the Catholic faith, a doctrine that determined the conduct of the New Spaniards, is identified.

Education during the time of New Spain was a crucial instrument for the consolidation of Spanish rule in the American continent. It can be identified the inclination of educators to implement a model of individuality with certain moral, ethical and civic principles, based on the Catholic faith, a doctrine that determined the conduct of the New Spaniards. With the arrival of the conquistadors and the subsequent establishment of viceroyalty, the educational system not only focused on transmitting knowledge, but also on instilling religious and cultural values (civic education) that aligned the population with the interests of the Crown and the Church.

So that the education in New Spain was deeply influenced by the Catholic religion and by the political interests of the Spanish monarchy. From the beginning, the conquistadors and missionaries understood that to educate was to evangelize. Therefore, the educational system was designed to: 1. Evangelize the indigenous people, ensuring their conversion to Christianity; 2. Consolidate

the power of the Spanish Crown, transmitting values that legitimized its rule; 3. To form Creole and Mestizo elites who could occupy administrative, religious or intellectual positions.

The study conducted showed that education was deeply influenced by the Catholic religion and European traditions. These were the main contents: 1. Christian Doctrine: the catechism was the fundamental pillar of education; prayers and the ten commandments and the sacraments were taught; 2. Reading and Writing: learning to read and write was mainly aimed at understanding religious texts; in most cases, students memorized entire passages from the Bible; 3. The Liberal Arts. The colonial educational system was authoritarian and based on memorization. European texts adapted to the American context were used, such as Father Ripalda's Catechism. Discipline was strict, and corporal punishment was common.

In the first years of the conquest, reading and writing, as well as singing, the making of musical instruments and Christian doctrine, were taught only to the children of the chieftains, but from 1513 onwards, laws were established so that education would be extended to all Indigenous people. Thus, they were taught "[...] to get up at midnight to pray the matins of Our Lady and, at dawn, her Hours. They were even taught to discipline themselves with flogging at night and to pray mentally, everything aimed at the formation of the Indigenous clergy" (Kazuhiro-Kobayashi, 1973, pp. 437–464).

The main idea was to disassociate the relationship they had with the religious part of their ancestors, to distance them from the pre-Hispanic religion: next to the church they had a school where the singers met, the song was taught to those who did not know it, and to those who play the musical instruments, and the children of the main people learned to read and write, after they had learned the Christian doctrine (Vázquez-de-Knauth, 2012).

The antecedents of formal civic and ethical education in Mexico date back to 1812, when the Political Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy was proclaimed in the Cortes of Cadiz (Andalusia, Spain), in article 366 of which the obligation of the State to open in all the towns of the monarchy the schools of first letters, in which children were taught to read, write and count, the catechism of the Catholic religion and which also included a brief exposition of civil obligations (Tanck-de-Estrada, 1985).

This great achievement of the Political Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy in educational matters is largely due to the activity of the

enlightened people of New Spain (Alzate-y-Ramírez, Bartolache, Eguiara-y-Eguren, Campoy, Clavijero, Díaz-de-Gamarra, Hidalgo, Mociño, Sigüenza-y-Góngora, among others), who believed it was necessary to convert the State into the primary instrument to achieve progress and the reign of reason. Until the ignorance and superstition of the masses were eliminated through education, political leaders would have to promote civil economic and social advances. Thus, civics is integrated into the educational curriculum to study the values that citizens must apply in a democratic world; it was necessary to extend elementary education to a greater number of students and include, in addition to religious education, technical and civic subjects (Tanck-de-Estrada, 2005, pp. 6–9).

Thanks to the work of the Novohispanic Enlightenment's bearers, a long process of economic, political, and social transformation began in the colony. The ideological and philosophical foundations were created to construct the legal framework with a democratic structure based on education, seen as the most appropriate instrument to transform men and women without making distinctions or discrimination based on religion, race, or economic, political, and social status.

At first, religious and civic education were imparted together in order to form citizens with a moral sense, committed to their environment and to manage the State's resources in the best way, becoming better children and parents: "[...] civic education was the basis of good government because it was a source of virtue" (Tanck-de-Estrada, 2005, p. 13). It was believed that integrating civic education into academic training would alleviate economic, moral, and religious problems.

Therefore, the traditional religious evangelization that had been practiced since the time of the conquest was joined by the social "catechism" of the liberals. Later, this new social "catechism" of the liberals acquired reinforced meaning at the beginning of the 19th century with the construction of the new independent and democratic Mexican state, of a new nation, the organization of a federative republic and the demand for the education of conscious citizens who knew how to express their vote democratically. Teaching all the people to read and write, forming free, conscious, and responsible citizens for their new republican homeland, aware that they are part of the new nation, responsible for their new republican homeland, was the objective of national education established in article 50, paragraph 1 of the first Political Constitution of

Independent Mexico (1824). This document determined the obligation of the State to promote the establishment of educational institutions where natural and political sciences, mathematics, arts, and languages would be taught (Staples, 2010).

Later, in the new Constitution of 1857 (article 3), the right of all citizens to education was proclaimed, as well as State control over schools, their status outside the influence of the Church, and freedom of education. In 1874, in articles 1 and 4 of the *Decree of President Lerdo-de-Tejada*, the secular character of the educational system and its independence from the Church were established.

### **Civic-ethical education at the end of the 19th century – 20th century**

At the end of the 19th century, thanks to the liberal educational ideas of Joaquín Baranda and Gabino Barreda, the Law (1867) that established compulsory and free primary education was promulgated; it eliminated religious education in exchange for the teaching of morality, obligations and rights of citizens and a compendium of the history and geography of the country. In 1889, secondary education was included in the national educational system as the link between primary and preparatory education; in 1891, the Regulatory Law on Education was passed, which established education as secular, free and compulsory, and as well established the so-called *Parents' Vigilance Committees* (Bazant, 1993). It should be noted that these same principles were passed on to the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States of 1917 and continue to govern the national education system to this day.

Based on the study carried out, we can affirm that civic education in the 19th century – early 20th century in Mexico sought the legitimate monopoly of physical coercion for the maintenance of social order and the establishment of a rigorous administrative order; it sought to establish the theoretical difference between the “citizen” (whose compliance with the law was the condition for achieving social peace) and the “man” (who could freely follow the light of his conscience, as long as it did not interfere with his public duty to the law). This led to the existence of a citizen divided between his individual and political rights, as well as giving rise to the coexistence of two behaviours: that which corresponded to the government of the State, through reason as

a critical exercise, and that related to personal perfection of oneself in front of others, through a set of techniques related to self-control. Consequently, the main purpose of the Mexican civic education in this period was to provide and foster the knowledge necessary for individuals to behave as “self-possessed” (rational) creatures in the public and private spheres. This led to the social administration of individual freedom (“government of the soul”), modifying previous human sensibilities and behaviours and leading to the strengthening of freedom as an individual and collective practice of political participation.

In short, it can be said that in the task of building the national education system at the end of the 19th century – beginning of the 20th century, liberal, positivist and scientist ideas triumphed: primary education was made free, compulsory and secular; secondary education was institutionalized; a great boost to the teaching of civics was given. Based on the analysis of documents from this period, it can be stated that the implementation of civic and ethical education in Mexican secondary schools was satisfactory. It was in keeping with the political objectives of the country’s development at that time: to form citizens who were aware and who would participate in democratic processes. It can be said that the liberal “catechism” of the beginning of the 19th century was replaced by the political “catechism”, with the same need to teach the population to read and write so that they would know how to at least write their names when voting in electoral processes. This situation lasted until the 30s-40s of the 20th century.

In the 1930s, the development of rural schools was promoted. In general, in 1930, there were 19,356 students enrolled in the technical education system; in addition, this system was organized in three levels: pre-apprenticeship (pre-vocational, or teaching of small industries, including those of a home type), vocational (training of qualified workers) and higher technical education. Between 1934 and 1940, during the mandate of President Lázaro Cárdenas, the actions directed towards the dissemination of rural education were expanded, covering not only the poor peasants and workers, but also the Indigenous people. In 1934, the third article of the Constitution was modified, establishing socialist education, excluding all religious doctrine with the purpose of creating in youth a rational and exact concept of the universe and social life (Zhizhko, 2015).

So that the institutions, curricula and textbooks developed during the Cardenista period sought to get young people to organize themselves to

improve the lives of their communities, to make effective the rights of workers and peasants, to defend themselves from the abuses of the authorities and to protect national resources and interests. This priority was an essential part of a project of great magnitude and ambitious in terms of its ultimate goal: to transform the knowledge and practices of the peasant masses.

In the second half of the 20th century, after the Second World War and with the change from a leftist government to a centrist one, civic education acquired new nuances and significant promotion. Thus, in 1959 the Secretariat of Public Works was created (which in 1992 changed its name to the Secretariat of Social Development) having among its objectives educational, sports, cultural and civic promotion. In the sixties of the 20th century, with the rapid growth of the population, the new objectives of the educational system appeared: teaching citizens to live and plan in a developing country (education for development) (Zhizhko, 2015, pp. 189-204).

This objective was reinforced in the seventies of the 20th century with the first global reform of the national educational system. In addition, the studies developed by Almond and Verba (1963), Segovia (1977) and the National Survey on Political Culture and Citizen Practices (ENCUP) offered a general view of the training needs of citizens and the areas in which the school needs to work within the margins of action in which it carries out its work.

In 1999, the “*Civic and Ethical Education Program*” promoted by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) began. This Program considered not only the work in a subject, but also the school environment, the transversality in the different subjects and the daily life of the students. It is aimed at in-service teachers, school directors and sector heads of general, technical, and TV-secondary schools, and students of primary and secondary schools. In 2004, its geographical coverage was already national. The program has different printed and audiovisual materials: “Knowledge at school. Civic and Ethics Education”, “Specials Civic and Ethics Education” and “Thoughts and ideas in Civic and Ethics Education”, etc. (OECT-OEA, 2003, pp. 70–75).

## **The characteristics of the modern civic-ethical education in technical middle schools**

The study carried out allows us to sustain, that the building of the modern civic-ethical education began in 2000, with the emergence of the program “*Citizen Education Towards a Culture of Legality*” as a response by the educational authorities of the state of Baja California to the gradual social deterioration caused by phenomena such as corruption, delinquency and organized crime in the border area with the United States. In accordance with the social commitment of the educational field, and in coordination with the Office of Education of San Diego County (USA), a school project was started with the aim of generating in students mechanisms of reflection and analysis regarding the harm caused by illegal acts and the need to build and consolidate the rule of law and the culture of legality (OECT-OEA, 2003).

The “*Citizenship Education towards a Culture of Legality*” program was an optional subject in the curriculum which objectives were to provide students with elements that favour the construction of knowledge, the acquisition of skills and the development of attitudes that encourage their voluntary participation in the promotion of a culture of legality.

Although its purpose was to be established as a permanent program in technical middle schools (secondary education) curriculum. In 2003 it operated only in six federal entities. The program was aimed at young people in the third grade of secondary education. Next, we will see in detail what the aforementioned “norms and values in social coexistence” are, which are explained in the *Teacher’s Guide* for the subject “Civic and Ethical Education”, made up of four chapters divided into 22 topics:

I. “*Culture of Legality*” which objective was for students to build and reflect on the concept of culture of legality, on the characteristics that make us human and individuals, as well as the meaning and importance of norms and values in social coexistence.

II. “*The Rule of Law and the Culture of Legality*” which emphasis was on the Rule of Law: young people learned what it consists of, how to recognize it and why it is important to protect it, they realized that in the face of incorrect norms, laws or the administration of justice, they themselves can bring about change, they understood how and why it is necessary to maintain a culture of legality.

III. “*Crime and Corruption: Enemies of the Culture of Legality*” which dealt with the harmful effects that organized crime has on the individuals involved, as well as their families, friends, and society as a whole. Students learned what organized crime is, how it works, how it attracts new members and why it represents a threat to society in general. In addition, students reflected on legal and institutional means to combat crime.

IV. “*Promoting a Culture of Legality*” allowed students to see their role in promoting and supporting the rule of law. Rejection of organized crime and its activities was encouraged, and an attempt was made to create awareness of their responsibility to act in this area. They were encouraged to think about their own future and the consequences of the decisions they make, and they were taught problem-solving techniques to help them overcome the obstacles they face in the pursuit of their goals (OECD-OAS, 2003).

This subject was taught by previously trained teachers, since the optimal development of its content required generating processes of awareness, sensitization and critical analysis of reality. The *Teacher’s Guide* was prepared by Baja California teachers and reviewed by staff from the General Directorate of Educational Materials and Methods of the Undersecretariat of Basic and Normal Education (SEByN). Videos were used as part of the supporting teaching material (OECD-OEA, 2003, pp. 57-69). Next, we will analyse how the teaching process was organized in the Program “Citizen education towards a culture of legality”, and what were the methods and tools used in working with students.

First, the subject of “Civic and Ethical Education” was included in basic education to provide moral education and civic training, develop children’s interest in participating in public affairs and promote their development as active citizens. On the other hand, the Children and Youth Consultation was implemented, conducted by the National Electoral Institute, the Children’s Council and the Network of Diffusers of the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF). Likewise, the dynamics developed to carry out these activities were the following: the “Our voice counts” camps, in which children from all neighbourhoods participated, children who attend school and those who do not attend; recreational events (children’s parties, piñatas, festivals, etc.) where children first have fun and then participate in a consultation meeting; meetings at sports venues (soccer, basketball, baseball fields, etc.); walks through the neighbourhood where children present letters

with their requests and needs regarding problems; group interviews with the mayor at schools and city hall, where children ask questions and talk with the authority; assemblies and town hall meetings with the participation of children, teachers, parents, and local authorities so that everyone is aware of each person's needs.

It can be said that, without a doubt, the Program "Citizen education towards a culture of legality" was an ambitious and far-reaching project, however, it was developed only in some states of the republic, it has not had adequate funding and it was implemented in a proportionate manner in the period from 2000 to 2006, during the six-year term of President Vicente Fox, whose team proposed the program, although there were attempts to implement it later (2007–2013) in some states. On the other hand, the lack of specialized training and formation of the teachers who teach this subject was evident. Therefore, its results were not entirely satisfactory. Likewise, for its full implementation, there was a need for the political will of subsequent administrations to include these topics and actions as part of the study plans from the first stages of school, starting from the early educational levels (preschool, primary, secondary) to the university. In this way, the construction of citizenship that is received at home and in the community could be strengthened and directed from the classrooms.

Therefore, in 2007 by the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) was promoted the Comprehensive Reform of Basic Education (RIEB), proposed modifications to the subject "Civic and Ethical Education" which development was supported by previous studies and surveys that showed areas of interest that require particular treatment to design instruments and evaluate the educational function of the school (SEP, 2008; SEP, 2011). Likewise, the proposal of the New Mexican School of 2019 brought some other modifications to this subject (SEP, 2023).

Thus, the subject "Civic and Ethical Education" is introduced from the first grade of primary school "with the purpose of making Mexican primary school students know and value honesty, freedom, equity, solidarity, justice, and peace. Through experiences close to the reality of girls and boys, the content and activities, proposed for them, reflect on their daily lives. The aim is to form full citizens, with values and capacities necessary for collaboration, dialogue and critical thinking" (DGME-SEP, 2022).

Regarding the subject "Civic and Ethical Education" in Mexican technical middle (secondary) schools, it is implemented nationwide starting with the

development and free distribution of textbooks *Civic and Ethical Education. Secondary (Formación cívica y ética. Secundaria)* with the following content: 1. Changes in adolescence; 2. Sexuality in adolescence; 3. Diversity of youth expressions and identities; 4. Human dignity and rights; 5. Decide and act autonomously; 6. Freedom and coexistence; 7. Conditions for being free; 8. Institutions, laws and programs to prevent and eliminate discrimination; 9. Groups to which I belong that make up my identity; 10. Solidarity as a value of cohesion; 11. Gender equality in Mexico; 12. Culture of peace: respect for life and rejection of violence; 13. Conflicts and the basic conditions for their solution; 14. Dialogue and mediation in conflict resolution; 15. Justice and its application through laws and regulations; 16. Laws and their importance for the social and political life of a country; 17. Authority and compliance with laws; 18. Democracy; 19. Being part of democracy in decision-making; 20. Citizen participation and its implications (SEP, 2022).

The analysis of the documents in the original language (Spanish) allows us to determine the following characteristics of the modern civic-ethical education in Mexican technical middle schools. First of all, the complexity of this subject is not centred on the mastery and handling of the contents of the study program, but on the fact that they are practical knowledge that demands consistency in the daily actions of those who teach it. The formative dimension of the subject is located in the field of practical knowledge that cannot be transmitted by repetition and memorization, among which the following are distinguished:

- The knowledge of living together, a combination of beliefs, attitudes and intentions of an ethical-political nature that allows subjects to make decisions to resolve action situations of a socio-moral nature, such as those faced in the field of daily coexistence and in that of citizen coexistence.
- The knowledge of being or practical-existential knowledge, a combination of beliefs, attitudes and intentions in relation to the self that allows subjects to make decisions to resolve action situations related to one's own body and the exercise of freedom in relation to one's own existence, one's own history and life project.

Despite the solid theoretical foundation of the subject "Civic and Ethical Education" in the Mexican educational system, the teaching of ethics in technical middle school has not had the desired results. Given the notable

change experienced by young people in school environments, values, the processes of fascination, creativity and the conquest of true freedom and the search for the common good have unfortunately become topics foreign to the rhythm of daily life, giving rise to the violence that in recent years has been involved in the torrent of massification and depersonalization.

This is due, first of all, to the fact that there is a clear dissonance between the justification of the “Civic and Ethical Education” course, its curricular content, the content of the textbooks and the perspective of human rights, since the latter are not incorporated as a central core. The justification of the subject mentions human rights together with democracy as its “sources of values”; however, when they are integrated in concrete they are only “topics” that cover, in a succinct manner, a single block. Human rights cannot be a “topic” because they are in themselves a worldview that affects the public and private dimensions of students (SEP, 2023, p. 28).

On the other hand, what is presented in the contents of the subject “Civic and Ethical Education” in the Mexican technical middle schools (presentations, videos, dramatizations, etc.), in most cases, does not belong to the reality of contemporary Mexico, since it is taken from the experiences that occur in other nations where ethics is taught and lived as a rule, which although there are exceptions, these are just that, exceptions.

Likewise, it is well known that examples are the best way to educate. The young people do what they see; imitation is one of the best ways to learn. Approximately 80% of learning is done through non-verbal language, especially through visual means. What people perceive through real facts is much more important and effective than what they perceive through words and even audiovisual instruments. Thus, young people observe that their parents and teachers preach one thing and do exactly the opposite: they are told that they must be punctual and show respect for the time of others and teachers arrive late to their classes, are absent and contravene what they precisely demand of their students; They are required to respect intellectual works and copyrights and the teacher’s notes consist of photostatic or electronic copies with copyright, etc.

In this way, students quickly discover the lack of congruence between what is said and tried to be taught and what is actually done, what is truly taught. Then, they easily learn the game of pretending, manipulating, deceiving, lying,

preaching something, and doing something else, so that others do what is said even if it is not executed.

Furthermore, in secondary technical education, “[...] the culture of instruction, prescription and exhortation of the teacher predominates; a good number of teachers have not had the opportunity to clarify their own values and take their own vision of the world for granted without subjecting it to a self-critical exercise” (Yurén, 2022, p. 104). Since the teaching of the subject “Civic and Ethical Education” in secondary technical school goes through a series of problems described above, there is a need for more in-depth studies on its problems; likewise, specialized training of teachers is required.

Thus, since 2022, the Bachelor’s Degree in Secondary Education of Teacher Training Colleges has included a specialty in civic and ethical training. As well, through the Academic Transformation and Strengthening Program of Teacher Training Colleges, training was promoted for teachers in charge of putting the subject’s program into practice. Two training phases were developed for in-service teachers, for which the following materials were prepared: “Civic and Ethical Education. Study guide for in-service teachers of general, technical, and TV-secondary schools”, “Civic and Ethical Education. Study guide for secondary education management staff”, “Study guide for the second national training day for in-service teachers of general, technical and TV-secondary schools”, “Study guide for the second national training day for directors of general, technical and TV-secondary schools”, “Study guide for the second national training day for heads of sector of general, technical and TV-secondary schools”, “Civic and Ethical Education. Let’s work on some content from the study programs”, “Book for the teacher. Civic and Ethical Education”.

## Conclusions

So the study carried out showed that the historical development of civic-ethical education in Mexico has a long account, beginning in the 16th century at the time of the conquest when it depended on religious education and catechism, going through the periods of Enlightenment and liberalism in New Spain when it became a compulsory subject in the educational system, and consolidating in the 20th century.

The main objective of the modern civic-ethical education as a part of the community-oriented training in Mexican technical middle (secondary)

schools, is the promotion of activities through which adolescents, in different areas of training (school, family, community, etc.), learn to become able and responsible citizens and to assume a set of attitudes to function as such. To this end, in Mexican educational system there is a trying to create an appropriate environment for coexistence, rules, the exercise of authority, the use of spaces for association and participation of students, as well as respect for their rights; design instruments that explore citizen and civic-ethical training that is not reduced to conceptual aspects and in which the impact that community-oriented programs could have that aim to influence the school environment and the daily students' lives. The role that the family, social organizations, political parties and the media play in the citizenship and civic-ethical education of students is also important.

The objective of the subject "Civic and Ethical Education" in Mexican technical middle (secondary) schools is to foster love of country and respect for the rights of all, to promote the integral development of students, helping them learn to appreciate what surrounds them, to identify their strengths and to understand what the community, Mexico and the world need and how they can contribute; to achieve the best level of learning, strengthen school-community ties and form responsible citizenship (SEP, 2022). Its implementation is guaranteed through specialized training of teachers and textbooks created and distributed free of charge by the General Directorate of Educational Materials of the Secretariat of Public Education of Mexico. Hence, it is evident that the construction of civic and ethical culture in Mexican technical middle (secondary) schools is advancing significantly.

However, for the full implementation of this project to be achieved, first of all, the intervention of institutions of the three levels of government, non-governmental organizations and society in general is necessary. Thus, for example, there are valuable proposals from civil associations that can be combined with public policies to achieve greater effectiveness. Likewise, it is necessary to first implement a pilot sample, monitor the results obtained and, depending on its scope, carry it out on a larger scale. On the other hand, it is vitally important to adequately disseminate all measures and mechanisms that promote citizen participation among children and adolescents; these mechanisms must be designed to be inclusive, reaching a greater number of children and young people. In addition, it is necessary to foster values through non-formal education.

In turn, the training and professionalization of the actors involved (teachers, volunteers, instructors, parents, etc.) is essential, since the challenge is very great and despite the existence of mechanisms and actions focused on guaranteeing the right to participation, they have not yet been achieved in decision-making and execution of public policies. Finally, constant monitoring and evaluation will be essential both for budgets and for implementing the improvements that are required, as well as to measure the scope and levels of participation of children and young people before and after the implementation of the programs.

For future research, it would be necessary to analyse the training and/or capacity building programs of the teachers who teach civic-ethical education in Mexican technical middle (secondary) schools.

**Abstract:** There are presented the historical and modern aspects of civic-ethical education in Mexican technical middle schools through a documentary-bibliographic study. It was found out, that the historical development of civic-ethical education in Mexico has a long account, beginning in the 16th century at the time of the conquest when it depended on religious education and catechism, going through the periods of Enlightenment and liberalism in New Spain when it became a compulsory subject in the educational system, and consolidating in the 20th century. The main objective of the modern civic-ethical education as a part of the community-oriented training in Mexican technical middle (secondary) schools, is the promotion of activities through which adolescents, in different areas of training (school, family, community, etc.), learn to become able and responsible citizens and to assume a set of attitudes to function as such.

**Keywords:** Mexican educational system; technical middle schools; civic-ethical education; historical development and modern situation of the civic-ethical education.

**Streszczenie:** Przedstawiono historyczne i współczesne aspekty edukacji obywatelsko-etycznej w meksykańskich szkołach technicznych poprzez studium dokumentalno-bibliograficzne. Odkryto, że historyczny rozwój edukacji obywatelsko-etycznej w Meksyku ma długą historię, począwszy od XVI wieku w czasach podboju, kiedy opierała się na edukacji religijnej i katechizacji, przechodząc przez okresy oświecenia i liberalizmu w Nowej Hiszpanii, kiedy stała się obowiązkowym przedmiotem w systemie edukacyjnym i konsolidując się w XX wieku. Głównym celem współczesnej edukacji obywatelsko-etycznej jako części zorientowanego na społeczność szkolenia w meksykańskich szkołach technicznych (średnich) jest promowanie działań, poprzez które nastolatki, w różnych obszarach kształcenia (szkoła, rodzina, społeczność itp.), uczą się być zdolnymi i odpowiedzialnymi obywatelami i przyjmować zestaw postaw, aby funkcjonować jako tacy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** meksykański system edukacyjny; szkoły techniczne; edukacja obywatelsko-etyczna; historyczny rozwój i współczesna sytuacja edukacji obywatelsko-etycznej.

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Łukasz BUKSA<sup>1</sup>

ORCID 0000-0003-4309-2438

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## Perspectives on spiritual life during the smartphone age

### Perspektywy życia duchowego w erze smartfonów

#### Introduction

Smartphones have transformed the public and private lives of modern people in dozens of different ways. Among the benefits they have brought to everyday life are mobile Internet access (thus, constant and immediate access to information, books, films, music, and interactive new media), enhanced interpersonal communication, ease of movement thanks to navigation, online shopping and services, payment processing, as well as the ability to use a smartphone almost anywhere and anytime.

However, this long list of gains is accompanied by a short but sufficiently worrying list of losses resulting from smartphone use: the constant engagement of attention and time by the device, smartphone addiction, and finally, the tendency to compulsively stay in the virtual world (Buksa, 2022; Buksa, 2023a).

One of the few remaining spaces where the use of a smartphone in the real-world causes consternation is the sphere of the sacrum – both space and time

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<sup>1</sup> PhD Łukasz Buksa OFM, PhD, Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, Poland, e-mail: lukasz.buksa@upjp2.edu.pl

– where a person experiences their spiritual life (Kustra, 2021, p. 122). It is not difficult to envision that, over time, smartphone use will further transcend these boundaries: it will gradually penetrate the sacred space, the time of liturgy, and the spirit of prayer. In fact, it has already crossed the threshold of the church – it is already there. This process is happening, slowly but surely.

Although the use of this gadget may still seem inappropriate, quietly, and innocently, the smartphone is already serving in the temple – for both clergy and faithful – as a device to read prayers aloud or to amplify the faintly heard word of God during Mass. This raises the question of whether we should calmly consider what prospects for the development of spiritual life are created by attempts to ‘smartphonize’ the sphere of holiness and the relationship with God.

Recognizing the limitations of this process is crucial, as awareness enables us to respond effectively before habits become too ingrained to change. Speaking about the protection of spiritual life in the era of smartphones, it is also worth reflecting on the realization of religious acts via smartphones in private life – in other words, on the spiritual life of *homo sapiens digitalis* (Fritzsche, Bengler, & Spitzhirn, 2022).

## From Religious to Spiritual

The phenomenon of human religiosity has not been given a clear scientific explanation. Both the belief that religiosity is a natural and spontaneous attribute of human beings and the view that religion is a contingent trait, a result of upbringing, environment, or tradition, have their supporters and opponents. The author assumes at the outset that although there is no consensus on the origins of religiosity and the factors that shape it, religiosity as such or its manifestations are not disputed. The history of humankind is rich in material evidence of the practice of religion since the earliest days of human existence. However, the concepts of religion, religiosity, and spiritual life need to be clarified.

Contrary to common belief, it is difficult to provide a universal definition of religion. This difficulty arises, among other things, from the multiplicity of religions, different interpretations of the sacred, and the subjectivity of religious experiences (Zdybicka, 1992, p. 355). It is also influenced by what sociologist Günter Kehrler has called the “ideologization of religious issues” (Kehrler, 1997, pp. 20–21). As he noted, completely different meanings are

attributed to the same religion by believers (positive definition), non-believers, or those with an indifferent attitude (usually a negative definition). Bearing this objection in mind, it may be noted that, in recent scholarship, religion has been broadly understood as “any form of humanity’s relation to Absolute Reality” (Kłoczowski, 2010) or as a belief “in the existence of something beyond the reality of everyday experience and the conviction that this reality is of great importance for human life” (Mariański, 2016, p. 3). For St. Thomas Aquinas, religion was humanity’s response to the revelation of God – “an act of justice to which man is obliged in relation to his Creator” (Kłoczowski, 2010). Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford, Harvey Whitehouse, emphasizes the significance of reference to the supernatural, stating that “religion consists of any set of shared beliefs and actions appealing to supernatural agency” (Whitehouse, 2004, p. 2).

A widely accepted functional definition of religion was developed by the French philosopher and sociologist Émile Durkheim, who saw it as “a system of interrelated beliefs and practices referring to sacred things, that is, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices uniting all adherents into a single moral community, which he called ‘church’ in a sociological sense” (Durkheim, 1990, p. 41). Durkheim pointed out an important characteristic of religion. As he observed, religion “happens” in society when there is a distinction between the profane (ordinary life) and the sacred (1915). He illustrated this concept by explaining that a rock, for example, is neither sacred nor profane. However, if someone turns it into a headstone or if another person uses it for landscaping, it takes on different meanings – one sacred, the other profane.

It is also worth noting the definition proposed by American sociologist Rodney Stark and British sociologist Roger Finke in their book *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. They define religion as “a set of beliefs, practices, and social forms through which people seek meaning with reference to the sacred” (Stark & Finke, 2000). This definition highlights both the individual and social dimensions of religion, as well as its role in providing meaning to the lives of individuals and communities. Particular attention should be given to sociological definitions of religion, as they are worldview-neutral, allowing for an academic study of religion regardless of the researcher’s personal beliefs. Moreover, and no less importantly, they enable the analysis of all religions by describing the phenomenon without assessing its truthfulness (Kurtz, 2011).

Of particular importance to our topic is the Christian view that religion has a personal character, influenced by three elements. Firstly, man – the subject of religiosity – is a personal being; secondly, God – the subject of religious experience – is a Person, a personal being; thirdly, the relationship between man and the personal God is personal in character (Jaworski, 1989, p. 12). The Latin root of the word religion is *religare* ('to bind, to bond'), thus signifies a bond – a relationship between humans and God as an interpersonal connection. Nothing happens automatically. As Romuald Jaworski rightly observes: "The magnitude of the personal charge in religiosity can vary from person to person: from the highest degree of intensification of the personal dimension (personal religiosity) to the absence of a personal connection between the subject and object of religiosity (apersonal religiosity)" (Jaworski, 1989, p. 12).

The components associated with religion are defined in different ways. Durkheim's definition of religion, mentioned above, allowed for the distinction of the following components: doctrine (truths of faith and moral principles), worship, sacred rituals, and organization: "the moral community called the church" (Durkheim, 1990, pp. 41–42). Sister Zofia J. Zdybicka, a scholar of religion, cites five elements of religion: "a holistic attitude toward faith, which encompasses cognition and acknowledgment of the Absolute, religious doctrine, religious worship, religious morality, and religious community" (Zdybicka, 1992, p. 355).

When it comes to religiosity, in a cursory judgment, it is often associated with "being religious" and practicing religion. In psychology, it is defined as "commitment to the beliefs and practices characteristic of a particular religious tradition" (Pettet, 1994, p. 237) or "the subjective, individual attitude of a person toward God and the supernatural, expressed in the sphere of concepts and beliefs, feelings, and behavior" (Golan, 2006, p. 71). Religiosity encompasses all forms of worship – both collective and private – "in which a person glorifies God, apologizes for their sins and failings, or asks for the grace of forgiveness" (Kłoczowski, 2010). In a broad sense, religiosity is understood as an attitude of adoration and reverence directed toward any reality, from the tangible to the abstract, including a homeland, a person, or an idea. Drawing on the insights of the German theologian Rudolf Otto and the American sociologist Peter Ludwig Berger, religiosity can be understood as a human and social phenomenon relating to the sacred – that is, to transcendence, to the "wholly

other”, the “non-empirical” (Piwowarski, 1990, p. 32). The primordial role of the *sacrum* – that which is *sacrum* and distinct from the *profanum* – in religious acts was emphasized by Durkheim, who pointed out that religious ritual cannot exist without the *sacrum*. At the same time, he argued that the circle of sacred things is not a closed set and is dependent on the specific religious tradition (Durkheim, 1990, p. 42). Despite the ambiguity and evolving nature of the term, scholars generally agree that spirituality encompasses a broader scope than religion. It is not necessarily tied to a specific religious tradition but instead focuses on personal meaning, fulfilment, and transformation (Collins, 2000, p. 44–47).

In this context, the observation that the topos of *homo religiosus* is disappearing in the digital age may be concerning. Those who believe that this issue only affects the so-called iGen (iGeneration) – that is, generations from the Millennials (Generation Y) through Generation Z, Alpha, and likely beyond – would be mistaken (Twenge, 2022). As psychologist Jean M. Twenge points out, the root of the problem lies in the fact that the generations of Americans who preceded them “practiced faith less often in public” and abandoned prayer and spiritual life (Twenge, 2022, p. 145). By 2015, almost a quarter of second- and fourth-year high school students claimed that religion was “irrelevant” in their lives, and there is a growing number of total non-believers “who have no contact with religion at all: they do not go to services, pray, or believe in God” (Twenge, 2022, p. 147).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the concept of religiosity has been confronted with the term “spirituality.” The latter, traditionally understood as religiosity – “an emotional involvement in the search for connection with God within ecclesiastical structures” – has taken on a new form in the so-called new spirituality, which “can mean feeling the presence of God even in situations devoid of any semantic reference to a formally functioning religious institution” (Mielicka-Pawłowska, 2017, p. 104). Although proponents of the new spirituality consider it a deepened form of religiosity, it is nevertheless limited to an “inner experience of the supernatural” in which the supernatural is reduced to “emotionality, sensitivity to beauty and the good, the everyday treated as extraordinary, and the search for the meaning of life and the reasons for the existence of order in the universe not only in the ideological dimension of religion but also in the experiential and consequential dimension” (Mielicka-Pawłowska, 2017, p. 113).

According to the insights of the German sociologist of religion Karl Gabriel, the transformation of religiosity into spirituality is accompanied by two processes – pluralization and individualization. The first implies a plurality of religions in society (inter-organizational pluralism) and religious differentiation within individual religions and churches (intra-organizational pluralism) (Gabriel, 2014, p. 15). The effect of religious pluralization, which he terms the “dynamization of world markets and lifestyles,” is a process of individualization – the creation of one’s own religion. As a result of both processes – religious pluralization and religious individualization – religion becomes deinstitutionalized, leading to the emergence of various religious movements and communities outside the institutional structures of churches. An extra-ecclesial, extra-institutional spirituality is emerging – an “own” or “homeless” spirituality (unbehauste Religion) – which arises from disenchantment with the Church, a questioning of the institutional dimension of religion, or a striving for autonomy (Mariański, 2016, p. 14; Schmidtchen, 1992, p. 165). This type of religiosity – individualized and extra-ecclesial – emphasizes “the autonomy and uniqueness of the contents and emotions experienced by a person in contact with the *sacrum*” (Jarosz, 2010, p. 9).

Park Soo Young Theodore SJ writes about how interest in religion has shifted from an institution to an autonomous “spirituality” of one’s own. He notes that the declaration “I am spiritual but not religious” (which has even gained its own acronym – SBNR – from Spiritual but not Religious; Park, 2021, p. 75) has become a widespread phenomenon. It gained popularity at the beginning of the 21st century, particularly on dating sites, where it is often used in self-presentations to enhance one’s image: “I am not some cold atheist, but I am not some moralistic, prudish person either. I am nice, friendly, and spiritual – but not religious.” (Park, 2021, p. 75)

## Digital Religion

Works by researchers analysing the so-called digital religion began to appear in 2004 and 2005 (Campbell, 2004, pp. 81–99; 2005, pp. 110–134; Lövheim, 2004, pp. 59–74; Cowan, 2005; Helland, 2005). The exploration of this phenomenon has continued with the work of Heidi Campbell, resulting, among other things, in her latest book, *Digital Religion: The Basics* (Campbell, 2023). As she writes in the introduction, the term digital religion was coined

to describe “the way in which religious individuals and groups engage with digital media and new technologies” (Campbell, 2023, p. 11). The term is also helpful in characterizing manifestations of religious worship and new forms of religious expression, making this issue relevant to the theme of this article.

As Heidi Campbell writes, sociologists, psychologists, and theologians have taken an interest in the fact that religious engagement on the Internet has begun to create new patterns of spiritual practices. As early as 2005, she observed: “When people use the Internet, religion changes. People combine different religious experiences. They create a personal religion online instead of belonging only to one church or religious association” (Campbell, 2023, p. 133). In her latest investigations, she states that digital religion has moved beyond the Internet. Indeed, it is practiced through online platforms, but it is also present in offline spaces due to the increasing interpenetration of the virtual and real worlds. It is evolving from an institutionalized form of religion to an individualized, living religion based on deep experiences. Digital religion focuses on praxis – the way religion is practiced and faith is expressed – rather than on doctrine imposed from above by the official Church.

This context leads us to the most important term – “spiritual life.” It should be noted that there is no precise definition of this concept, and it is often used interchangeably with inner life. However, the latter is not an exclusively religious category, as it encompasses psychological experiences (feelings, cravings, desires, passions), the intellectual sphere (thoughts, ideas, concepts), and the volitional sphere (decisions, resolutions) and is not necessarily related to faith.

In Christianity, the foundation of the spiritual life, as proclaimed by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), is the recognition of man as the image of God, meaning that he has the capacity to open himself to the Creator and, at the same time, to desire Him, since “only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for” (CCC, 27). The Catechism reminds us of that man – *imago Dei* – is both body and soul. The spiritual life is born of a person’s conscious relationship with the personal God; it is forged in union with Him through the sacraments and prayer, develops under the influence of acts of faith addressed to God and interior reflection, and, in short, is the fruit of the search for and encounter with the sacred.

## “Digital” practice of spiritual life

Almost from the beginning of the Internet, after years of reticence on the part of faith communities toward the new medium, the Web has become the “place” of religion, the “modern areopagus” which – like other media – should be used to proclaim the Gospel and Christian doctrine, but also to “integrate the message itself into this ‘new culture’ created by the modern media” (RM, 37). The Internet is meant to evangelize and be evangelized because, as Heidi Campbell writes, “religion and religious thinking can co-shape the Internet” (2005, p. 111). This role is played by religious portals, YouTube channels, and countless websites of parishes, communities, and individuals.

As mentioned, smartphones – devices permanently connected to the Internet – are taking over ever wider aspects of modern human life. It is no different with religious life, which became even more apparent in 2020–2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the global quarantine, sanitary restrictions prevented churches from celebrating liturgies with the faithful, while traditional media and the Internet made it possible for them to attend mass remotely and to participate in the unforgettable – because different from every year – Paschal Triduum AD 2020 during the first pandemic Easter.

The coexistence of religion and the internet should not be underestimated, given the immense influence of the latter. It is essential to recognize that the internet is a medium, and media – especially digital media – have become the “religion” of modern humans, profoundly shaping his perception of reality (Buxa 2024, p. 165). At the same time, it is crucial to emphasize that religion, or rather religiosity, has an active presence on the web. The Word of God – once primarily transmitted through literature and art and now increasingly through digital platforms – reaches anyone who seeks it, sometimes even through an accidental “click.” Without the pandemic prompting the Church to embrace new technologies, many Christians would have lost access to their faith in the online world, a space where they are daily “natives.” The absence of religion in the digital sphere would ultimately relegate it to irrelevance in both private and public life beyond the Church.

It is difficult for active religious users of the web to question the gains that the Internet brings in terms of communicating spiritual content in textual, image, or multimedia form. It cannot be overstated that unlimited sources of reflection, inspiration for religious acts, new forms of worship, and spiritual

experiences can be accessed via the smartphone. However, the encounter between spiritual life and the digital world explored via the smartphone also raises questions. Among others, is it possible to fully realize religious practices – spiritual life mediated by the Internet, by technological processes, and by the device? Can participation in online liturgy, in the future even using one's own avatar placed in a virtual temple, be a sufficient “substitute” for offline liturgy?

According to the Christian faith, the source of grace – and of man's spiritual development – are the sacraments, which a simple catechism rule encapsulates in the expression “visible signs of invisible grace.” The liturgy (from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning “public work”) of their celebration is “the summit to which the Church's activity is directed, and at the same time the source from which all its power flows” (SC 10). The liturgy is a communal work between the priest and the faithful, who participate in it in different ways. The transmission of the celebration via smartphone changes the status of the faithful – from being participants in the offline liturgy, they become “observers” of the online liturgy.

One must not lose sight of the fact that matter and form play an important role in the sacraments. For example, the administration of baptism is accompanied by consecrated water, and its form is the words: “N (= nomen), I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”; in the case of the Eucharist, the matter is the host made of unleavened flour and natural wine pressed from grapes. It is not possible to administer the matter of the sacraments through a medium; in short, there can be no fully indirect reception of the sacrament. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the Church has for centuries known the formula for spiritual communion (EE 35).

Enthusiasts of so-called Internet religion base its meaning on the concept of “transference.” Online religion has no extraordinary status – it simply represents one of the activities that man has “transferred” to virtual reality (Nowak, 2011).

It is not without reason that we recall the liturgy is, by definition, a “sacred convocation,” a gathering of the Church – a common and communal celebration. The lack of physical presence in the sacred space makes it difficult for the “spectators” to feel connected to the sacred. Moreover, physical separation does not constitute a congregation. Liturgy is accomplished in a sacred space and time consecrated to encountering God – a quality that cannot be achieved in the private, unconsecrated world, that is, outside the temple or the “sacred ground” set aside for worship. Can sacramental liturgy “from a smartphone”

serve the spiritual life? This question should be addressed to the believers themselves.

What we see today on the small screens of smartphones during the broadcasting of Mass is a continuation of what was previously realized by traditional media: first on the radio, through which the bedridden were able to experience a tremendous gift and privilege not available to people before the invention of the radio. Television added video to the voice, and the Internet has increased the choice of transmissions in different languages. The miniaturization of devices has now made the Internet available on a smartphone. Will the phone screen allow the kind of liturgical experience that can be experienced in church during the Eucharist?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, an interpretation of doctrine, has for years reminded us that an unexcused absence from Sunday Mass celebrated in the real world “is to draw upon oneself a grave sin that breaks the bonds of friendship with God and is a serious evil in spiritual life.” It is also important to bear in mind that people using new technologies and participating in online liturgy, in the way they know best, are trying to cultivate their relationship with God – their search for a path to God is also expressed in the fact that they attend Mass online rather than watching a series on Netflix at that time. Such a choice (of online streaming instead of attending liturgy in church) can be criticized, even by those far from the Church, who say of online Mass attendees that they are in church with one foot. This one foot should not be cut off by the Church, but should be given special care, seeking answers to the question of why people who “disappear from the churches” look for religious content online, want to participate in online services and Masses, and find on the Internet what they lack in a nearby church.

In the case of inspired prayer, the Internet seems to offer an opportunity to choose the most convenient time and source of transmission – one best suited to the recipient’s discretion, serving personal piety more than the teaching of the pastor. One can imagine that reading the most profound prayer texts can stimulate spiritual life. A medium such as the smartphone opens up the possibility of accessing in-depth content relevant to personal religiosity through a hypertextual virtual world.

When the phone screen transmits real-time images from cameras in the Blessed Sacrament chapel, it can definitely facilitate a sense of connection, a “gazing” at the Sanctissimum. A smartphone equipped with applications

containing biblical texts and commentaries, a “word of life” for each day, or a compendium of prayer texts helps to meet religious needs. It also enables the establishment of interpersonal relationships, fostering bonds with communities and individuals who share similar spiritual aspirations – often difficult to achieve in parishes suffering from anonymity. However, what is particularly surprising is the use of the profane in the sacred relationship with God – namely, the phone. Will it be able to serve as a means of encountering a personal God, in mysticism or the realm of the sacrament? In the case of a faith that is mature and full of trust in God’s guidance, the arrival of something new – like a divine surprise (Pope Francis, in one of his first homilies on Holy Saturday, spoke of not being afraid of surprises from God) – can lead toward something good.

Smartphone use can also be an exercise in developing a spiritual life by... unplugging, fasting from the smartphone. Isabelle Jonveaux observes a tendency to “reject” the Internet and the smartphone temporarily in order to focus on a relationship with God or spirituality. Catholics often undertake this kind of fast as an act of renunciation during Lent and Advent (Jonveaux 2020), declaring, for example, “I will not be on Facebook on Fridays during Lent.”

The smartphone and the Internet can also do much good in the lives of the sick, people with disabilities, and the immobile, as they provide alternative access to religious services such as the liturgy or homily.

Religious experience is a separate matter. It is both cognitive and experiential in nature, involving a sense of contact with a transcendent reality – the Divine (Zimnica-Kuzioła, 2013, pp. 11–12). Heidi Campbell, quoted above, argues that “if people experience the same effects offline as they do online, then religious practice in the digital space must be seen as authentic” (Campbell & Bellar, 2023, p. 124). The author references the work of Wendi Bellar, who studied the responses of a group of evangelicals participating in religious practices through mobile Bible and prayer apps (Bellar, 2017). Bellar found that users often described feeling encouraged and close to God while using these apps. The former was an important indicator for users that their religious experience was authentic. When they did not feel encouraged by the apps, they assumed the problem lay in their own religious identity (Campbell & Bellar, 2023, p. 125). This supports the legitimacy of religious practices in the digital world – though not all of them a priori. It may attest to their authenticity and their potential to influence spiritual life.

However, the risks to spiritual life must also be considered, particularly its exposure to manipulation and deception, both of which are prevalent on the Internet. When exploring religious inspiration via a smartphone, one can easily be misled by what Fr. Grzegorz Strzelczyk describes as “a flood of things that verge on esotericism, sprinkled with holy water and dressed up in a Catholic narrative.” This is even more concerning because, as he notes, “the main teacher for Polish Catholics is YouTube. Not any bishop” (Strzelczyk, 2018).

A separate issue is the inauthentic (performed for show) or entirely false religious self-presentations of bloggers or “witnesses to the faith,” who craft elevated personal narratives. As Deborah Whitehead notes, when such figures are exposed as dishonest or their stories as exaggerated, audiences may experience a “sense of ‘emotional deception’” and feel disillusioned by the spiritual world (Whitehead, 2015, p. 138). This sense of deception can significantly impact belief in the credibility and meaning of spiritual life.

Criticism, ridicule of religion, and the questioning of religious truths and authorities can be even more destructive. Mads Damgaard points out that computer-mediated communication – likely including smartphone use, which young people, in particular, rarely part with – creates new opportunities for challenging and contesting traditional, including religious, authorities. Moreover, religion itself, as a belief system, can be “re-done,” and reality can be sacralised anew (Damgaard, 2014, p. 33).

Ultimately, everything depends on what kind of knowledge and experiences the smartphone user seeks on the mobile Internet. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that “more and more people see the Internet as a sacred space and Internet technology as having a spiritual quality” (Campbell & Bellar, 2023, p. 127). In other words, it can positively impact their spiritual life, offering interactions they might not otherwise have access to without a smartphone.

## Conclusions

Canadian sociologist of religion Christopher Helland pointed out that religion directs actions and shapes the worldview of its adherents, entailing the “doing” of religion through ways of living, interacting, and participating in rituals (Helland, 2005, pp. 4–5). Religious, spiritual life is a manifestation of human religiosity both in collective religious activities (e.g., worship, rituals) and in the sphere of individual spirituality, such as prayer or mysticism.

After several decades of the popularization of smartphones equipped with mobile Internet, the ability to access network resources anytime, anywhere, and join various types of groups and social media activities, the Internet is increasingly influencing the formation of religious identity and spiritual life. It can serve as a tool in building piety and provide a sphere of spiritual support, contributing to the transformation of religious practice in the digital age. Forecasting the role of digital religion, the author states that online religious practice supplements traditional religious practices rather than replacing them, but this may change in the future (Buksa 2023b, p. 320). However, as research on digital religion shows, this process is not without consequences – smartphones shape new forms of spirituality, often outside traditional religious institutions, leading to a hybridization of faith and the growing phenomenon of “Spiritual but not Religious” (SBNR) believers.

Despite these positive aspects, this still-new phenomenon is accompanied by many questions and concerns. Among them is the question of whether practicing religion through a gadget like a smartphone, a device used for mundane activities such as buying a ticket or mindless scrolling, is a spiritual obstacle. Can mediated contact with the Word of God read “on screen” instead of from a holy book have the same religious overtones, be a comparable experience? This raises concerns about the mediation of religious experience – whether digital interaction with sacred texts can be equivalent to the embodied, communal experience of worship.

One could agree with these reservations if it were not for the fact that religion itself is a form of “mediation”, as direct contact with God in the world is not possible. We encounter God and perform religious acts always indirectly, through sacraments, prayers, and religious symbols. Nevertheless, as scholars point out, digital sacraments cannot replace physical ones – while virtual participation in the liturgy can sustain faith, it does not fulfil the theological and sacramental requirements of religious life.

It seems that in an increasingly indifferent world, especially in areas where clergy do not undertake a new evangelization of today’s “baptized pagans” – as envisioned by Fr. Franciszek Blachnicki (1921–1987) in his concept of the deuterocatechumenate – the use of smartphones should be embraced, much like the Internet once was. The increasing shift towards online religious engagement challenges the role of traditional religious institutions, and ignoring this trend could accelerate the deinstitutionalization of faith. The

possibilities offered by these widely available devices can be an effective tool for evangelization and revitalization of spiritual life if they are used wisely.

To return to the thoughts formulated in the introduction, the increasing expansion of smartphones into the sacred sphere is to be expected. There are many arguments to appreciate their role in sustaining and building personal religious life *ad intra*, in the individual experience of faith. However, as research suggests, the risks of religious digitalization must be considered, particularly the exposure to manipulation, misinformation, and emotional deception in online religious content. The fragmentation of religious authority, where clergy are replaced by digital influencers, is another challenge that must be addressed.

At the same time, the *sacrum ad extra* – the communal experience of faith in sacred space – must remain as free as possible from digital intrusions. While smartphones can facilitate religious engagement, they can also distract from authentic spiritual reflection. This principle must not be violated, especially by the clergy, who, in the name of pious practices, risk bringing smartphones before the altar through a side door. The role of digital tools should be supportive, not disruptive to the embodied, physical, and communal aspects of faith.

Ultimately, it is not about the device itself – the gadget, the phone connected to the Internet – but about the wise and conscious use of its content. The paradox of digital fasting, observed by scholars, suggests that while smartphones can be tools for spiritual growth, they also necessitate periodic disconnection to cultivate deeper contemplation. This balance between technological engagement and spiritual discipline is key to ensuring that digital religion enriches rather than undermines faith.

Undoubtedly, the spiritual life realized under the influence of the smartphone-connected world is complex. It has many forms and stages, and as sociologists of religion note, requires further research. At the same time, digital tools provide unprecedented access to religious resources, particularly for the sick, disabled, and geographically isolated believers, making faith more accessible than ever before. The future of faith in the digital age will likely be hybrid, balancing traditional religious practices with digital innovations. The key challenge remains finding equilibrium between digital engagement and preserving the depth and authenticity of religious life.

**Abstract:** This chapter explores how one can nurture, from the perspective of Christian faith, the development of a person's spiritual life in the modern era of behavioural transformations driven by smartphonisation – the frequent and often addictive use of smartphones. This issue is highly significant considering the widespread adoption of mobile phones and the exponential increase in time spent by almost all generations engaging with screens. The topic is particularly urgent as it highlights the intersection of two profoundly different realms. On the one hand, the inner spiritual world of human beings, which, since the advent of modernity, has often been marginalized or reduced to a pursuit of psycho-physical well-being. On the other hand, the virtual world, which increasingly dominates our time, particularly for younger generations, creating a “networked life” or “connected life.” The pervasive influence of this second universe – the world of screens – demands both a commitment to safeguarding the spiritual life of the *digital human*, or *homo sapiens digitalis*, and an exploration of new opportunities for spiritual growth in the smartphone era.

**Keywords:** Christian faith, spiritual life, smartphonisation, smartphone addiction, digital habits, virtual world, digital human, connected life, networked life, screen culture.

**Streszczenie:** Niniejszy rozdział analiz, w jaki sposób można pielęgnować, z perspektywy wiary chrześcijańskiej, rozwój życia duchowego człowieka we współczesnej epoce przemian behawioralnych napędzanych smartfonizacją – częstym i często uzależniającym korzystaniem ze smartfonów. Kwestia ta jest niezwykle istotna, biorąc pod uwagę powszechne wykorzystanie telefonów komórkowych oraz wykładniczy wzrost czasu spędzanego przez niemal wszystkie pokolenia przed ekranami. Temat ten jest szczególnie pilny, ponieważ ukazuje przecięcie dwóch zasadniczo odmiennych rzeczywistości. Z jednej strony – wewnętrznego, duchowego świata człowieka, który od początku nowoczesności był często marginalizowany lub sprowadzany do dążenia do dobrostanu psychofizycznego. Z drugiej strony – świata wirtualnego, który coraz bardziej dominuje nad naszym czasem, zwłaszcza wśród młodszych pokoleń, tworząc „życie w sieci” lub „życie połączone”. Wszechobecny wpływ tego drugiego uniwersum – świata ekranów – wymaga zarówno zaangażowania w ochronę życia duchowego człowieka cyfrowego, czyli *homo sapiens digitalis*, jak i poszukiwania nowych możliwości rozwoju duchowego w erze smartfonów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Wiara chrześcijańska, życie duchowe, smartfonizacja, uzależnienie od smartfonów, cyfrowe nawyki, wirtualny świat, *homo sapiens digitalis*, connected life, networked life, kultura ekranu.

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Michał PIERZCHAŁA<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0001-9214-2353

Alicja KORNICKA<sup>2</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0002-9697-1340

Paweł MARCZAK<sup>3</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0002-3907-8062

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## **Masculinity without violence – the application of NVC in the upbringing and education**

### **Męskość bez przemocy – zastosowanie komunikacji bez przemocy (NVC) w wychowaniu i edukacji**

#### **Masculinity Without Violence: The Application of NVC in Upbringing and Education**

The world of human relationships, the ability to create lasting bonds, and the skill to find solutions in conflict situations remain significant challenges,

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<sup>1</sup> Michał Pierzchała, PhD candidate: John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, e-mail: [michal.pierzchala@kul.pl](mailto:michal.pierzchala@kul.pl)

<sup>2</sup> Alicja Kornicka, PhD candidate, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, e-mail: [alicja.kornicka@kul.pl](mailto:alicja.kornicka@kul.pl)

<sup>3</sup> Paweł Marczak, PhD candidate: John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, e-mail: [pawel.marczak@kul.pl](mailto:pawel.marczak@kul.pl)

despite the rapid development of science and the growing public awareness in many areas of life. While much is said about constructive ways of expressing emotions, violence remains firmly embedded in the landscape of Polish reality and constitutes an ongoing social challenge. As research shows, in the vast majority of cases, men are the perpetrators and aggressors in domestic violence situations.

Against the background of general communication theories, including Peirce's concept (Fleischer, 2009), the NVC method finds its special place due to its multifaceted application and effectiveness in various areas of social life. The theoretical foundations of NVC refer to Carl R. Rogers' humanistic psychology (1951), who emphasized the importance of empathetic listening as the foundation of healthy interpersonal relationships. Rosenberg (2003) developed these ideas, focusing on four key elements of NVC: observation (without judgment), expressing feelings, identifying needs, and making requests in a way that does not violate the autonomy of the other person.

The aim of this article is to attempt to answer the question of how the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) method can contribute to solving the issues faced by contemporary society. Another goal of the publication is to present specific proposals for implementing NVC in the upbringing and education of men, with the aim of promoting adaptive methods for regulating emotions, meeting needs, and interpersonal communication.

## **Violence in Poland and Its Contexts**

Recent years have been characterized by rapid advancements in science, technology, and media, which have led to an increase in knowledge, changes in values, and actions among Poles in various areas of social life. Despite the popularization of social science research findings, the rise in educational standards in Poland, the promotion of personal development, psychoeducation, and constructive communication and mediation patterns, the phenomenon of violence remains a current problem, disrupting the atmosphere of many domestic and professional relationships (Kantar, 2019). According to research results and statistics, the male element dominates in this area (Makaruk et al., 2023, p. 6). According to the definition of the Polish Penal Code, "domestic violence is a single or repeated intentional act or omission that violates the rights or personal goods of close family members as well as other individuals

living together or sharing a household, especially putting them at risk of death, harm to health, violating their dignity, bodily integrity, freedom, including sexual freedom, causing physical or psychological harm, and causing moral suffering to those affected by the violence” (Ustawa z dnia 29 lipca 2005 r. o przeciwdziałaniu przemocy domowej- Dz.U. 2005 nr 180 poz. 1493 ze zm.).

Violence can take various forms. The first is physical violence, which includes any actions that cause harm to the victim’s body. Examples include beating, kicking, pulling, choking, and using tools to inflict pain. This is the most noticeable form of violence, as it leaves visible marks on the body. Psychological violence, which does not leave physical traces but has a profound impact on the emotional and intrapsychic state of the individual, is harder to observe. It may take the form of continuous insults, humiliation, criticism, manipulation, or intimidation. Victims of psychological violence often experience anxiety, depression, feelings of worthlessness, and their sense of safety and emotional stability can be severely disrupted. This phenomenon becomes particularly problematic when violence is ongoing, based on repeated acts by a parent, teacher, or another adult in a caregiver or superior role over a child, as well as when it occurs between adults. These types of acts often lead to complex trauma, which is difficult and demanding to treat (Maercker et al., 2022, p. 60–71).

Emotional violence is similar to psychological violence, but it mainly involves manipulating the victim’s emotions. It usually occurs in partner relationships, where one person tries to control the other’s emotions by instilling feelings of guilt, shame, or fear. It often takes the form of emotional blackmail, with the perpetrator assuming the roles of accuser, punisher, martyr, or seducer, leading to the devaluation of the other person’s worth, invalidation of their needs, ignoring their voice and opinion in discussions, and various forms of passive aggression (Forward & Frazier, 2020, p. 38–59). This can lead to emotional dependence on the manipulator, with victims feeling unable to defend themselves, leave the relationship, or seek help. This type of violence can involve various actions that are hard to measure or quantify. It is worth noting that it can include both derogatory or dismissive attitudes as well as behaviours such as love-bombing or gaslighting (Klein et al., 2023, p. 11–34). The emotional dimension of violence is incredibly rich, yet it is not always easy to recognize by those who experience it or their environment.

The next form of the described phenomenon is sexual violence, which refers to any form of coercion with a sexual character. This violence can take various forms: physical, verbal, or nonverbal, and each dimension is associated with the violation of boundaries in the sexual sphere, which may include rape, attempted rape, sexual harassment, exploitation of disabled individuals, trafficking, child exploitation, forcing someone into prostitution, unwanted sexual comments, coercion to undergo abortion, refusal of protection against sexually transmitted diseases, or marriage to a minor (Jedlecka, 2017, p. 19–21). Sexuality is the most intimate area of human functioning, which is why violence in this domain leaves deep wounds, not only violating the physical integrity of the person but also their intimacy, sense of self-worth, and agency. Unfortunately, statistics indicate that the perpetrators of sexual exploitation of children are most often men (Makaruk et al., 2023, p. 6).

Economic violence is another form, which involves controlling and restricting access to financial resources of a spouse, partner, child, or even an employee, leading to the loss of dignity, self-worth, and dependency on the perpetrator. It may include taking money, limiting work opportunities, forbidding the use of one's own income, and controlling the victim's spending. The goal of this form of violence is to dominate the other person, leading to control over their life and forcing them to earn or provide material goods. Although this article focuses on male violence due to its broad scope, it is important to add that women are also perpetrators of violence, mainly in the economic and relational aspects (Kędzierska, 2017).

Violence can also occur within institutional frameworks, where the state, organizations, or other entities engage in actions aimed at marginalizing, persecuting, or excluding specific individuals or social groups (Omyła-Rudzka, 2019, p. 12–13). This may include, for example, discrimination based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or social status. Reports on peer violence are also concerning, as the scale of this phenomenon in Poland is very broad (Szewczyk-Firek, 2021; Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2018, p. 46–63). Institutional violence can take various forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, and bullying, and may involve actions aimed at intimidating, excluding, or controlling employees. It is also worth noting that public perception of morally reprehensible phenomena prominently identifies the exploitation of employees (95%), giving or receiving bribes (over 90%), violence against children (89%), and abusing one's professional position for personal gain (89%) (Boguszewski, 2021, p. 1–7).

Police statistics reveal that domestic violence continues to be a serious social problem in Poland. Data shows that men make up the vast majority of perpetrators of domestic violence. To illustrate, in 2022, of the 71,631 individuals suspected of committing violence, 51,935 were men, accounting for about 73% of all perpetrators (Komenda Główna Policji, 2023). The results regarding gender discrepancies in the context of perpetrators of violence have remained at similar levels since 2012. It is also significant that alcohol continues to be one of the most frequently identified factors contributing to the escalation of domestic violence. According to data from 2023, men in Poland consume alcohol nearly three times more often than women, which is linked to the fact that they commit three times more suicides than women. Alcoholism is a major trigger for aggression in domestic and social contexts (Malczewski & Jabłoński, 2023, p. 7–9; Witkowska, 2021, p. 27–30). Furthermore, approximately 60-70% of perpetrators of violence were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the act (Komenda Główna Policji, 2023). Although the number of drunk perpetrators of crimes has decreased over the years, alcohol not only acts as a catalyst for aggression but also hinders timely intervention (Fal, 2020; Frąckowiak & Motyka, 2015; Zgliczyński, 2016).

As the data indicates, the COVID-19 pandemic period contributed to an increase in domestic violence, both in Poland and globally. Due to restrictions associated with lockdown, the closure of schools and educational institutions, as well as limited social contact, many individuals found themselves in a situation of isolation, which had negative consequences for safety within homes. Increased time spent in confinement, in the presence of perpetrators of violence, as well as stress related to health and economic uncertainty, deepened the problem of difficult family relationships. Statistics show that the number of reports of domestic violence significantly rose during the pandemic (Ławska & Makara-Studzińska, 2023; Sarnowski & Dominiak, 2021; Zin-Sędek, 2021). A notable increase in the number of completed “Blue Card” forms was recorded. Data shows that the number increased to 85,575, marking a clear difference compared to previous years (Komenda Główna Policji, 2023); Ławska & Makara-Studzińska, 2023). It is also worth mentioning the issue of violence in relationships where both partners are perpetrators. Although the text focuses on the male element in the context of violence, it should be noted that women sometimes trigger or maintain the violent dynamics in the family (Dutka, 2014).

The establishment of this procedure has contributed to combating violence, but it still requires improvement in order to enhance the standards of victim safety (Witkowska-Paleń, 2023, p. 189–205). The pandemic presented a huge challenge for both law enforcement and organizations dealing with violence prevention, as it simultaneously reduced access to interventions in cases of reports, and isolation made it difficult to solve problems at the local level (Bebel, 2022; Guessoum et al., 2020; Kasiak et al., 2022). While men are not always perpetrators of domestic violence, they constitute the overwhelming majority among those suspected of committing it. Therefore, the need for anti-violence actions, preventive measures, and the promotion of psychoeducation and NVC to improve social well-being seems justified.

### **The power of Nonviolent Communication (NVC)**

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a method aimed at fostering mutual understanding, respect, and empathy between people, even in difficult and conflict-laden situations. It was developed by American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg, who noticed that communication styles based on accusations, judgments, and criticism often lead to the escalation of conflicts and the breakdown of relationships. NVC, on the other hand, offers an alternative, teaching how to express one's feelings and needs in a way that fosters constructive solutions (Rosenberg, 2022, p. 11–29). To illustrate different communication styles, the theory's author used the symbols of the giraffe and the jackal to represent the language of dialogue and conflict, respectively (Mol, 2015, p. 8–29). There are several key elements of NVC theory that help to understand its principles.

1. All people have the same needs, but different preferred ways of fulfilling them. Feelings inform us about whether our needs are being met or unmet.
2. The needs of all people are equally important and can at least be taken into account if they cannot be fully satisfied. People are willing to contribute to the good of others, as long as they do so voluntarily.
3. People do not act against us but towards fulfilling their own needs. Every criticism, judgment, and anger are maladaptive attempts to meet their own needs.

4. Conflicts arise from the belief that there is only one way to fulfill a given need.
5. Establishing contact with the other person is the second step in conflict resolution; the first step is connecting with one's own feelings and needs (Dermont-Owsińska et al., 2019, p. 18–20).

The NVC method is based on four key steps: observation, identifying and expressing feelings, defining needs, and making requests. A fundamental principle of NVC is to avoid judging or accusing the other person, which is often the cause of tension in relationships. Instead, the parties focus on their own emotions and needs, which allows for more open and secure dialogues. NVC is especially effective in conflict situations because it facilitates communication that does not escalate tensions but instead allows for understanding and cooperation.

The application of Nonviolent Communication in the family can significantly improve the quality of relationships between spouses or partners, as well as between parents and children. NVC helps in expressing feelings and needs openly, which reduces the risk of growing aggression and tension within family systems. Parents can learn how to talk about their emotions in ways that do not blame but strengthen the bond with their children. Particularly in the case of fathers, who often have difficulty expressing their emotions, NVC is an excellent tool for developing empathy and sensitivity. Children who learn to communicate in this way are more likely to resolve conflicts without aggression, which can have a positive impact on family well-being (Islam & Naher, 2017, p. 69–75).

In a professional context, the model proposed by Rosenberg can be a tool for improving relationships between employees and employers. The communication type discussed does not impose compromise or the abandonment of expectations regarding the employee or employer but instead allows for a clear and accessible presentation of one's needs and expectations. Empathy-based communication supports the creation of teams where cooperation can be established more easily, and team members can assist each other. Recent years have seen a growing appreciation for psychology and communication sciences, which has led to the promotion of leadership based on empathy, as such communication forms can contribute to the better well-being of employees, which in turn improves team efficiency (Berendt et al.,

2018, p. 81–98). The education sector also provides a space where NVC can be helpful in resolving conflicts and building bonds. It can serve as a practical guide for children and adolescents, but also for teachers, education workers, parents, and other individuals involved in the education sector (Hildebrandt, 2024, p. 23–26). As Marshall Rosenberg emphasized, “When we listen to our own and others’ deep needs, according to NVC, human relationships appear to us in an entirely new light” (Rosenberg, 2022, p. 13). As an educational, professional, and social tool, NVC has the potential to bring about real changes in the way people communicate with one another, improving the quality of life for individuals and communities.

### **Proposals for applying NVC in the upbringing and education of men**

The description of the context of violence in Poland and the presentation of the key principles of Nonviolent Communication in this article serve to highlight how the application of NVC can contribute to raising or adapting men to safely resolve conflict situations. Research shows that over 60% of men declare they have no one to talk to about their emotions, and in the group of young respondents (19–25 years old), this percentage increases to nearly 79% (Gedeon Richter Polska, 2024). Insufficient contact with one’s own emotional states and receiving destructive scripts for expressing emotions in the home, peer environment, or online environment serves as a “recipe” for engaging in violence. When substances like psychoactive drugs and addiction problems come into play, it becomes even easier to inflict harm in families and relationships. Learning to fulfil key needs is one of the pillars of counteracting the destructive mechanisms that men, in particular, use. NVC can serve as a useful method for self-discovery, uncovering a new path for expressing feelings and fulfilling needs.

To successfully implement Nonviolent Communication as a tool in upbringing and education, actions must be taken at various levels – from working with parents, teachers, to professionals engaged in violence prevention. A key starting point is raising parents’ awareness of the importance of psychoeducation in the emotional development of their children. When implemented in family or school life, this method allows for the ongoing resolution of tensions, reducing the risk of peer and domestic violence.

Psychoeducational workshops and courses, as spaces for teaching parents how to use the “giraffe language” instead of the “jackal language,” can become a breakthrough in implementing healthy parenting patterns (Mol, 2015, p. 46–63). NVC can be a valuable tool for addressing conflicts and destructive emotional regulation scripts that children and adolescents may observe in society. Particularly for growing boys, the four pillars of “giraffe language” can serve as tools for expressing true feelings without the need to suppress or manifest them aggressively.

An important aspect of implementing NVC in education is its promotion at every stage of learning – from kindergarten to universities. Even at the youngest ages, children can learn to recognize their emotions and translate them into concrete actions, avoiding aggression in relationships with peers. Pilot studies in elementary schools show the effectiveness of implementing this communication method in reducing interpersonal difficulties (Suzić et al., 2018). NVC has instructional potential, showing how to communicate with feelings, recognize one’s needs, and fulfil them in relationships, instead of resorting to alcohol, other substances, or destructive behaviours. Educators, school psychologists, and teachers equipped with the proper knowledge about NVC can effectively introduce this method into their daily work with children and youth, promoting dialogue, respect, and empathy. At the stage of high schools and universities, NVC can help to develop the ability to listen to others, negotiate, and reach a consensus. It is crucial that teachers are well-trained in this regard, so they can confidently and systematically implement the principles discussed during educational hours, shaping young people who will be able to handle difficult emotions in adult life. Pilot studies among nursing students indicated significant improvements in communication skills, increased self-esteem, and reduced aggression due to the incorporation of NVC elements into study programs (Sung & Kweon, 2022). Similarly, studies on male student groups have confirmed the effectiveness of reducing aggression levels through the application of empathic communication (Najafabadi et al., 2024).

NVC can also be quite useful in the context of combating domestic violence. Workshops and education implemented by educational institutions, local governments, and non-profit organizations can inspire work with men who use violence in their families. NVC provides tools for more conscious and responsible expression of feelings. Moreover, this communication method not only changes the way men can respond in conflict situations, but it also

helps other family members – wives, children, in-laws – learn how to express their emotions without the fear of escalating the conflict. Family workshops can lead to the creation of new, healthier bonds. It is, therefore, beneficial for organizations working with domestic violence victims to promote NVC as an effective complementary method to professional psychotherapeutic help. It is important to emphasize that empathy-based communication does not replace crisis intervention and legal anti-violence actions, but it can contribute significantly to social change.

NVC, as a communication method, also finds its application in a broader social context, especially in situations where tensions can lead to violence escalation. NVC can be used not only in the face of major social crises but also in daily interactions, which are often tense, especially in large cities or diverse environments. Examples of such tensions can include protests by specific professional or social groups against new legal or tax regulations, opposition to job reductions, or policies of a given company. While these situations require mediation and professional negotiations, NVC can help to lower the “temperature of the conflict,” enabling the exchange of opinions and arguments. Introducing “giraffe language” in training for social leaders, activists, or organizations involved in andragogy can assist in building structures based on respect for people’s dignity and the common good. This method has its limitations, and its application does not guarantee agreement, but it creates the best possible conditions for mediation and negotiation (Islam & Naher, 2017; Norman et al., 2023). As the renowned Italian psychiatrist and writer V. Andreoli states, cooperation, rather than competition, seems to be the proper direction for development and functioning in the 21st century (Andreoli, 2023, p. 22–30). One of the key elements in supporting dialogue and social cooperation is fostering more empathetic styles of building contact, managing emotions, and conflicts. In this and many other areas of upbringing, education, and shaping modern individuals, empathy-based communication is essential – requiring little effort, but having the potential for real change.

## Conclusion

Although the scale of violence in Poland has decreased in recent years, it remains a phenomenon that should be fought against and completely eradicated. The application of NVC can become an effective tool in promoting

an empathetic and safe model of action in the face of conflicts and interpersonal tensions. The analysis of the violence issue in relation to men has shown the need for educational intervention in the process of upbringing and raising awareness, providing tools from the earliest stages of life to meet needs in a way that does not harm others. The conclusions presented in the article point to the necessity of continuing work on reducing aggression levels and popularizing the practical application of NVC in the context of the educational system, family environments, and local communities. Nonviolent Communication has the potential to influence men, helping them to understand themselves, communicate their needs, and meet them without harming others, but with sensitivity to the other person.

**Abstract:** The article presents the proposal to apply Nonviolent Communication (NVC) as a strategy for reducing the phenomenon of violence in Poland, with particular focus on men, who continue to dominate in the role of perpetrators. Despite advancements in technology and growing public awareness, violence remains a significant challenge, including in the Polish context. Nonviolent Communication, based on empathy and understanding the needs of all parties involved in an interaction, can serve as an effective method for reducing aggression and fostering constructive, nonviolent forms of dialogue. The article also presents suggestions for incorporating NVC into parenting and education, as an important element for improving the quality of relationships within families, schools, and local communities.

**Keywords:** Nonviolent Communication (NVC), masculinity, domestic violence, conflict resolution, empathy

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł przedstawia propozycję zastosowania komunikacji bez przemocy (ang. Nonviolent Communication, NVC) jako strategii w redukcji zjawiska przemocy w Polsce, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem mężczyzn, którzy wciąż dominują w roli sprawców. Mimo rozwoju technologii i rosnącej świadomości ludzi, przemoc pozostaje poważnym wyzwaniem także w polskim kontekście. Komunikacja bez przemocy, bazująca na empatii i zrozumieniu potrzeb wszystkich stron zaangażowanych w interakcję, może stanowić skuteczną metodę zmniejszania agresji i budowania konstruktywnych, nieprzemocowych form dialogu. W artykule zaprezentowano również propozycje wdrożenia metody NVC w wychowanie i edukację, jako istotny element poprawiający jakość relacji w rodzinie, szkole i lokalnych społecznościach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Komunikacja bez przemocy (NVC), męskość, przemoc domowa, rozwiązywanie konfliktów, empatia

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Robert POCHOPIEŃ<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0009-0008-5855-5179

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## The evolution of understanding of fatherhood. Attempt at synthesis

### Ewolucja rozumienia ojcostwa. Próba syntezy

#### Introduction

The behavioural models and social roles of the father that were created throughout history were based on the innate predispositions of the father, on one hand, and they are a result from the necessity for him to take on specific roles, on the other hand. Over time, attempts were made to provide a compelling theoretical justification by including philosophical reflection in the topic, naturally according to the assumptions of a given philosophy. This was necessary not only because the reason “it is a gift of God”, should always be used, but also because the practice used in everyday life itself requires reflection. We know perfectly well how thoughtless action ends. Creative reason was necessary even more so in relation to such an important issue as

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Pochopień, PhD, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland, email: r.pochopien@gmail.com

the evolution of the understanding of fatherhood. Since pedagogy is a science whose main subjects of research are the processes of upbringing, education, and broadly understood care for a person, it is appropriate to look at this problem also from this perspective, i.e., the father in this role. The father, who can be called “paidagogos” (originally - “a guardian and guide of boys”) i.e., the one who is a teacher, leads and takes care of the child. The article also aims at attempting to outline a historical approach, recall various thinkers with their often completely different views, as well as to recall the voice of Catholic theology (Benedict XVI, Francis), and call for further exploration of this issue for the sake of our Christian fathers.

### Historical Outline

Historically, it was a man’s task to be the leader of a tribe (king), a defender (warrior), a sage whose duty was to interpret life phenomena (magician), and the head of the family responsible for its needs. Over time, these roles and functions have gained philosophical justification. A political treatise “*Patriarcha*” by a Protestant writer Robert Filmer might be an example. Written around 1640, this work was published posthumously in 1680. The author derives royal authority directly from the authority of the father. According to him, biblical Adam had, at least potentially, royal authority. The royal and paternal authority derive from and complement each other, for they have the same meaning, except that the king is the father of many families, and the father, who is his subject, is the father of one. Filmer used historical, biblical, and social arguments to demonstrate that royal power has attributes of paternal power. By the will of God, the natural state of man is a social state. Man comes into the world as a helpless being that depends on others and is thus a subject. The natural subordination of children to their father gives him the power over their offspring, and their independence may be gained as an act of the father’s grace. This applies especially to the decision to get married. Filmer was inspired by the writings of Jean Bodin, who saw a renewal of morality and public order in the restoration of social significance fatherhood formerly had. He wrote:

In any rightly ordered commonwealth, that power of life and death over their children which belongs to them under the law of God and of nature, should be restored to parents. This most primitive of customs was observed in ancient times by the Persians, and people of Asia generally, by the Romans and the

Celts; it was also recognized throughout the New World till the time of the Spanish conquests. If this power is not restored, there is no hope of any restoration of good morals, honour, virtue, or the ancient splendour of commonwealths. [...] Yet paternal power was gradually undermined in the time of the decline of the Roman Empire. [...] The affection of parents for their children is so strong, that the law has always rightly presumed that they will only do those things which are of benefit and honour to their children (Bodin, 2024).

John Locke represented the theory of limited anti-paternalism. He tried to show that Christian fatherhood is not of a monarchical nature because political power is a human creation. Therefore, the commandment to honour one's parents did not apply to every authority, especially state authority. He opposed natural law to the human law of convention, on which political society was based. He accused Filmer of misinterpreting the Bible, especially regarding Eve's subordination to Adam, woman's subordination to man, and especially wife's subordination to husband. He believed that the father's paternal authority over children is not a political authority of life and death. It is mainly connected with the obligation to care for the child until the child develops the ability to think rationally, which enables the recognition of human rights. Without this level of consciousness, there can be no freedom for a human being. Locke then proposed almost identical forms and scope of education for girls and boys.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a supporter of traditional ideals of men and women and of sharp contrasts in social roles based on gender. In his opinion, a man should be physically strong and spiritually independent – a producer of goods and defender of his country, while an ideal woman ought to be a tender and caring priestess of the home hearth – a practical, modest and patient housewife, fully devoted to her children and husband. In everyday life, both sexes should be significantly separated. Masculinity was to be part of a social arrangement which resulted from unanimous consent – a social contract whose aim was the common good. While a strong man was to be a defender of the country, assuming a military role by a woman would conflict with her role as a mother. Education should primarily develop natural predispositions in children, and in the process, prepare them for social life. Both reasons prompted different education for boys and girls. In the upbringing of boys, Rousseau recommended taking care of unhampered physical development, and only secondarily of shaping mental abilities through familiarization with the world of things, and finally of introduction to coexistence with other people. He also claimed that successful functioning of men in the family guarantees

a strong state, because all social feelings are shaped in the family. He wrote: “Is it not the good son, the good husband, the good father, who makes the good citizen?” (Rousseau, 1762).

The purpose of marriage was obvious to Rousseau: living together and raising children. Spouses had very different roles in the family: the man was to set strategic goals, make decisions about the family’s relationship with the outside world, and be the decision-making authority while the woman could devote herself entirely to household matters. The husband should have control over his wife’s conduct to make sure that the children he must acknowledge and feed do not belong to someone else. An adulterous wife pretends to love her husband and deceives him and, moreover, deceives the entire society (she bribes the servants, sets a bad example for children, robs her husband). Respecting each other’s natural abilities, the husband and wife should complement each other, creating a perfect moral organism, in which

woman is the eye and man the hand, but the two are so dependent on one another that the man teaches the woman what to see, while she teaches him what to do (ibidem).

J. J. Rousseau (1962) did not believe in equality of the sexes: *T*

these resemblances and differences must have an influence on the moral nature; this inference is obvious, and it is confirmed by experience; it shows the vanity of the disputes as to the superiority or the equality of the sexes.

A significant breakthrough in the contemporary view of the social role of gender occurred in the 1960s with the emergence of sociobiology, the science of the biological foundations of social behaviour. Researchers W. D. Hamilton, R. L. Trivers, G. C. Williams and others created its theoretical foundations, while Edward O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins were its propagators. Sociobiologists assumed that during evolution, natural selection refers not so much to individuals as their genotype. Hence, genes, which are carriers of hereditary traits, are the most important decision-maker in the process of evolution, and they strive for multiplication. To ensure success for his genotype, a man should impregnate young and healthy women (whose offspring will likely be strong) as often as possible. Therefore, it is advantageous for a male in most animal species, including humans, to be domineering, emotionally unstable, impulsive, and even aggressive. In sociobiology, Steven Goldberg put forward a theory of perpetual patriarchy based on the existence of a physiological factor that prevents the formation of a non-patriarchal society. The high position of

a man in society and his status in the family were based on a physiological factor and, therefore, did not depend on the rights granted to women. A woman could take up almost any social and professional role, because most of them are not physiologically determined. Nevertheless, professions and roles played by men were usually regarded as more prestigious. Ultimately, dominance was related to innate male aggression, which was caused by testosterone. Others, like Geoff Dench, argued that patriarchy has serious economic advantages that determined the dominance of men in most societies.

### Contemporary Attempts to Define Sexuality

Analyses of the situation of the family often include currently challenging problems and tasks. The analyses are not usually focused on individual components of families such as fatherhood. However, the crisis of fatherhood seems to influence the functioning of the contemporary Catholic family. It is difficult not to notice that, along with the rapidly growing process of the disappearance of patriarchal relations, there has been an increased discussion about the appearance of a *civilization without fathers*. The reluctance to build new models of fatherhood, at least the ones which aspire to be universal, is accompanied by a tendency to look at fatherhood from a negative perspective, define what it should not be and omit its positive aspects. The biggest influence on mounting difficulties in identifying a man with his parental role are undoubtedly new models of masculinity, strongly promoted yet ambiguous. Inappropriate paternal attitudes are shown in the public sphere much more often in relation to the father than to the mother. The critical assessment of paternal attitudes is often justified. The number of *fatherless families* is growing, while a significant number of children might be called *orphans with living fathers* – the fathers who have problems understanding the essence of fatherhood, the infantile *Peter Pans*, who never fully grew up.

Otto Weininger, in his book *Sex and Character*, treated masculinity and femininity as opposing elements, without prejudging their metaphysical character (whether they are two components or two aspects of one). One of the main theses was the relativity of human gonochorism. He wrote,

All the peculiarities of the male sex may be present in the female in some form, however weakly developed; and so also the sexual characteristics of the woman persist in the man (Weininger, 2024).

According to Weininger sexuality is ultimately determined by the following factors: primary sexual characteristics (male testicles, female ovaries); primary internal sexual characteristics (spermatic cords, seminal vesicle, urethra, uterus) and external (organs); secondary sexual characteristics (anatomical features and processes that appear during the process of growing up, but do not directly serve reproduction (mutation, facial hair, breasts development); tertiary sexual characteristics (innate features distinguished for practical reasons which are revealed through activity or behaviour: male – stubbornness and strength, female – delicacy); quaternary sexual characteristics, which are accidental and arise from habit, custom, or tradition (smoking and drinking in men, handicrafts in women). According to Weininger, an individual is never one hundred percent male or female but is masculine or feminine to a certain degree. The *ideal you*, i.e. the *100 percent man* or *100 percent woman* does not exist in the real world.

The theme of androgyny is currently clearly present primarily in the practice of social life aimed at unisexuality. The sharp segregation of the sexes in history emphasized their distinctiveness and differences between them. Currently, professional work, cultural life, everyday duties, as well as political and economic life and many other aspects of public and social engagement aim at unifying the places and roles of the sexes. The modern model of upbringing means that the frequency of androgyny is increasing in both men and women. This results, for example, from the strong feminization of teaching professions and the frequent dominance of the mother in the home environment (additionally, single motherhood). In the case of men, this manifests itself in a greater flexibility of behaviour, and search for optimal life strategy. Androgynous women have a more permanent unification of masculine and feminine traits in their own *I*. Researchers claim that in Western countries about 50% of the population reveals traditional traits of masculinity/femininity, and already about 30% of androgynous traits.

Heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality exist in the sphere of sexual and romantic attraction. A form that has recently been noticed, however, is asexuality – weakening of erotic/sexual reactions or their complete disappearance (in a healthy person, it basically does not occur). In a radical biological and psychological form, it can also take the form of transsexuality. It is also associated with contesting the traditional understanding of fatherhood.

This tendency was reinforced by the view that biological dimension of sex should be rejected, differences between women and men erased, and sexual otherness recognized as the norm, even if this meant destroying the family. According to the *gender* theory, there is no reason to distinguish between men and women, and biological sex is not part of a person's identity. Femininity and masculinity are abstractions which are not supported by human nature. Gender is a matter of convention; it is merely a social construction. It is not determined by biology and psychology as the supporters of classical sexuality would have it, but by culture. *Sex* is determined by genes and hormones, but *gender* is shaped by culture, i.e. the influence of family and environment during childhood.

Gender ideology, or the so-called social or cultural gender, which is not identified with biological sex, appeared at the end of the 20th century. The theory began with the signing of the Amsterdam Treaties in 1999, according to which the strategy of implementing equal opportunities for the sexes became binding for all European Union countries. A further step was the ruling by the European Parliament in 2006 that homophobia, which is an irrational fear of homosexuality, and aversion to people with different preferences, i.e. homosexuals, bisexuals, lesbians, transsexuals, is considered an offense equal to racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. A new field called *Gender Studies* appeared. The popularity of the new ideology, which generates a new outlook on fatherhood, is so widespread that contemporary family studies indicate two possible directions of approaching fatherhood: one built on the framework of traditional thinking about masculinity and another one constructed on the concept of *gender*. This mutually exclusive duality indicates a deep division and deconstruction of the concept of the father. The problem is deliberately discussed more broadly from a historical perspective. These data have naturally been available for some time. Simultaneously, one should not underestimate new achievements in this area, and not only in pedagogical, theological or philosophical terms, but also in medical sciences. However, an honest debate in many circles is necessary. The debate on "gender". For a father to be "paidagogos", he must first know who he is. All the more so because the right to change sex and to self-determine gender has been recognized as an element of the right to human freedom. The emphasis on freedom is absolutely right, but it must be remembered that in the light of the Gospel, Love and eternal life, not freedom is the highest virtue. The understanding of sexuality as freely shaped by culture

and society has primarily affected the family, the understanding of the roles of men and women, i.e. father and mother. The definition of fatherhood has become arbitrary because the criteria for determining it have been introduced relatively. Relativism identified with freedom is very dangerous.

### **The Voice of the Pope and Theologian – Benedict XVI and Francis**

This concept of sexuality has met with strong polemics from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Pope Benedict XVI, referring to the treatise and teaching of the French Rabbi Gilles Bernheim, pointed out a significant error of gender ideology:

According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society. The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious. People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves. According to the biblical creation account, being created by God as male and female pertains to the essence of the human creature. This duality is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God. This very duality as something previously given is what is now disputed. The words of the creation account: “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27) no longer apply. No, what applies now is this: it was not God who created them male and female – hitherto society did this, now we decide for ourselves. Man and woman as created realities, as the nature of the human being, no longer exist. Man calls his nature into question. From now on he is merely spirit and will. The manipulation of nature, which we deplore today where our environment is concerned, now becomes man’s fundamental choice where he himself is concerned. From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be. Man and woman in their created state as complementary versions of what it means to be human are disputed. But if there is no pre-ordained duality of man and woman in creation, then neither is the family any longer a reality established by creation. Likewise, the child has lost the place he had occupied hitherto and the dignity pertaining to him (Hall, 2012).

The above, extensively quoted statement by Benedict XVI precisely indicates the reflection on the subject of gender from the point of view of

Catholic theology. This is one of the elements of our exploration of the subject of the evolution of fatherhood. However, it is currently extremely important because it touches on the very essence of being a human being, a man, a husband and finally a father.

Continuing this line of reasoning and argumentation, in an interview with the Argentinean daily “La Nacion” on March 11, 2023, Pope Francis talked about a futuristic experience that he had many years ago when he read a book *Lord of the World* written by Robert Hugh Benson in 1907. The Pope said that the book presents the idea of “a future in which differences are disappearing and everything is the same, everything is uniform, a single leader of the whole world” (Catholic News Agency, 2024). The Pope then said that it was there that he began to feel a tendency to reduce differences, while he believes that the richness of humanity lies in its differences. The Pope said that he talks about gender

ideology because some people are a bit naive and believe that it is the way to progress. He said that they do not distinguish what is respect for sexual diversity or diverse sexual preferences from what is already an anthropology of gender, which is extremely dangerous because it eliminates differences, and that erases humanity, the richness of humanity, both personal, cultural, and social, the diversities and the tensions between differences (ibidem).

The Pope very aptly pointed out the difference between respect for sexual diversity and the fact that gender anthropology “erases humanity”, that is, something fundamental for every human being.

Society has again started a discussion on the topic of family and parenthood, also including fatherhood. Political correctness promotes gender ideology and issues related to it such as same sex marriage, bisexual people (who are attracted toward both men and women) and promotes freedom in selecting gender for oneself.

There is an ongoing debate on the legal consequences of such solutions, and it also concerns practical understanding of paternity by law, the right to adopt a child by same sex couples, or the limits of state interference in parental authority. Regardless of the momentary conclusions of these debates and discussions, the understanding of fatherhood is becoming increasingly blurred. The family as a group and social institution is changing along with this process. It is subject to constant changes: structural and social, cultural, ideological as well as technological and economic. An example of it is the position of the

child, who is increasingly becoming an emotionally important value, as well as a burden. The confusion around the concept of the father influences in turn an increasingly destructive image of the wife – mother, and the child.

## Contemporary Proposals for the Definition of Fatherhood

Fatherhood is no longer an unambiguous concept. It defines reality which is both lost and unknown. To describe new social relationships about marriage and family additional descriptive words or expressions are used (*adjectival fatherhood*) to describe its nature. This is intended to illustrate the specific situation of a specific *father*. And so, among the many definitions of modern fatherhood, we can list the following:

- desired fatherhood – impossible to achieve, for example, due to disability;
- long-term fatherhood – of adult children who get married; also, for example, of a daughter-in-law;
- presumed paternity – used in connection with a legal determination of biological paternity;
- denied paternity – court-determined because not accepted by the alleged father;
- absent fatherhood – forced by, for example, difficult economic situation and the need to earn money abroad;
- limited paternity – by a court decision or as a result of unfavourable or unfortunate circumstances, for example, illness;
- unfortunate fatherhood – when a father abandons a severely disabled child;
- adoptive paternity – arising as a result of legal adoption of a child;
- helpless fatherhood – related to difficult life situations, for example, job loss, homelessness;
- anonymous paternity – resulting from conception with sperm from an unknown donor, stored in so-called sperm bank;
- embarrassing fatherhood – including extramarital fatherhood, may sometimes be desired
- bisexual fatherhood - when the father is also homosexual, although strongly attached to the child;

- discriminated paternity – when, for example, mother prevents contact with the child following divorce;
- fighting paternity – organized in associations fighting for their parental rights;
- diasporic fatherhood – raising a child, e.g. after a divorce, but not living in the same household as the child;
- single fatherhood – mainly as a result of the mother's death, or after divorce, when the court assigned parental rights to the father;
- toxic fatherhood – a negative type, when the father's influence on the child is toxic because the father is an alcoholic, troublemaker or a drug addict;
- pathological paternity – in its extreme form – incestuous, related to molesting the child;
- atypical paternity – for example, resulting from in vitro fertilization or another medical technique;
- unemployed fatherhood – economically or socially disadvantaged due to job loss;
- fatherhood, step fatherhood – when a man who is not related to the child takes on the role of a stepfather;
- incomplete paternity – mainly concerns infertility of the male, the female partner or both;
- forced fatherhood – when a man does not want a child, and the mother wants it or even forces it;
- maintenance paternity – related to enforcing maintenance for one's own child;
- disputed paternity – established by the court at the request of authorized persons: the child, mother or prosecutor;
- prenatal paternity – for example, in a situation of a dislike of the partner, who is usually forced to terminate pregnancy;
- conscious fatherhood – planned, an optimal situation, responsible;
- biological paternity – the most common type of paternity, related to reproductive health;
- symbolic fatherhood – linking fatherhood with the concept of God and His Divine Fatherhood, also related to great national ancestors or social heroes (Wesoły, 2013).

Such a comparison is naturally only intended to indicate the diversity of approach towards this topic today. The difficulty of defining fatherhood does not, however, exempt us from the need to analyse and understand new social situations that many contemporary fathers encounter. Each challenge awaits a solution and an answer to the basic duties that are associated with fatherhood. Absent fathers continue to be fathers. The crisis of the family, also associated with changes of a model of the father, cannot become the source of a *civilization without fathers*.

The world and history are trying to deeply root themselves in the family, interfering with the understanding of the role of the father and questioning his place in the development of all who create the community together with him. The Church places great hope in returning to the original – biblical and Christian – analysis of fatherhood. A more direct relationship of the family with God can contribute to a new, vital development of fatherhood. It would be based on deep spirituality, stemming from the teaching about God the Father, as well as from the basic assumptions of personalism, the teaching about the dignity of each person and their rights. The absence - especially among young people - of experiencing sacrificial love which emphasizes dignity of the person raises concern. Fathers' engagement in daily work, which drains a lot of their energy and the cult of economic success and professional career place work at the forefront of the lives of fathers and lead to neglecting family ties. Negative intergenerational patterns bring with them the image of the father as an insensitive or emotionally dry parent.

## Conclusion

Contemporary reflection on the role of the father often comes down to not removing him from the family, to making everyone aware of the necessity of his presence in the process of raising and developing the family. Pedagogy, which examines the process of education – indicating specific means, goals, and content – is vital for such reflection. The conclusions of its scientific research become a specific guideline in the everyday upbringing of children. Despite differences between the sexes and the fact that men and women experience and interpret reality differently, both complement each other and together create the right conditions for the growth of their children. An analysis of the historical approach to fatherhood leads one to ask the questions which

two scholars – J. Delumeau and D. Roche – had: whether the father still has a future in the West, whether we are not complicit or indifferent witnesses of disintegration of fatherhood, and whether all this means the death of the father, or possibly the birth of a “*new father*”. Despite many publications about family, the father very often remains an “*unknown being*”. His needs and expectations are not often discussed. Likewise, postulates to support future fathers in their pro-family formation are seldom formulated. Directions and paths for the further evolution of the father’s role in the family are rarely set. The vocation to fatherhood still awaits a clear and thorough understanding. Such conclusions may be surprising, because the figure of the father has been with us practically forever. And yet it turns out that an attempt to show the evolution and synthesis of the concept of *father* is current and needed, especially when we think about the future of our Christian families. It is relevant in contemporary scientific, interdisciplinary considerations, among which pedagogy, let us emphasize this once again, has its special place. As a society, we cannot leave fathers alone. Every wise and pragmatic idea to support them is worth its weight in gold today.

**Abstract:** The word “evolution” comes from Latin “evolvere” – “to develop” – that is, to reveal or demonstrate hidden possibilities. The aim is to capture the process of changes which occur over time. The modern term “evolution” simply means change. This article attempts to synthesize the evolution of the concept of “fatherhood”. It considers the historical context, mentions selected thinkers who have dealt with this subject and outlines the position of the Catholic Church expressed by the last two popes. The article refers to the traditional approach to gender and indicates contemporary attempts to define fatherhood. It calls for substantial support for fathers in their educational activities, also in the pedagogical aspect, which is extremely important. Fathers need support and encouragement to actively participate in the raising their children. Both theoretical (scientific) and pragmatic (practical) guidelines, which consider contemporary scientific achievements and the cultural context, need to be considered.

**Keywords:** fatherhood, family, pedagogy, philosophy, evolution, history, upbringing

**Streszczenie:** Słowo „ewolucja” pochodzi od łacińskiego „evolvere” – „rozwick się” – czyli, ujawniać bądź demonstrować ukryte możliwości. Chodzi o uchwycenie procesu zmian zachodzących w czasie. Współczesny termin „ewolucja” oznacza po prostu zmianę. Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje próbę syntezy ewolucji pojęcia „ojcostwo”. Uwzględnia rys historyczny; wskazuje na wybranych myślicieli zajmujących się także tym tematem; przypomina również stanowisko Kościoła katolickiego, wyrażone przez ostatnich dwóch papieży. Artykuł nawiązuje do tradycyjnego ujęcia płci, a także wskazuje na współczesne próby definicji ojcostwa. Upomina się o konkretne wsparcie ojców w ich działaniach wychowawczych, ujmowanych również w aspekcie pedagogicznym, co jest niezwykle ważne. Ojcowie potrzebują wsparcia, zachęty do tego, by czynnie uczestniczyć we wzrastaniu swoich dzieci. Potrzebne są zarówno rozważania teoretyczne (naukowe), jak i pragmatyczne, czyli konkretne wskazówki uwzględniające współczesne osiągnięcia nauki oraz kontekst kulturowy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ojcostwo, rodzina, pedagogika, filozofia, ewolucja, historia, wychowanie

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Marcin KĘSKA<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0009-0006-6681-704X

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## Cash benefits in foster care

### Świadczenia pieniężne w pieczy zastępczej

#### Introduction

The family constitutes the natural and optimal environment for a child's development. However, when referring to the word "family," I mean a properly functioning family—one that provides children with a nurturing environment for growth and meets all their emotional and material needs. However, there are cases where a family does not function properly. In such situations, the well-being of children may be at risk, and their needs may go unmet or even neglected. Under these circumstances, state intervention in family life is necessary, activating a support system aimed at improving parental attitudes, helping parents fulfil their responsibilities, and, if necessary, equipping them with the appropriate competencies and skills. Unfortunately, if support efforts for families in crisis do not yield results, children are placed in foster care.

Foster care plays a crucial role in the social welfare system, providing care for children who, for various reasons, cannot stay with their biological families.

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<sup>1</sup> Marcin Kęska, LL.M., University of the National Education Commission, Krakow, Poland, e-mail: marcin.keska@up.krakow.pl

Benefits associated with foster care are a key component of the support system, ensuring that children have appropriate living, educational, and emotional conditions. In Poland, foster care is regulated by the Act of June 9, 2011, on Family Support and the Foster Care System. The primary legal acts governing financial benefits in foster care are:

- The Act of June 9, 2011, on Family Support and the Foster Care System,
- The Act of November 28, 2003, on Family Benefits,
- The Act of February 11, 2016, on State Assistance in Raising Children.

In this article, I will outline the provisions of these legal acts, under which foster families can receive financial assistance from the state.

## Parental Authority

To better understand the essence of foster care and, consequently, the issue of cash benefits in foster care, it is first necessary to examine the concept of parental authority. According to Article 92 of the Family and Guardianship Code of February 25, 1964, a child remains under parental authority until reaching adulthood. Exercising parental authority primarily involves caring for and raising the child, ensuring proper development, health protection, access to education, and talent development. It should primarily protect the child's interests and implement the principle of child welfare. A child remains under parental authority until the age of 18, except as specified in Article 10 of the same act.

According to Article 96 of the Family and Guardianship Code, parental authority is vested in both parents. If the child's welfare requires it, the court, in a ruling determining the child's origin, may order the suspension, limitation, or deprivation of parental authority of one or both parents. Additionally, if one parent is deceased or lacks full legal capacity, parental authority is granted to the other parent. The same applies if one parent has been deprived of parental authority or if their parental authority has been suspended.

As Aneta Pośpiech (2023) points out, under Polish law, parental authority belongs to both parents. This means that each parent is an individual holder of parental authority. The Family and Guardianship Code, in realizing the principle of equality between men and women and among all children, grants both parents equal rights regarding the exercise of parental authority, regardless

of whether they are married. In practice, each of them has full authority and can act as if they alone possessed parental authority.

Legislators also require that parents have full legal capacity. Only then they are able to effectively fulfil their duties and exercise their rights arising from parental authority. If they lack full legal capacity, they lose parental authority. When a child reaches adulthood or when a parent's incapacitation ceases, parental authority is automatically restored by law. A consequence of parents jointly exercising parental authority is the obligation to agree on the upbringing and decision-making regarding the child's matters (Pośpiech, 2023a, art.93). On the other end of the spectrum, which brings us closer to the topic of foster care, it is the situation in which parents do not have parental authority. This situation arises when both parents are unknown, both parents are deceased, both parents lack full legal capacity (due to being minors or being incapacitated), or the court has suspended or revoked parental authority for both parents.

According to Article 109 § 1 of the Family and Guardianship Code, if the child's welfare is at risk, the guardianship court will issue appropriate orders. In the event of a temporary obstacle to the exercise of parental authority, the guardianship court may order its suspension. The suspension of parental authority will be lifted when the cause ceases to exist. Temporary obstacles are usually incidental, such as a foreign trip or illness, but they may also be due to fault, such as serving a prison sentence.

The guardianship court may also revoke parental authority, as regulated by the provisions of Article 111 of the Family and Guardianship Code. According to this provision, if parental authority cannot be exercised due to a permanent obstacle or if parents abuse their parental authority or grossly neglect their obligations toward the child, the guardianship court will revoke parental authority. The revocation of parental authority may also apply to just one parent. The court may revoke parental authority if, despite receiving assistance, the reasons for applying Article 109 § 2 point 5 of the Family and Guardianship Code have not ceased, particularly if parents permanently show no interest in the child. If the reason for revoking parental authority ceases, the guardianship court may reinstate parental authority.

Aneta Pośpiech (2023b, art.111) points out that both the failure to fulfil parental obligations and the abuse of rights granted to parents in relation to the child constitute grounds for revoking parental authority. However, it should be noted that regarding the abuse of parental authority, the law does

not require—unlike in cases of neglect—a determination of a gross degree of abuse. Thus, from a formal legal standpoint, any abuse of parental authority may serve as grounds for its revocation.

## Foster Care

In very simple terms, foster care is the care provided to a child when their parents are unable to ensure proper upbringing and care. Importantly, foster care is temporary. The organizer of foster care is the county (powiat). According to the Act of June 9, 2011, on Family Support and the Foster Care System, foster care is an institutional or family-based system of care for children who have been temporarily deprived of parental care or whose parents are unable to fulfil their parental responsibilities. Foster care is a temporary measure, applied until the child can return to their biological family or, in the absence of such a possibility, until they reach adulthood.

Foster care can take one of two forms. The first is family-based care, which can be provided by:

- Kinship foster families (e.g., grandparents),
- Non-professional foster families (unrelated individuals),
- Professional foster families (including family group homes).

The second form is institutional foster care, which includes:

- Residential care facilities,
- Regional therapeutic care facilities,
- Pre-adoptive intervention centres.

The primary goals of foster care are to provide a child with care and support in conditions as close as possible to a family environment. Ensuring the child's rights, safety, and conditions for proper physical, emotional, and social development is crucial. Foster caregivers are responsible for preparing the child for a return to their biological family (if possible) or, in the absence of such a possibility, for adulthood. According to Article 33 of the Act on Family Support and the Foster Care System, the responsibilities of foster care include ensuring the child's health, psychological development, education, and safety, supporting children in building social bonds, and preparing them for independent living. Furthermore, foster caregivers are obligated to cooperate with the child's biological family to facilitate their return, if possible (Ustawa o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, 2011). Foster care plays a crucial role in the child protection system,

providing temporary care and support to children who, for various reasons, cannot stay with their biological families.

The foster care system is a legal and organizational structure aimed at providing care for children who, for various reasons, cannot remain under the care of their biological parents. It is a temporary solution that ensures the child has safe living conditions and development opportunities similar to those that a family should provide. The organizational units supporting families and the foster care system include organizational units of local government entities performing tasks related to family support and the foster care system, day support centres, foster care coordinators, childcare and educational facilities, regional therapeutic care facilities, emergency pre-adoption centres, adoption centres, and entities entrusted with implementing tasks related to family support and the foster care system.

As stipulated in Article 3 of the Act on Family Support and the Foster Care System, the obligation to support families experiencing difficulties in fulfilling their childcare and educational functions, as well as organizing foster care within the scope defined by law, rests with local government entities and government administration bodies. This obligation is fulfilled by local government entities and government administration bodies, particularly in cooperation with the local community, courts and their auxiliary bodies, the police, educational institutions, healthcare providers, as well as churches, religious associations, and social organizations.

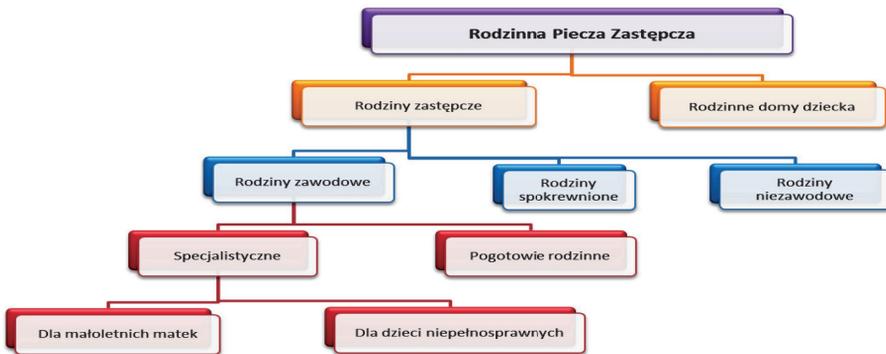
As indicated by Stanisław Nitecki (2024), the Act of June 9, 2011, on Family Support and the Foster Care System provides for two forms of foster care: family-based and institutional. The list of forms specified in the Act is closed, meaning that authorized entities in this area are obliged to carry out their assigned tasks using only these forms and cannot introduce their own solutions. Any changes to the forms of foster care implementation would require an amendment to the Act.

The concept of family-based foster care includes the following types of foster families: related foster families, non-professional foster families, and professional foster families. Within the latter category, professional foster families can be further divided into emergency foster families and specialized professional foster families. In addition to the aforementioned foster families, the concept of family-based foster care also includes family children's homes. A family children's home is classified as a family-based form of foster care;

however, in reality, it combines elements of both identified forms of foster care. This is because it exhibits characteristics typical of strict family-based care while also displaying features associated with institutional forms of foster care. The classification of a family children's home as a form of family-based foster care is justified by the fact that it is run by a family or a person who meets the requirements to serve as a foster family. The analysed concept also encompasses foster care provided in institutional forms.

Institutional foster care is carried out in the form of childcare and educational facilities, regional therapeutic care facilities, and emergency pre-adoption centres. The list of institutions classified as part of the institutional form of foster care is closed, meaning that local government entities responsible for carrying out tasks in this area, either independently or on commission, cannot introduce types of institutions other than those specified (Nitecki, Wilk, 2024). The catalogue of the aforementioned forms of foster care is well illustrated in the diagram below.

**Figure 1.** Family-Based Foster Care



Source: Municipal Social Welfare Center in Bydgoszcz, 2024

### Financial Benefits in Foster Care Under the Act of June 9, 2011, on Family Support and the Foster Care System

The right to benefits is granted to foster families or those running a family children's home, established by a court ruling, who:

- Provide direct care for a child;

- Provide direct care for a child holding a disability certificate or a certificate of severe or moderate disability;
- Provide direct care for a child and plan the child's vacation outside the place of residence.
- Foster care benefits can be divided into:
  - Mandatory benefits (for all);
  - Mandatory benefits only for foster families and those running family children's homes;
  - Other benefits for individuals providing family-based foster care, which can be either discretionary (upon fulfilment of specific conditions) or mandatory.

According to Article 80 of the aforementioned Act, a foster family (whether kinship, non-professional, or professional—including professional emergency foster families and specialized professional foster families) and those running a family children's home are entitled to receive financial support to cover the child's living expenses. This support must not be lower than 1,002 PLN for a child placed in a kinship foster family and 1,517 PLN for a child placed in a professional foster family, a non-professional foster family, or a family children's home. First and foremost, it should be noted that the legislator used the term "is entitled to" in this provision, which implies that the indicated benefit is granted to family-based foster care forms and has the status of a public subjective right (Nitecki, Wilk, 2024). This benefit is intended to meet the current needs of a child placed in a family and cannot be considered a form of financial security or savings accumulation. It will also be granted to an individual or a married couple to whom the court has temporarily entrusted the role of a foster family.

Another benefit is the allowance described in Article 81 of the aforementioned Act. If a child is placed in another type of foster family, including a non-professional or kinship foster family, or in a family children's home, that foster family or the person running the family children's home will also receive an allowance of no less than 306 PLN to cover the increased costs of raising the child. This allowance is granted for each child and is paid every month the child remains in family-based foster care. The amount of this allowance may be increased based on a resolution of the county council (Trynieszewska, 2015).

The second allowance specified in this provision is granted exclusively to a professional foster family. This allowance applies to a child placed under the provisions of the Act of June 9, 2022, on Supporting and Resocializing Juveniles and amounts to no less than 306 PLN per month to cover the increased costs of raising that child. Similarly, in this case, the amount of the allowance may be increased by a resolution of the county council.

It should also be noted that a foster family and a person running a family children's home are entitled to the benefits mentioned above even after the child reaches the age of majority, provided that the child continues to reside in the foster family or family children's home under the conditions specified by law. These benefits and allowances are granted during the school year, academic year, vocational training, or professional preparation period (Ustawa o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, 2011). As indicated by the Provincial Administrative Court in **Łódź**, the term "continued stay in family-based foster care", as mentioned in Article 82(1) of the 2011 Act on Family Support and the Foster Care System, should be understood as a situation in which the centre of living and existential affairs of an adult child remains in the place of residence of the previous form of family-based foster care. Thus, an adult child continues to be financially supported by the previous foster family (Wyrok WSA w Łodzi, 2024).

The analysed Act, in Article 83, also provides for additional funding and benefits. According to its provisions, the county governor (starosta) may grant a foster family or a person running a family children's home: Funding for vacation outside the child's place of residence; Financial support to cover: a) Necessary costs related to the needs of an admitted child (one-time payment); b) Costs incurred due to random events or other circumstances affecting the quality of care (one-time or periodic payment).

A non-professional and professional foster family may receive financial support for maintaining a residential unit in a multi-family building or single-family house, in an amount corresponding to the costs incurred by the non-professional or professional foster family for rent, lease payments, electricity, heating, fuel, water, gas, waste disposal (solid and liquid), elevator maintenance, communal antenna, TV and radio subscriptions, telecommunication services, and other operating costs. These costs are calculated by dividing the total amount of these expenses by the number of people living in the residence and multiplying it by the number of children, individuals who reached the

age of majority while in foster care, and individuals leaving family-based foster care as minors, who are placed in the foster family along with the foster parents. The county governor (starosta) is obligated to grant financial support to a professional foster family if more than three children, individuals who reached the age of majority while in foster care, or individuals leaving family-based foster care as minors are placed in the family, as well as if the need for these funds is confirmed in the opinion of the foster care organizer. Additionally, the county governor (starosta) may grant a professional foster family a one-time annual benefit to cover the costs of necessary renovations of their residential unit in a multi-family building or single-family house (Ustawa o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, 2011). As indicated by the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań, special benefits may be either one-time or periodic. A one-time benefit may be granted when it is necessary to cover essential expenses related to the needs of a child being placed in a foster family, or when, as a result of a random event, a child already placed in foster care requires additional assistance. A periodic benefit is granted when, due to a random event, a child placed in foster care requires ongoing additional support. Special benefits are granted at the discretion of the administrative authority and do not constitute a public subjective right. From the above, it follows clearly that a benefit for covering random events or other occurrences affecting the quality of care is not mandatory. This means that even if an applicant meets the statutory criteria, the administrative authority is not obliged to grant the benefit. Instead, it is a discretionary benefit that the public administration authority may, but is not required to, award (Wyrok WSA w Poznaniu, 2024).

Furthermore, the person running a family children's home receives financial support for maintaining a residential unit in a multi-family building or single-family house where the family children's home is operated. The amount of this support corresponds to the costs incurred by the family children's home for rent, lease payments, electricity, heating, fuel, water, gas, waste disposal (solid and liquid), elevator maintenance, communal antenna, TV and radio subscriptions, telecommunication services, and other operating costs. These costs are calculated by dividing the total amount of these expenses by the number of people residing in the residential unit or single-family house and multiplying it by the number of children, individuals who reached the age of majority while in foster care, and minors leaving foster care, who are placed in

the family children's home along with the person running it. As rightly pointed out by Stanisław Nitecki (2024), the list of housing maintenance costs is closed and includes the following expenses: rent, lease payments, electricity, heating, fuel, water, gas, waste disposal (solid and liquid), elevator maintenance, communal antenna, TV and radio subscriptions, telecommunication services, and operating costs. It should be noted that the full scope of these housing expenses will not necessarily apply in every case. This means that the list represents the maximum set of expenses considered for funding, but in a specific case, some of these costs may be lower or absent. In such instances, the person running the family children's home will only receive reimbursement for the actual expenses incurred. This benefit may be granted in an amount corresponding to the costs actually incurred by the person running the family children's home, calculated according to the mechanism set out in the relevant legal provision (Nitecki, Wilk, 2024). The benefits provided under this provision will be granted based on an administrative decision, as stipulated in Article 88. Therefore, it should be noted that the initial determination of financial resources to meet the needs, as specified in the agreement under Article 62, serves as a starting point. However, the final determination of these benefits will be made through an administrative decision, issued after conducting appropriate evidentiary proceedings, which will assess the justification for granting assistance and its amount.

Moving on to the final issue regulated by this Act, it should be noted that a professional foster family and a person running a family children's home are entitled to a monthly remuneration of no less than 4,100 PLN. A professional foster family performing the role of an emergency foster home is entitled to a monthly remuneration of no less than 124% of this amount. If a professional foster family or the person running a family children's home does not provide direct care for a child due to the child being placed in another institution or due to the last entrusted child leaving the professional foster family or the family children's home, they receive 80% of their previous remuneration for the period they remain on standby until the child's return from another institution or until they accept another child. The Act also states that a professional foster family and a person running a family children's home who temporarily serve as a support family are entitled to a monthly remuneration of no less than 20% of the remuneration that is received for performing the role of a foster family or running a family children's home.

Importantly, the amounts of benefits provided to cover the costs of child maintenance and the allowance for a child with a disability are subject to indexation based on the consumer price index, as announced by the President of the Central Statistical Office. This indexation takes effect from June 1 of the calendar year following the calendar year in which the consumer price index exceeded 105% compared to the last year in which indexation was carried out. These benefits are granted by administrative decision. The competent authority for submitting applications for these benefits is the County Family Support Centre (Powiatowe Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie) or, in the case of a city with county rights, the Municipal Social Welfare Centre (Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej).

According to Article 88(1) of the Act on Family Support and Foster Care, the benefits, allowances, and vacation subsidies described above are granted upon request by a foster family, support family, or the person running a family children's home. The relevant application must be submitted by the foster family, support family, or the person running the family children's home to the County Family Support Centre (Powiatowe Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie) responsible for their place of residence. If the application is submitted in a city with county rights, it must be submitted to the Municipal Social Welfare Centre (Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej). The granting or refusal of benefits, allowances, and vacation subsidies is issued in the form of an administrative decision. The administrative authority may amend or revoke the decision if it is found that the beneficiaries are squandering the granted benefits (Ustawa o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, 2011).

### **Benefits in Foster Care Under the Act of November 28, 2003, on Family Benefits**

The Act of November 28, 2003, on Family Benefits defines the conditions for acquiring the right to family benefits as well as the rules for determining, granting, and paying these benefits. According to the aforementioned Act, family benefits include:

- Family allowance and supplements to the family allowance;
- Care benefits, including the nursing allowance and caregiving benefit;
- One-time assistance paid by municipalities;
- Benefits paid by municipalities under Article 22b;

- One-time childbirth allowance;
- Parental benefit.

The first benefit that can be obtained in foster care under this Act is the caregiving benefit, regulated in Article 17. According to the cited provision, the caregiving benefit is available to a foster family, a person running a family children's home, the director of a childcare and educational facility, the director of a regional therapeutic care facility, the director of an emergency pre-adoption centre provided that they care for a person under the age of 18 who holds a certificate of severe disability or a disability certificate that includes indications of:

- The need for constant or long-term care or assistance from another person due to a significantly limited ability to live independently;
- The need for the continuous daily involvement of the child's caregiver in the processes of treatment, rehabilitation, and education.

At this point, it is worth citing the position of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gdańsk, which states that the determining factor in assessing eligibility for the caregiving benefit is the factual situation at the time of submitting the application as well as at the time of the decision-making process by the authorities. According to Article 17(1) of the Act on Family Benefits, resignation from employment must be directly related to the need to provide care for a disabled person. Not every resignation from employment constitutes a basis for granting the caregiving benefit—only those that are motivated by the need for care. The welfare authority has no right to determine the reasons for the lack of employment of a person applying for the caregiving benefit. The authority is only obligated to determine whether the person is capable of working and whether the sole reason for resigning from employment is the necessity of providing care. This care must represent a clear obstacle to performing professional work, meaning it must result in the actual inability to take up employment or lead to resignation from employment for the purpose of providing care. In any case, the connection between resigning from or not taking up employment and providing care must be direct and strict. For entitlement to the caregiving benefit, it does not matter when this situation began. Therefore, the resignation from employment for caregiving reasons may have occurred a month, a year, or even several years before submitting the benefit application, as long as these two elements remain causally linked. Moreover, Article 17(1)(4) of the Act on Family Benefits does not require only

a resignation from gainful employment for the purpose of providing care; an equally valid condition is the inability to take up employment due to providing care (Wyrok WSA w Gdańsku, 2024).

The last benefit regulated by the aforementioned Act is the parental benefit. According to Article 17c, this benefit is available, among others, to a foster family, except for a professional foster family, in cases where they take care of a child up to the age of 7, or up to the age of 10 if a decision has been made to postpone the child's school obligation.

The determination of the right to the aforementioned family benefits and their payment is made upon request by:

- The actual caregiver of the child,
- The legal guardian of the child,
- A foster family,
- A person running a family children's home,
- The director of a childcare and educational facility,
- The director of a regional therapeutic care facility,
- The director of an emergency pre-adoption centre,
- A student,
- An adult disabled person, or
- Another person authorized to represent the child or the adult disabled person.

Additionally, individuals legally obligated to provide child support under the Act of February 25, 1964 – Family and Guardianship Code may also submit the request. A request for the determination of the right to a caregiving benefit for a child placed in foster care may only be submitted by:

- A foster family,
- A person running a family children's home,
- The director of a childcare and educational facility,
- The director of a regional therapeutic care facility, or
- The director of an emergency pre-adoption centre (Ustawa o świadczeniach rodzinnych, 2003).

It should also be noted that family benefits, which are regulated by the Act on Family Benefits, just like the benefits regulated by the Act on Family Support and the Foster Care System, are granted in the form of an administrative decision.

## **Benefits in Foster Care Under the Act of February 11, 2016, on State Assistance in Raising Children**

Another legal act that regulates benefits available in foster care is the Act of February 11, 2016, on State Assistance in Raising Children. This Act defines the conditions for acquiring the right to the child-raising benefit as well as the rules for granting and paying this benefit. As Marzena Kucharska (2019) indicates, according to Article 4(1) of the Act on State Assistance in Raising Children, the purpose of the child-raising benefit is to partially cover expenses related to raising a child, including care and meeting the child's basic needs. The reasons for introducing the child-raising benefit are more extensively outlined in the justification of the draft Act on State Assistance in Raising Children. It is stated that: the child-raising benefit is directed at families responsible for the maintenance of children, its main objective is to partially cover expenses related to the child's upbringing and meeting their basic needs, the education and preparation of children for life represent a significant financial burden for those responsible for their care, particularly in large families, as a result, families often face economic barriers related to their income levels, it is therefore necessary to introduce solutions that will eliminate or significantly reduce these barriers, the adopted measures were designed to reduce existing economic constraints, especially among young people deciding to have children, particularly a second or subsequent child (Kucharska, 2019, art. 4). According to Article 2(5) of the aforementioned Act, whenever the Act refers to a child, it means: one's own child, an adopted child, a child for whom adoption proceedings are ongoing, a child under legal guardianship, a child placed in foster care, or a child placed in a social welfare home. The purpose of the child-raising benefit is to partially cover expenses related to raising a child, including providing care and meeting the child's basic needs.

The child-raising benefit granted for children placed in socialization-type childcare and educational facilities, intervention-type childcare and educational facilities, specialist-therapeutic childcare and educational facilities, regional therapeutic care facilities, or emergency pre-adoption centres is primarily allocated for the development of children's interests, increasing their educational and developmental opportunities, or accumulating savings. If a child returns to their biological family by court order, the court also decides on the disposition of financial resources accumulated from the child-raising

benefit as savings. According to Article 5a(2), for a child placed in foster care, the child-raising benefit is granted exclusively to a foster family, a person running a family children's home, the director of a childcare and educational facility, the director of a regional therapeutic care facility, or the director of an emergency pre-adoption centre (Ustawa o pomocy państwa w wychowaniu dzieci, 2016).

The determination of the right to the child-raising benefit and its payment is made upon request by a foster family, a person running a family children's home, the director of a childcare and educational facility, the director of a regional therapeutic care facility, or the director of an emergency pre-adoption centre. The application is submitted to the Social Insurance Institution (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, ZUS). Unlike previous cases, the granting of the child-raising benefit does not require an administrative decision. The Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) provides the applicant with information about the granted child-raising benefit via their information profile. A notification of the granted benefit or a notice of the availability of this information on the information profile may be sent to the applicant's email address or phone number provided in the application. An administrative decision is issued only in the case of refusal to grant the child-raising benefit.

## Summary

As indicated above, individuals in foster care can rely on a wide range of state support. The authority of local governments, in order to increase certain benefits, allows for tailoring assistance to the actual needs of each individual case. The assistance available to foster children and caregivers, guaranteed by law, was introduced relatively recently. However, over time, the scope of support has been expanded by the legislator, which suggests that social security in Poland is progressing toward a level comparable to that of Western European countries.

**Abstract:** The article analyses and presents cash benefits in foster care under the Act on family support and the foster care system, on family benefits and the Act on state aid in raising children. The article indicates the conditions for granting individual benefits as well as the procedure for granting them. The article also presents the judiciary's positions on individual benefits and the conditions for granting them

**Keywords:** foster care benefits, foster care, social assistance, family benefits, state assistance in raising children, social security.

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł analizuje i przedstawia świadczenia pieniężne w pieczy zastępczej na gruncie ustaw o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, o świadczeniach rodzinnych oraz ustawy o pomocy państwa w wychowywaniu dzieci. Artykuł wskazuje przesłanki przyznawania poszczególnych świadczeń jak również tryb ich przyznawania. W treści artykułu przedstawione zostały także stanowiska judykatury dotyczące poszczególnych świadczeń i przesłanek ich przyznawania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** świadczenia w pieczy zastępczej, piecza zastępcza, pomoc społeczna, świadczenia rodzinne, pomoc państwa w wychowaniu dzieci, bezpieczeństwo społeczne.

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Karni IIRIZ MIZRAHI<sup>1</sup>

ORCID 0000-0003-2904-902X

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## **Fostering phonological proficiency: the role of educational language games in hebrew kindergarten curricula**

## **Rozwijanie biegłości fonologicznej: rola edukacyjnych gier językowych w programach nauczania w przedszkolach hebrajskich**

### **Introduction**

Phonological development is crucial for the acquisition of language skills in early childhood. It involves the ability to recognize and produce the sounds of a language, which forms the basis for speaking, understanding, and eventually reading and writing. Children typically go through different stages of phonological development, beginning with babbling and progressing to more complex speech sounds. This development eventually enables them to communicate effectively and build their language skills throughout their lives (Benway et al., 2021). Hebrew is a language with distinctive phonological features and provides a unique context for the study of language development.

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<sup>1</sup> Karni Iiriz Mizrahi, PhD, Gaia College, Israel, e-mail: sksm3060@gmail.com

Its distinctive features include a consonant-heavy script, a system of diacritical vowels, and a unique phonological structure. Hebrew, for example, is written from right to left and vowels are often not represented in the script, which can be challenging for language learners.

The purpose of this study is to examine how educational language games can foster phonological proficiency among Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children, addressing the unique challenges posed by Hebrew's distinctive phonological features. By investigating the theoretical foundations and practical applications of educational language games, this research aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance early language acquisition in Hebrew kindergarten curricula.

Studying how children acquire and adapt to these unique phonological features of Hebrew can provide valuable insights into the broader field of language development. It highlights the adaptability of young language learners and how they cope with the complexity of their native language's phonology. This research may also have implications for language acquisition and literacy development in other languages with similar characteristics or challenges. Hebrew is a language with distinctive phonological features and provides a unique context for the study of language development (Hassinger-Das et al., 2016).

The importance of early language development, particularly phonological development, is a well-established and widely recognized aspect of child psychology and education. Mastery of phonological skills, such as phonemic awareness (the ability to recognize and process individual sounds in words) and the production of speech sounds, is fundamental to successful reading and writing. Research has consistently shown that children who develop strong phonological skills in their early years are more likely to become good readers and writers (Rachmani, 2020). These skills provide the foundation for understanding how sounds correspond to letters, words, and meaning in written language. Therefore, interventions and pedagogical strategies that focus on promoting young children's phonological development are critical to building the essential skills needed for reading and understanding language (Benway et al., 2021). It is a crucial point regarding the challenges and opportunities of early education for Hebrew-speaking children due to the complexity of the phonological system of the language. Indeed, theories such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Piaget's theory of cognitive development are of great importance in this context.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in a child's development. For Hebrew-speaking children, participating in meaningful conversations and language-intensive games with peers and educators can help them navigate the intricacies of Hebrew phonology. Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes that children progress through different cognitive stages. Early education programs for Hebrew-speaking children should be tailored to their cognitive abilities and provide age-appropriate activities that promote phonological development (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget & Cook, 1952). Incorporating play and interaction into the curriculum can be particularly effective, as this not only improves phonological skills, but also creates a positive and engaging learning environment that is essential for the successful acquisition of a language, but moreover in a complex language such as Hebrew.

This work, which focuses on educational language games as a means of promoting phonological development in Hebrew-speaking children, is commendable. By bridging the gap between phonological development theory, language acquisition theory, and practical educational strategies, this research can provide valuable insights to educators and policy makers. Emphasizing the theoretical underpinnings that support the use of language games is consistent with the established principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Piaget's theory of cognitive development, as mentioned earlier. Emphasizing the interactive and engaging nature of these games can effectively contribute to a child's phonological awareness and language skills. By shedding light on the theoretical framework and potential benefits of using educational games in Hebrew kindergarten, this article can provide guidance to educators and policy makers and help them make informed decisions about promoting the early language development of Hebrew-speaking children.

### **Research questions**

What insights can be gleaned from academic studies conducted in the past within the research field of language acquisition, specifically concerning phonological development and related aspects?

How can the findings from past studies inform the practical application of educational language games in early childhood education, particularly for Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children?

To what extent does early exposure to multiple languages affect the phonological development of bilingual children, considering the unique characteristics of each language?

How do educational language games, designed to enhance phonological awareness, impact the acquisition of reading and writing skills in young learners, especially in languages with complex phonological structures like Hebrew?

What role do sociocultural factors, including language variation and dialects, play in shaping phonological development in culturally diverse kindergarten classrooms?

The effect of the intervention: Is there a difference between the group that received an intervention and the group that did not?

Is there a significant difference between the year's beginning and end in each group?

## **Method**

### *Research Methodology*

This research conducted a literature review to explore past academic studies in the field of language acquisition. A thorough review of existing academic literature is a fundamental step in research, as it helps you build upon existing knowledge and identify gaps in the field. By asking what these studies teach us about language acquisition, this research contributing to the broader understanding of this complex and multifaceted area of study. The literature review identifies trends and patterns, analyses common themes, trends, and patterns in previous research, providing a foundation for our own research. It highlights knowledge gaps, recognize areas where further research is needed or where existing studies may offer contradictory findings. Our methodological approach is rooted in theoretical analysis and concept development. This approach paves the way to examine the theoretical foundations and practical implications of integrating educational language games into the curricula of the Hebrew Kindergarten to cultivate phonological skill.

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific educational intervention. The intervention focused on improving students' ability to identify initial sounds in words. Participants were divided into two groups: one that received the intervention (the intervention

group) and one that did not (the control group). Over the academic year, both groups were tested on their ability to correctly identify the initial sounds of a set of given words at the beginning and end of the year.

Data collection involved administering a standardized test comprising various words for which students had to identify the initial sounds. The words were selected to cover a broad range of phonetic complexities and presented randomly to each participant. Students' answers were recorded as either 'correct' or 'incorrect' for each word, quantitatively measuring their phonemic awareness. Each group was of 30 kindergarten students. The test was given to all of them, and if somebody missed the exam day, he took the test on the day he came back, so we have an answer for 100% of them. If someone did not respond immediately, we kept on asking a few times more until the student answered the question.

### *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative research design with a focus on literature review and content analysis. The primary aim is to investigate and synthesize academic studies conducted in the past within the field of language acquisition. The research questions guiding this study are inherently retrospective, seeking to uncover what can be learned from these prior studies about the research field of language acquisition.

This study employs a robust quasi-experimental design to investigate the impact of educational language games on phonological awareness development among Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children. The research design allows for systematic examination of the relationship between game-based interventions and phonological development while maintaining ecological validity in authentic kindergarten settings.

### *Data Collection*

The data for this study consist exclusively of existing academic literature and research articles. A comprehensive search strategy is employed to identify relevant sources within the research field of language acquisition. This strategy includes electronic databases, academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and reports. The key criterion for source selection is their contribution to the understanding of language acquisition, with a specific focus on phonological development and related areas.

The study population consists of 60 kindergarten children from two classes in central Israel. These kindergartens are in proximity and feed into the same primary school, ensuring demographic consistency. Participants come from families of medium to high socioeconomic status, representing the typical population of the area. The intervention group (n=30) received the game-based phonological awareness program, while the control group (n=30) received standard kindergarten curriculum without the specific game intervention.

The intervention spanned one full academic year, providing sufficient time for developmental changes to manifest. The game-based program included three weekly structured sessions incorporating both small group and individual play formats. Games were specifically designed to target Hebrew phonological awareness, with progressive difficulty levels addressing phoneme isolation, phoneme blending, and other related skills critical to early reading development in Hebrew.

The games were categorized into three main types:

1. Sound Recognition Games focused on basic phonological skills, such as identifying initial sounds in words and matching words that begin with the same sound
2. Sound Manipulation Games developed more advanced skills by adding, removing, or changing sounds within words
3. Phoneme Blending and Segmentation Games targeted complex phonological operations such as combining individual sounds to form words

Each game was carefully designed to address the unique phonological features of Hebrew, including its root-based morphological structure and consonantal writing system.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

The research employed comprehensive assessment tools to measure phonological awareness development:

1. Standardized Phonological Awareness Assessment: Administered both pre- and post-intervention, this assessment measured skills including phoneme isolation, blending, and segmentation abilities. The assessment was specifically calibrated for Hebrew language features.
2. Game Performance Measures: Systematic observation protocols tracked children's engagement and progress through various game

levels, documenting both quantitative success rates and qualitative observations of strategy use.

3. **Teacher Assessment Records:** Provided additional data on individual student progress and group dynamics during game sessions, capturing developmental patterns not evident in standardized testing.

## Data Analysis

For data analysis, we employed several statistical techniques to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Paired t-tests were used to compare students' performance within each group (intervention and control) between the start and end of the year, allowing us to measure improvement over time. Independent t-tests were conducted to compare the performance between the two groups at the start and end of the year, assessing the impact of the intervention. Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationship between the initial and final performance of the students. Cohen's d was used to determine the intervention's effect size, providing insights into the practical significance of the results.

The analysis plan encompassed multiple statistical approaches to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness:

1. Paired t-tests compared pre-and post-test scores within groups to measure change over time.
2. Independent t-tests examined differences between intervention and control groups at both baseline and post-intervention.
3. Correlation analyses investigated relationships between game performance and phonological awareness development.
4. Effect size calculations (Cohen's d) determined the practical significance of observed differences.

This comprehensive statistical approach allowed for detailed examination of both statistical significance and practical importance of the intervention effects.

The combination of these methods offered a comprehensive analysis of the data, enabling us to conclude the effectiveness of the phonemic awareness intervention and its impact on students' learning outcomes.

## Quality Control Measures

To ensure data quality and reliability, several measures were implemented:

1. All assessments were conducted by trained professionals with expertise in early childhood education and Hebrew language development.
2. Evaluators were not informed about participants' group assignments to minimize potential bias.
3. Assessment sessions were scheduled at consistent times during the school day to control for fatigue and attention factors.
4. Implementation fidelity was monitored through regular observations and documentation of game sessions.
5. Both qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated to ensure comprehensive understanding of intervention effects.

## Ethical Considerations

As this study involves the analysis of existing academic literature, it does not involve human subjects, and ethical approval is not required. Proper citation and referencing of all sources are essential to maintain academic integrity and acknowledge the contributions of previous researchers in the field.

This research adhered to strict ethical guidelines for working with young children:

1. Informed consent was obtained from parents or legal guardians of all participating children.
2. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by relevant educational authorities and ethics committees.
3. Participation was voluntary, and children could withdraw at any time without consequence.
4. All data collected was kept confidential, with participants assigned numerical codes to protect privacy.
5. The intervention was designed to be developmentally appropriate and enjoyable for all participants.

## Limitations

It is important to acknowledge potential limitations of this study. The primary limitation lies in the reliance on existing literature, which may have its biases and limitations. Additionally, the scope of the literature search and the selection of studies could influence the comprehensiveness of the findings. However, efforts are made to mitigate these limitations through a rigorous and systematic review process.

## Literature Review

### The Socially Mediated Experiences of Phonological Development

The theoretical framework underlying phonological development in Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children begins with the introduction of Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory. This theory plays an important role in understanding how children pass through different cognitive stages, each characterized by unique cognitive abilities (Piaget & Cook, 1952; Babakr et al., 2019). The transition from the preoperational stage to the concrete-operational stage represents a significant cognitive maturation process that profoundly affects a child's ability to recognize and process phonemes. As children enter the concrete-operational phase, their increased capacity for abstract thinking and logical reasoning allows them to accomplish phonemic awareness tasks more effectively. This development is central to phonological development, as it enables children to mentally process speech sounds, recognize phonological patterns, and ultimately build a more solid foundation for language and literacy skills, especially in the context of a language as complex as Hebrew. By linking Piaget's theory of cognitive development to the specific challenges and opportunities of Hebrew phonology, this study can provide valuable insights for the field of early language acquisition and education.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and its emphasis on social interactions and cultural context in cognitive and language development.

In the field of phonological development, Vygotsky's framework is indeed significant. The concept of the zone of proximal development, which he praised, is particularly important. It refers to the zone of tasks that a child cannot accomplish alone, but only with the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable person, such as a teacher or peer. In the context of phonological

development, collaborative interactions within the zone of proximal development may be critical. Examining the application of Vygotsky's theory to the phonological development of Hebrew-speaking children, considering the sociocultural context and the role of collaborative interactions, may provide valuable insights into effective teaching and learning strategies for this language group. It can also provide insight into how language games and interactive approaches can be optimized to support phonological development in a sociocultural setting (Vygotsky, 2016).

Socially mediated experiences, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, especially in the context of the phonological development of Hebrew-speaking children, can play a crucial role in language skills acquisition. This approach recognizes the importance of interactions with peers and educators in a language-rich environment, which are central to improving phonological awareness and language skills. It aligns perfectly with Vygotsky's perspective on how social interactions and cultural contexts influence cognitive and language development. This analysis provides a solid foundation for educators and researchers to understand the importance of integrating language learning games into early childhood education, especially for Hebrew-speaking children, to foster their phonological development within a sociocultural framework (Pathan et al., 2018).

Interactionist theories, often studied in the context of young children's phonological development, emphasize the complex interplay of multiple factors. These theories recognize that cognitive processes, language use, and social interactions are closely related and influence a child's phonological development. Understanding how these factors interact and affect phonological development is critical to gaining a comprehensive perspective on how children acquire language skills, including the ability to recognize and produce speech sounds. Researchers and educators often draw on interactionist theories to develop effective strategies and interventions that address the holistic nature of language development. (Assaoui, 2016).

These theories underscore that the development of phonological awareness is a dynamic process that is influenced by the complex interaction of cognitive functions and linguistic experiences. According to Assaoui (2016), phonological development cannot be viewed in isolation but should be understood within a broader framework that integrates cognitive and linguistic elements. Educational language games, in this context, can be seen as

a tool that facilitates the interaction of these factors, promoting phonological development through engaging and interactive experiences.

Sociolinguistic perspectives, as explored in the context of phonological development among young children, consider the influence of sociocultural factors, including language variation and dialects, on the acquisition of phonological skills (Johnson & White, 2020; O’Kane & Goldbart, 2016). These perspectives also acknowledge that phonological development does not occur in isolation but is intricately linked with the sociocultural context in which a child grows and learns. As children acquire language variation, phonological development should be viewed as a part of the broader sociolinguistic landscape (Johnson & White, 2020). O’Kane and Goldbart (2016) underscore the importance of communication in the pre-speech phase of development during the early stages of language acquisition. In the context of Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children, these sociolinguistic perspectives are crucial in recognizing the impact of sociocultural factors on phonological variation and how educational language games can be thoughtfully designed to embrace linguistic diversity while promoting phonological awareness.

### **Phonological Development in Hebrew-speaking Kindergarten Children**

Hebrew, a Semitic language renowned for its historical significance, presents distinctive phonological features that profoundly influence the development of phonological skills in Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children (Keren-Portnoy & Segal, 2016). Hebrew’s root-based morphology involves constructing words around three-letter root consonants (Keren-Portnoy & Segal, 2016). This structural element is central to phonological development, shaping how children perceive and manipulate word forms. Moreover, Hebrew adheres to specific phonological rules, such as vowel reduction and consonant gemination, impacting the way sounds are produced and understood by young learners (Wasserstein & Lipka, 2019). Another aspect of the language is non-linear script, which follows a nonlinear pattern, written from right to left, often incorporating vowel diacritics (nikkud). This script’s visual complexity can influence the phonological awareness and literacy development of Hebrew-speaking children (Eviatar et al., 2018).

The phonological development of Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children aligns with distinct milestones reflecting the language's unique attributes. First, children typically exhibit early phonemic awareness (Keren-Portnoy & Segal, 2016), which illustrates the recognition of phonemes and their role in word formation as well as a crucial foundation for literacy development. As children progress, they acquire Hebrew's distinct vowel and consonant sounds, including an understanding of vowel markings (nikkud) and consonant gemination (Gendler-Shalev et al., 2021). Finally, children exhibit mastery of Hebrew's syllable structure, characterized by consonant clusters (Ben-David & Bat-El, 2016) where they navigate and develop phonological awareness of complex syllable patterns.

While many Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children follow typical developmental trajectories, some may encounter challenges and developmental delays. One such challenge involves vowel reduction (Haim & Bat-El Foux, 2022), which especially in unstressed syllables, can pose challenges in speech production and phonological awareness, potentially leading to developmental delays.

Another common challenge is the mastery of consonant clusters (Sukenik, 2023) which is more common in Hebrew-speaking children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder can have an effect on relative clause production abilities which in turn can impact speech sound production and phonological development. The transition from spoken to written Hebrew may also present challenges, as children grapple with vowel markings (nikkud) and the complexities of root-based word formations, affecting phonological awareness within a literacy context.

All these characteristics shape the development of phonemic awareness, sound production skills, and phonological awareness essential for literacy. While many children follow typical developmental pathways, understanding potential challenges and delays is crucial for educators and speech-language professionals working with Hebrew-speaking children in early education settings.

## **Educational Language Games**

Educational language games serve as a dynamic and engaging tool in early education, fostering language development and phonological awareness among young learners. Educational language games can be defined as

structured, interactive activities designed to facilitate language acquisition and enhance phonological development through play (Kostikova, 2017). These games encompass a wide range of activities and formats, catering to diverse language learning objectives. Classification of these games can be based on their primary focus, such as vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, or phonological awareness enhancement, allowing educators to select games tailored to specific linguistic goals (Gruss, 2016).

Educational language games offer a multitude of cognitive and linguistic benefits for young learners. Games have been proven to stimulate cognitive functions like memory, problem-solving, and attention, contributing to enhanced language acquisition (Papanastasiou et al., 2017). Furthermore, they provide a conducive environment for learners to practice linguistic skills, improve pronunciation, expand vocabulary, and strengthen their phonological awareness (Hassing-Das et al., 2016). These activities not only enrich vocabulary but also reinforce phonological skills by exposing children to varied phonemes and their contextual use. Educational language games thus serve as a valuable complement to traditional teaching methods.

Accordingly, designing effective language games for promoting phonological development involves adhering to certain principles. Games must be engaging and enjoyable to capture children's interest and motivation, ensuring active participation and facilitating intrinsic motivation (Kokkalia et al., 2017). Games should also have clear linguistic objectives, whether focused on phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, or pronunciation improvement (Gruss, 2016). As classrooms are filled with diverse students, a range of games should be available, catering to different learning styles and abilities (Papanastasiou et al., 2017). Moreover, the games should provide immediate feedback to learners, reinforcing correct linguistic behaviours and promoting reflection as it will promote more successful phonological development (Hassing-Das et al., 2016). Educational language games should be integrated into the curriculum to align with specific learning goals and linguistic benchmarks (Kokkalia et al., 2017).

### **Curricular Integration**

It seems that, curricular integration of educational language games is imperative, requiring a deliberate and systematic inclusion of educational

language games within the kindergarten curriculum (Gruss, 2016). These games should be thoughtfully aligned with specific linguistic objectives and developmental milestones (Gendler-Shalev et al., 2021). This alignment ensures that language games become an integral part of the overall educational framework, reinforcing linguistic growth.

Secondly, a robust approach to professional development is essential. Educators should be provided with the requisite training and resources to adeptly integrate and manage language games in the classroom. Equipping teachers with the pedagogical skills necessary to implement these games effectively, while grounding them in the theoretical foundations discussed, is pivotal for success (Hassinger-Das et al., 2016).

Additionally, there should be a strong emphasis on assessment and evaluation. Formative and summative assessments should be implemented to monitor the progress of phonological development among students (Hassinger-Das et al., 2016). Regular evaluations of the effectiveness of language games in achieving specific linguistic goals should be conducted. These assessments guide educators in adjusting instructional strategies as needed, fostering continuous improvement.

Policymakers play a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape. Developing policies that recognize the significance of phonological development in early education is vital. Advocating for the inclusion of educational language games as an integral component of Hebrew kindergarten curricula is essential (Kostikova, 2017). This advocacy should be reinforced through official guidelines and support structures, affirming the importance of language games in nurturing linguistic proficiency among young learners. Educators and policymakers can collaboratively create an educational environment where educational language games are seamlessly integrated, fostering a rich and engaging linguistic journey for kindergarten children (Gruss, 2016).

## Holistic Education

Holistic educational approaches offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance phonological development among Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children (Kostikova, 2017). Recognizing the value of combining cognitive, sociocultural, interactionist, and sociolinguistic

perspectives in shaping pedagogical practices is fundamental. A holistic approach ensures that theoretical insights seamlessly inform classroom strategies, fostering comprehensive language development in young learners.

Moreover, aligning instruction with children's cognitive developmental stages, as advocated by Piaget's theory (1952), is essential. Understanding that children progress from preoperational to concrete operational stages allows educators to make informed decisions regarding age-appropriate educational language games and activities. By tailoring instruction to the cognitive readiness of students, educators can create more effective and engaging learning experiences.

Furthermore, implementing Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) emphasizes the importance of fostering collaborative and interactive learning environments. Educational language games, designed to encourage peer interactions, cooperative play, and guided language activities, serve as powerful tools for scaffolding phonological development through social engagement (Vygotsky, 2016). These games not only facilitate language acquisition but also promote the development of social and communication skills in a supportive context.

Lastly, it is crucial to acknowledge and address individual variation in phonological development (Ben David & Bat-El, 2016). Various factors, including sociolinguistic influences, developmental disparities, and neurodiversity, can impact a child's phonological development journey (Johnson & White, 2020). Educators should embrace a flexible approach, tailoring instruction to accommodate diverse needs. Providing additional support, when necessary, ensures that every child has the opportunity to thrive in their linguistic development, fostering inclusivity within the educational setting (Sukenik, 2023).

## Results

This research, guided by the research questions, shaped by an extensive literature review in the field of language acquisition, yielded insightful findings.

Firstly, we discovered that early exposure to multiple languages significantly impacts the phonological development of bilingual children, with a nuanced effect based on the unique phonological characteristics of each language.

Additionally, our investigation into educational language games revealed their substantial impact on the acquisition of reading and writing skills in young learners, especially in languages like Hebrew with complex phonological structures.

Moreover, our research underscored the influential role of sociocultural factors, including language variation and dialects, in shaping phonological development in culturally diverse kindergarten classrooms, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches.

### **Data Analysis**

Here, we will present the analysis of the data collected at Table No. 1 that tests the ability to recognize opening sounds in words. There are two groups: one that did not receive an intervention program and one that did. Each group underwent tests at the beginning and end of the year.

For any analysis, we must calculate the means and standard deviation. Moreover, we will check the correlation between results at the beginning and at the end of the year. The averages and standard deviation were calculated for each group and each time point (beginning and end of the year). Consider this data for both the number of correct answers and the number of incorrect answers. Then, we can examine the effect of the intervention by comparing the changes between the beginning and the end of the year in the two groups.

First, the averages and standard deviations were calculated for the group without intervention and then for the group with intervention. We can see an improvement in the results in both groups between the beginning and the end of the year, with an increase in the number of correct answers and a decrease in the number of incorrect answers in both groups. Though a more significant improvement is evident in the group with the intervention.

We performed two types of tests:

1. Pairs t-test – Improvement Over Time: We test the differences between the beginning and end of the year for each group.
2. Independent t-test – Effect of Intervention: We test the differences between the group without intervention and the group with intervention at each of the two times.

We will start with a Paired t-test (1) to assess the changes within each group, then move on to the independent t-test (2), and then we will check what we learn from the value of p-value (3).

The results of the Paired t-test:

Without intervention – Correct answers: t-statistic = -15.56, p-value < 0.001

Without intervention – Incorrect answers: t-statistic = 15.27, p-value < 0.001

With intervention – Correct answers: t-statistic = -28.70, p-value < 0.001

With intervention – Incorrect answers: t-statistic = 28.70, p-value < 0.001

Independent t-tests – Effect of Intervention:

Beginning of the Year – Correct answers: t-statistic = 0.96, p-value = 0.342

Beginning of the Year – Incorrect answers: t-statistic = -0.96, p-value = 0.342

End of the Year – Correct answers: t-statistic = -4.56, p-value < 0.001

End of the Year – Incorrect answers: t-statistic 4.56, p-value < 0.001

The low p-value shows that the differences between the year's beginning and end are statistically significant in both groups for correct and incorrect answers.

In the next step, we will perform two more statistical tests:

We will check the correlation between the results at the beginning and the end of the year for each group, without intervention and with intervention, and both types of answers, the correct and incorrect. After that, we will move on to perform an analysis of the assumption of influence. For it, we will calculate the Effect Size (Cohen's d) for changes between the beginning of the year and the end of the year in each group.

Correlation analysis: checking the correlation between the results at the beginning of the year and the end of the year can show if there is a relationship between the student's initial ability and their ability at the end of the year.

Analysis of the strength of the effect (Effect Size): This can help estimate the size of the intervention's effect beyond being statistically significant.

The correlation analysis:

Without intervention – Correct answers: correlation = -0.086, p-value = 0.720

Without intervention – Incorrect answers: correlation = -0.054, p-value = 0.822

With intervention – Correct answers: correlation = 0.330, p-value = 0.156

With intervention – Incorrect answers: correlation = 0.330, p-value = 0.156

In the case of the group without intervention, the correlation is low and insignificant (close to 0), which shows no clear connection between the results at the beginning of the year and the results at the end of the year. In the group with intervention, there is a positive correlation, but it is a slightly positive one, and it cannot be noted as statistically significant.

Assumption of Influence (Cohen's d)

We will move on to calculate the assumption of influence (Cohen's d) for the changes between the beginning and the end of the year in each group:

Without intervention – Correct answers:  $d = 5.09$

Without intervention – Incorrect answers:  $d = -4.94$

With intervention – Correct answers:  $d = 7.91$

With intervention – Incorrect answers:  $d = -7.91$

The magnitude of the effect measures the magnitude of the change between two groups. Here, the d values are very high, which suggests a large and significant change in results between the beginning and the end of the year in both groups, especially in the intervention group. Values of d higher than 0.8 are considered a large effect.

Some important points can be noted here:

1. Correlation: The slight positive correlation in the group with the intervention suggests a weak relationship between the ability at the beginning of the year and the ability at the end of the year. However, this is not statistically significant, so there is no high confidence that this relationship exists in the general population beyond our sample.

2. The impact assumption: The very high Cohen's  $d$  values in the group with the intervention show that the change in results between the beginning and the end of the year is large and significant. This indicates that the intervention significantly improved students' ability to identify opening sounds in words.

## Conclusions

Conclusions from Pairs t-test and independent t-tests

The groups had no significant differences at the beginning of the year.

At the end of the year, there are significant differences between the groups in correct and incorrect answers.

The low  $p$ -value shows that the differences between the year's beginning and end are statistically significant in both groups for correct and incorrect answers.

The data shows that the intervention significantly improved students' ability to identify opening sounds in words.

Conclusions from Correlation and the impact assumption

Although the correlation exists, it is not statistically significant. Examining the hypothesis of the effect indicates a large and significant improvement in ability in the group with the intervention.

This could be a case where the improvement is so great that it occurs to almost all students, regardless of their initial ability, and therefore the correlation is low.

**Table 1.** Data Collected

	Amount	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Without intervention				
Beginning of the year				
Correct	66	11%	3.3	2.03
Wrong	534	89%	26.7	2.03
End of the year				
Right	383	64%	19.15	3.91
Wrong	217	36%	10.85	3.91
With intervention				

Beginning of the year				
Right	55	10%	2.75	1.55
Wrong	545	90%	27.25	1.55
End of the year				
Right	491	82%	24.55	3.58
Wrong	109	18%	5.45	3.58

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

Graphic presentation of the results. A bar graph to illustrate the change in averages and a scatter graph to illustrate the correlation. Each graph shows the ratio between the data at the beginning of the year (X-axis) and at the end of the year (Y-axis) for each category.

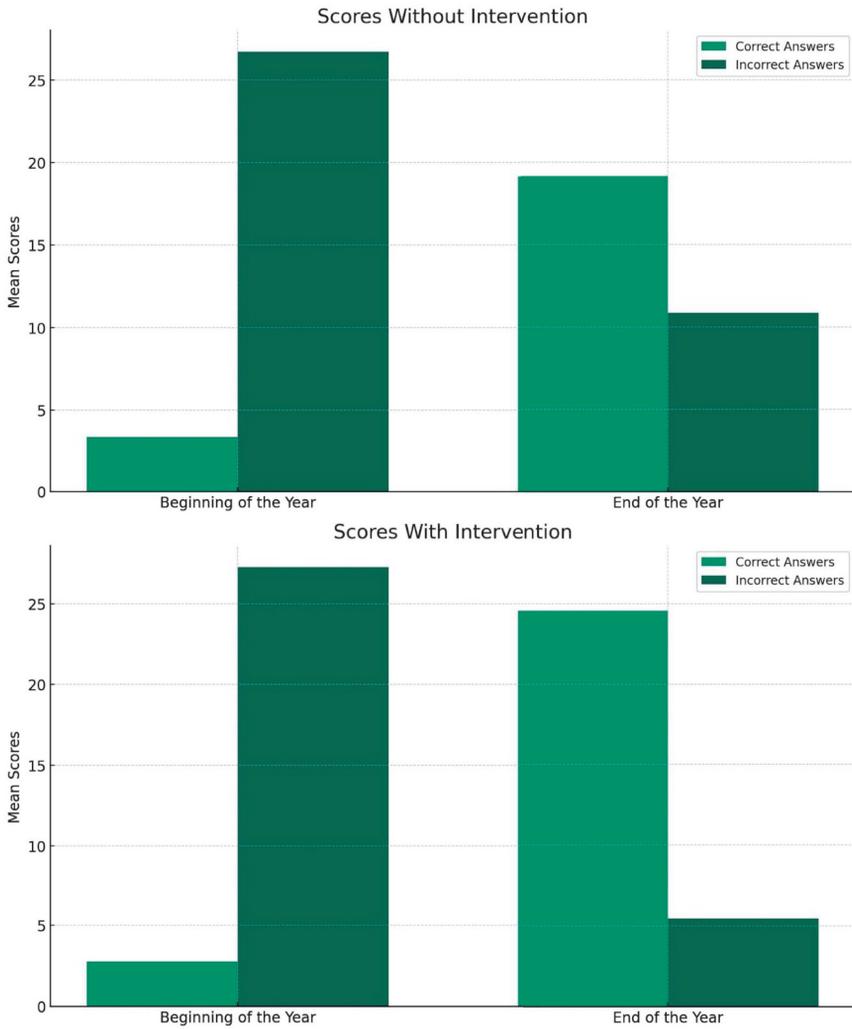
Change Over Time (Paired t-test). These graphs will show the mean values for correct and incorrect answers at the beginning and end of the year for both groups (with and without intervention). This will visually represent the improvement or decline in each category.

Comparison Between Groups (Independent t-test). These graphs will compare the mean values for correct and incorrect answers between the groups (with and without intervention) at both the beginning and end of the year. This will highlight the effect of the intervention.

The graphs for the Correlation Analysis and the Assumption of Influence (Cohen's d):

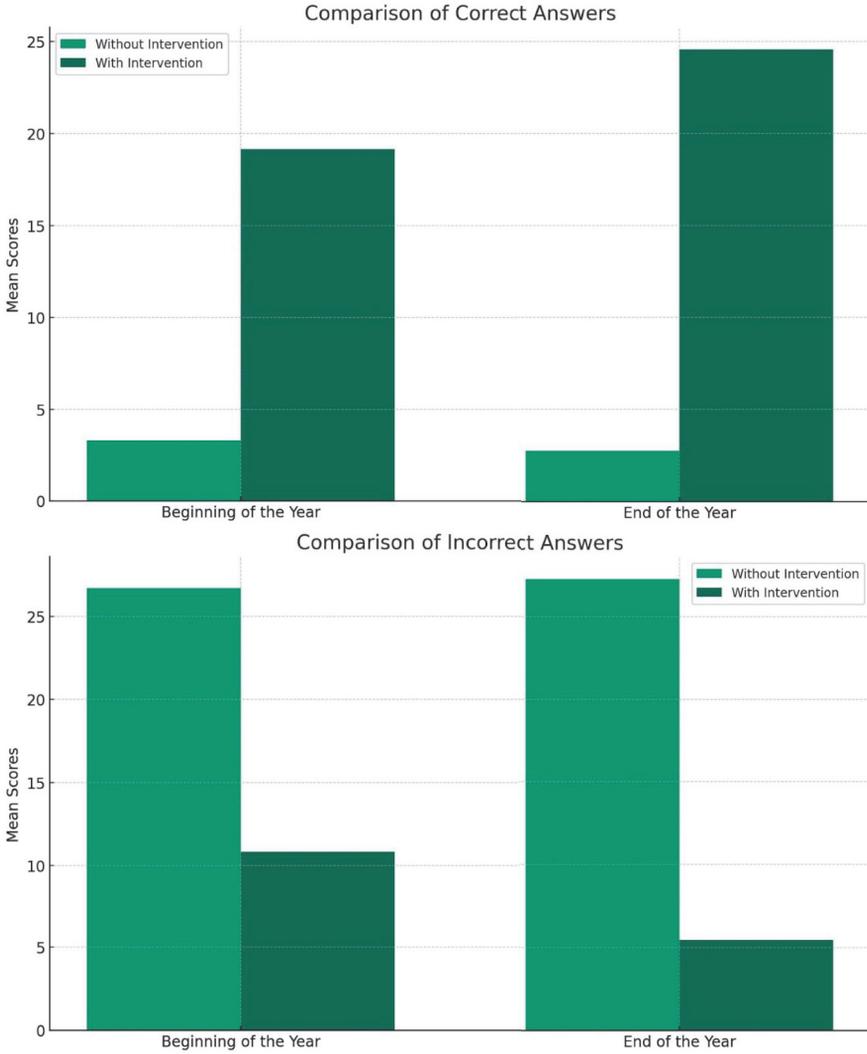
Correlation Analysis. This graph shows the correlation coefficients for correct and incorrect answers in both groups (with and without intervention). It provides a visual representation of the relationship between the results at the beginning and the end of the year for each group.

Assumption of Influence (Cohen's d). This graph illustrates the effect sizes for correct and incorrect answers in both groups. The high values of Cohen's d, particularly in the group with intervention, indicate a large and significant change in results between the beginning and the end of the year.

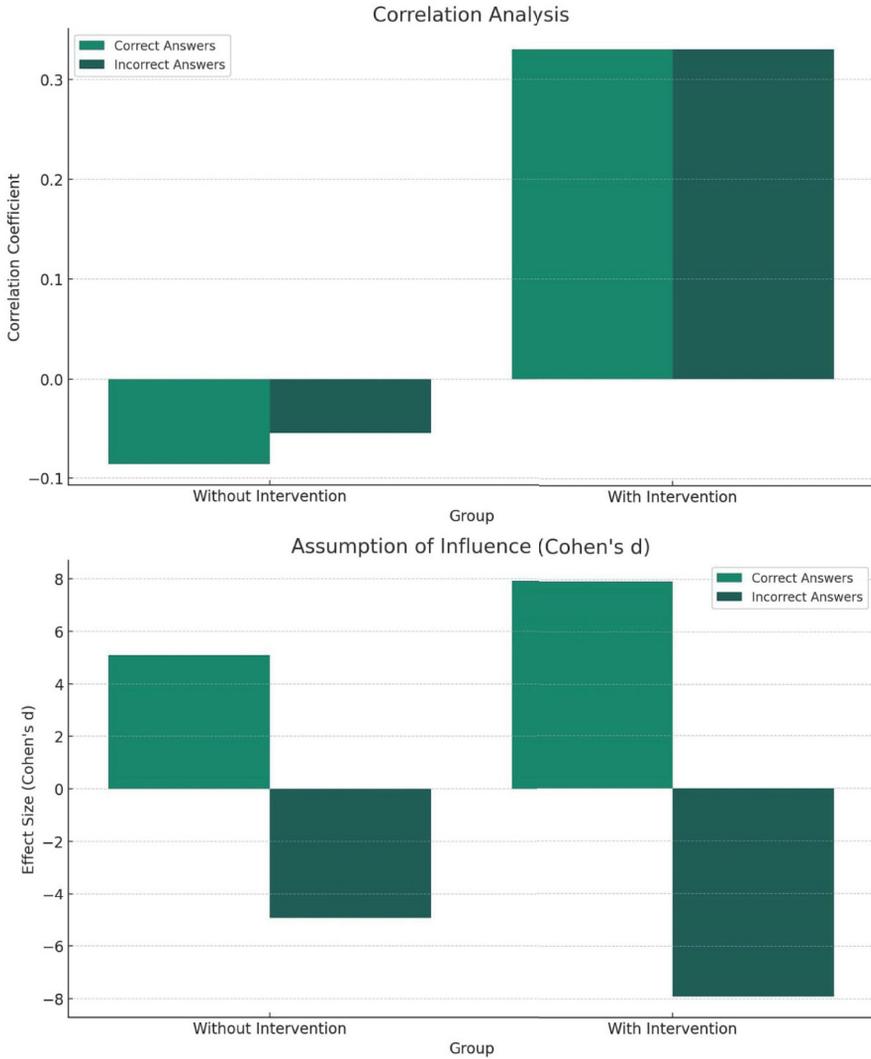
**Graph 1.** Change Over Time (Paired t-test)

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

**Graph 2.** Comparison Between Groups (Independent t-test)



**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

**Graph 3.** Correlation Analysis and the Assumption of Influence (Cohen's d)

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

## Discussion

The results of our literature review shed light on several critical aspects of phonological development and language acquisition, aligning with the research questions formulated based on an extensive literature review in the field.

Firstly, the influence of multilingual exposure on phonological development was a central finding. Bilingual children demonstrated varying phonological competencies, which appeared to be influenced by the phonological attributes of each language they encountered. This underscores the importance of considering the unique linguistic characteristics of each language when designing interventions and support for multilingual learners.

Moreover, the impact of educational language games on reading and writing skills, particularly in languages with complex phonological structures like Hebrew, was evident. These findings reinforce the potential of interactive and engaging teaching methods to foster phonological awareness and literacy skills in early education settings.

Our reading also emphasizes the importance of sociocultural factors, including language variation and dialects, for phonological development in different classes. This underscores the need for educators to recognize and respect linguistic diversity while supporting phonological development.

In this preliminary study we conducted on language development in 2 groups of kindergarten children with 30 children each. We examined language development without intervention versus language development with intervention and found that a positive and almost equal effect was observed for all children in the group.

At the beginning of the year, there were no significant differences between the groups. But at the end of the year, there were significant differences between the groups in the correct and incorrect answers. The low p-value shows that the differences between the beginning and the end of the year are statistically significant in both groups for correct and incorrect answers. The data shows that the intervention significantly improved the students' ability to recognize initial sounds in words.

Although the correlation exists, it is not statistically significant. The test of the effect hypothesis shows a large and significant improvement in skills in the group with the intervention. We conclude that the improvement in this case is so large that it occurs in almost all students, regardless of their initial ability, and the correlation is therefore low.

## Conclusion

The reviewed literature underscores the significance of phonological awareness in early language development, highlighting its vital role as a precursor to proficient reading and writing. Integrating educational games into language instruction, particularly in the form of interactive and engaging experiences, offers a promising approach to fostering phonological awareness. While studies have examined the impact of such games on language development, targeted investigations will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the potential of educational games in nurturing phonological awareness skills among kindergarten children.

The theoretical insights presented in this discussion offer invaluable guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance phonological development among kindergarten children. These insights enrich our understanding of phonological development and provide a blueprint for actionable steps in early education. The intersection of theory and practice is critical for effective phonological development in kindergarten children.

This research demonstrates the critical importance of evidence-based approaches in developing effective pedagogical strategies for phonological development. The statistically significant improvements observed in the intervention group highlight how research can directly inform classroom practices, curriculum design, and policy decisions. By continuing to investigate the intersection of theory and practice in early language acquisition, educators can develop increasingly effective methods to support children's phonological proficiency, particularly in languages with complex phonological structures like Hebrew. Future research should build upon these findings to further refine educational language games and their implementation in diverse educational contexts, ultimately enhancing literacy outcomes for young learners.

Our research confirms the significant impact of targeted educational interventions on young children's language development. The study, which was conducted on two groups of kindergarten children, one with and another one without intervention, showed that the intervention had a uniformly positive effect on all participants. The intervention was particularly effective in improving the students' ability to recognize initial sounds in words. This result is proof of the effectiveness of well-structured and thoughtfully implemented language development programs in early education.

An important finding was the lack of significant differences between the groups at the beginning of the year, which changed dramatically by the end of the year. The substantial improvements observed in the intervention group, as evidenced by the low p-values and high effect size (Cohen's *d*), underscore the profound impact of the intervention on phonological development. The statistical significance of these changes confirms the effectiveness of the intervention in promoting language skills.

Interestingly, the correlation analysis showed a correlation but no statistically significant results. This suggests that the improvement attributed to the intervention was so widespread and robust that it occurred in almost all students, regardless of their initial ability. This pattern suggests that the intervention was effective across a wide range of ability levels and improved the phonological skills of all participants.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of considering unique linguistic characteristics, sociocultural factors, and the potential of interactive teaching methods in promoting phonological awareness and literacy skills. The findings support the inclusion and integration of tailored language development interventions in early education, particularly in settings with multilingual learners and diverse linguistic backgrounds. In the future, these findings can guide the development of more effective teaching strategies and interventions to support the holistic language development of young learners in different educational contexts.

Educational language games represent a potent tool for advancing phonological development and should be seamlessly integrated into Hebrew kindergarten curricula. For educators and policymakers, the following recommendations are crucial for the effective integration of educational language games:

1. Curricular integration. Deliberate and systematically include educational language games within the kindergarten curriculum, aligning them with specific linguistic objectives and developmental milestones to reinforce linguistic growth.
2. Professional development. Providing educators with training and resources to effectively integrate and manage language games in the classroom while grounding them in the theoretical foundations discussed.

3. Resource Allocation. Adequate resources should be allocated for developing and acquiring educational language games tailored to Hebrew phonological development. This includes investments in high-quality game materials and digital tools that enrich the learning experience, ensuring the resources are engaging and effective in achieving desired linguistic outcomes.

Balancing pedagogical approaches with theoretical foundations is paramount for optimizing phonological development among kindergarten children. The harmonious fusion of theory and practice ensures that language games effectively nurture phonological awareness, sound discrimination skills, and language proficiency. By embracing these theoretical insights and recommendations, educators and policymakers can collaboratively create a language-rich learning environment, empowering young learners to embark on a journey toward linguistic excellence and literacy.

The comprehensive analysis of our study together with the findings from an extensive literature review highlights several key aspects of phonological development and language acquisition in early childhood education. The results of this study provide valuable contributions to the understanding of phonological development, particularly in multilingual contexts and in the use of educational games.

**Abstract:** Background: Phonological development is pivotal in early language acquisition, serving as a precursor to proficient reading and writing abilities. For Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children, the complexity of the language's phonological system presents unique challenges and opportunities. This study explores the theoretical foundations of phonological development, drawing from cognitive, sociocultural, interactionist, and sociolinguistic perspectives, and examines the transformative potential of educational language games in Hebrew kindergarten classrooms.

Methods: This study employs a qualitative research design, primarily focused on a systematic literature review and content analysis. The research questions investigate what insights can be gleaned from past academic studies in language acquisition, specifically phonological development, and how these findings can influence the practical application of educational language games in early education.

**Results:** The study highlights the holistic integration of theoretical insights into pedagogical practices, emphasizing the importance of cognitive alignment, sociocultural interactions, addressing individual variation, and curricular integration. Recommendations for educators and policymakers include aligning instruction with cognitive developmental stages, fostering collaborative learning environments, acknowledging diverse needs, providing professional development, allocating resources, implementing assessments, and advocating for policy support.

**Conclusion:** By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study offers valuable guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance phonological development among Hebrew-speaking kindergarten children. The harmonious fusion of theoretical insights and practical recommendations creates a language-rich learning environment, empowering young learners in their linguistic journey and promoting inclusivity within the educational setting. Phonological development plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of language skills during early childhood.

**Keywords:** phonological development, educational language games, Hebrew kindergarten, language acquisition, inclusive education

**Streszczenie:** Tło: Rozwój fonologiczny odgrywa kluczową rolę we wczesnym przyswajaniu języka, stanowiąc podstawę dla biegłości w czytaniu i pisaniu. Dla dzieci hebrajskojęzycznych uczęszczających do przedszkola złożoność fonologicznego systemu języka hebrajskiego stwarza zarówno wyzwania, jak i możliwości. Niniejsze badanie analizuje teoretyczne podstawy rozwoju fonologicznego, czerpiąc z perspektyw kognitywnych, socjokulturowych, interakcjonistycznych i socjolingwistycznych, a także bada potencjał edukacyjnych gier językowych w przedszkolnych klasach hebrajskich.

**Metody:** W badaniu zastosowano jakościowy projekt badawczy, koncentrując się głównie na systematycznym przeglądzie literatury oraz analizie treści. Postawione pytania badawcze dotyczą tego, jakie wnioski można wyciągnąć z wcześniejszych badań akademickich na temat przyswajania języka, w szczególności rozwoju fonologicznego, oraz w jaki sposób odkrycia te mogą wspierać praktyczne zastosowanie edukacyjnych gier językowych w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej.

**Wyniki:** Badanie podkreśla znaczenie całościowej integracji wniosków teoretycznych z praktyką pedagogiczną, zwracając uwagę na dopasowanie do procesów poznawczych, interakcje socjokulturowe, uwzględnianie indywidualnych różnic oraz włączanie treści do programu nauczania. Wśród rekomendacji dla nauczycieli i decydentów znajdują się: dostosowanie nauczania do etapów rozwoju poznawczego, promowanie współpracy w nauce, uwzględnianie różnorodnych potrzeb uczniów, zapewnienie rozwoju zawodowego nauczycieli, alokacja zasobów, wdrażanie systemów oceniania oraz wspieranie polityki edukacyjnej sprzyjającej rozwojowi fonologicznemu.

Wnioski: Poprzez połączenie teorii z praktyką, badanie dostarcza cennych wskazań dla nauczycieli i decydentów dążących do wspierania rozwoju fonologicznego dzieci hebrajskojęzycznych w przedszkolach. Harmonijne połączenie wniosków teoretycznych z praktycznymi rekomendacjami tworzy bogate w język środowisko edukacyjne, wspierając młodych uczniów w ich rozwoju językowym oraz promując inkluzywność w procesie edukacyjnym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rozwój fonologiczny, edukacyjne gry językowe, hebrajskie przedszkole, przyswajanie języka, edukacja inkluzyjna.

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Shakira MUKHTAROVA<sup>1</sup>

ORCIDID: 0000-0002-1184-9240

Marzhangul BAIMUKANOVA<sup>2</sup>

ORCIDID: 0000-0001-5010-4770

Alyona BARIKOVA<sup>3</sup>

ORCIDID: 0000-0002-5362-5560

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## Research of teachers' professional readiness to work with children with deviant behaviour

## Badanie profesjonalnej gotowości nauczycieli do pracy z dziećmi wykazującymi zachowania dewiacyjne

### Introduction

As things stand, the issue of bringing up the next generation raises concern and alarm in society. As the most common form of deviant behaviour, bullying

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<sup>1</sup>Shakira Mukhtarova, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Karagandy university of the name of academician E. A. Buketov, Kazakhstan, e-mail: shak.ira.53@mail.ru

<sup>2</sup>Marzhangul Baimukanova, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Karagandy university of the name of academician E. A. Buketov, Kazakhstan, e-mail: marber@mail.ru

<sup>3</sup>Alyona Barikova, Master of Psychological Sciences, Karagandy university of the name of academician E. A. Buketov, Kazakhstan, e-mail: alena.luh@mail.ru

is of concern to everyone: the state, teachers, parents, and communities. To address this, in the 2024-2025 academic year, 50 schools in Kazakhstan are testing the anti-bullying program DosbolLIKE (Anti-bullying program, 2023). More than 70 thousand schoolchildren and over 5 thousand teachers are taking part. To successfully implement the program, teacher participants had to undergo instructional and methodological seminar training. The KiVa anti-bullying program was launched in 110 Kazakhstan schools in September 2024 (Zakieva, 2024). However, bullying in schools is not the only type and form of deviant behaviour in children. Accordingly, one of the most important social tasks is the search for methods to eradicate negative forms of deviations in school, “secure targeted work on social rehabilitation of children with deviant behaviour” (Law on Prevention of Infractions, 2004) and improve competencies of teachers in working with such children during their socialization. Thereby, prerequisites for the development of the research topic were its relevance to society in connection with the spreading of deviant behaviour among children and adolescents, as well as a scientific search for a solution to the issue of developing professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children showing patterns of deviant behaviour.

The interdisciplinary approach to this study is based on the ideas of anthropological sciences, namely, philosophy, sociology, law, psychology, and pedagogy substantiating general scientific categories that study the concepts of deviation and deviant behaviour, the concept of upbringing, social adaptation, and socialization of the individual, socio-pedagogical theories on socio-cultural determinacy and complexity in interpreting factors and causes of deviant behaviour in minors, the humanistic psychology legacy (Durkheim, 1994; Maslow, 1954; Vygotsky, 1926; Rogers, 1967; James, 1991; Erikson, 1950, etc.), and modern research in social psychology on interpersonal relationships and behavioural attitudes.

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study is formed by the conceptual ideas on preventing deviation in children and adolescents (Zmanovskaya, 2004; Gilinsky, 2004; Klayberg, 2004; Rean, 2015; Akazhanova, 2020, etc.), theory of barriers in pedagogical activity (Zimnyaya, 2006, etc.), scientific research of teacher professional competencies, abilities, qualities and of pedagogical difficulties and mistakes (L. A. Grigorovich, A. A. Gorelov, Chudakov, 2022, etc.).

The analysis of scientific sources on the issue of deviant behaviour in children shows how researchers are primarily interested in the causes of deviant behaviour in children and adolescents, humanistic approaches to overcoming it among adolescents (Zinnurov (2012), D. V. Adamchuk, Y. G. Dozortseva, Yenikolopov (2016), A. B. Petrova (2008), Volkova, Tsvetkova et al. (2019), etc.).

A great contribution to the development of research on this issue is owed to foreign pedagogical experience in developing and implementing programs supporting various groups of deviant children (pragmatic pedagogy of J. Dewey (1899), moral development of the individual by L. Kohlberg (1981, 1984), the method of therapeutic communities, work therapy, play therapy, art therapy). The use of a combination of interscientific research methods, such as demographic, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical, etc., related to the issue of deviant behaviour in children equips teachers with the necessary knowledge and provides an opportunity to determine risk factors and early detection of behavioural deviations. The USA has successfully implemented the program Self-Esteem Builders (Borba, 1989), effectively working with children with deviant behaviour. According to the author's program, providing educational conditions raises the level of adolescents' self-esteem, resulting in good behaviour, reduced aggression, and improved academic performance. The psychological and pedagogical science of the USA and Great Britain offers a multitude of juvenile deviant typologies. The most common ones are the classifications by Bandura (1973), Becker (1964), Jenkins (1969), etc. In his analysis of the concepts of deviant behaviour based on the materials of the USA and Great Britain, D.V. Volkov (2001) points to the multiplicity of different theories that arose in the mainstream of Anglo-American deviantology. Forty different sociological, criminological, social-pedagogical, psychological-pedagogical, biologically conditioned, behaviourist, etc. theories of deviant behaviour include Durkheim's (2006) concept of social anomie transformed by R. Merton, the theory of subculture (Cohen (1972), Miller (1958), etc.), the theory of mass media, etc. The scientific value of these theories contributes to the development of the theory and practice of deviantology. However, the listed theories are not free of shortcomings: they exist each on their own and, therefore, lack connection between them. In recent decades, Anglo-American juvenology has been actively developing a socio-pedagogical direction that

includes socio-cultural conditioning and complexity in explaining the causes of deviant behaviour of minors.

In the context of this study, modern deviantology researcher efforts revealing the issues of forming competencies of experts who interact professionally with children with deviant behaviour are of theoretical and practical significance. These include publications both by local (Akazhanova (2022), Sadvokasova (2016), Izakova, Valiyev et al. (2018) and foreign scientists (Coplan et al., Salimi et al., Varela et al., Verseveld et al.), including Polish researchers (Pyżalski (2012), Łukawska (2015), Borkowska, Szymanska (2012), etc. (2019). The USA, Great Britain, Poland, and Slovakia's social and correctional-rehabilitation work experience on the topic of this study is of great interest to our country.

Local scientists have made a significant contribution to addressing the issue of deviant behaviour in children and adolescents in the theoretical and empirical studies by Dusmanbetov, Sheryzdanova (2003), Zhigampar (2011), Sadvokasova, (2016), textbooks and study guides for university students by Akazhanova (2022), Abdykarimov, Baiseitova et al. (2008), Aitbaev, G.A. Qasen (2014), methodological recommendations by Izakova, Valieva et al. (2018), Torybaeva, Atakhanova (2021).

The textbook by Akazhanova, (2022) reveals psychology issues of deviant behaviour of minors, explores the main theoretical and methodological principles, presents a classification of types of deviant behaviour, age and individual characteristics, mechanisms for the formation of asocial and antisocial groups, methods of psychological and pedagogical prevention and intervention. Sadvokasova's monograph "Technologies in Working with Children with Deviant Behaviour. Art-Pedagogical Aspect" (2016) offers modern technologies in working with children with deviant behaviour: approaches, techniques, methods, forms, procedures, and tools in working with adolescents.

As part of the project, methodological recommendations Measures to Prevent Deviant Behaviour Among Children and Adolescents have been developed, revealing the problem relevance, characteristics, causes, and factors of deviant behaviour of children and adolescents. A model of systemic measures to prevent deviant behaviour among children and adolescents is proposed to cover the system of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of preventive measures (Izakova, Valieva, (2018). Accordingly, as the review

of scientific sources showed, Kazakhstani authors have not given the issue of forming professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour the scientific coverage it deserves.

*The purpose of the article* is to identify psychological and pedagogical conditions that contribute to the professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour.

## Methodology and methods

The following scientific approaches serve as methodological guidelines for the problem under study: axiological, personality-oriented, system-activity, cultural-anthropological, environmental, social-role, interdisciplinary, competence-based, and comparative. The use of a set of methodological principles, such as humanism, cultural conformity, natural conformity, and reliance on the positive traits of a person and their bringing up, orientation towards the student's spiritual and moral development, creation of psychological and pedagogical conditions for successful subject-subject interaction between the teacher and the student, formation of competence in managing deviant behaviour, and the process complexity of professional interaction with children with deviant behaviour will allow us to reveal the problem under study in depth.

To achieve the stated goals, we have used the following research methods: theoretical analysis and synthesis, classification, generalization of experience, surveying (polling), ranking, and quantitative and qualitative processing of materials using mathematical statistics methods, etc.

The main research topic is as follows: "What pedagogical competencies schoolteachers in Kazakhstan have to work with students exhibiting deviant behaviour?" To identify teacher competencies in child deviant behaviour and to examine their knowledge and skills (KS) of schoolchildren deviant behavioural aspects, we have developed two proprietary questionnaires under the umbrella title "Teacher Awareness." The sample of schoolteacher respondents consisted of 498 people out of five regions of Kazakhstan: Karaganda region (149), Almaty region (80), Akmola region (92), Ulytau region (78), and North Kazakhstan region (99). Among the teachers who underwent diagnostics, the range of experience was 1 to 30 years. Diagnostics for this study took a period between October 15th and December 15th, 2024.

## Results

Deviation concepts consider positive and negative deviance. Positive deviation (genius, giftedness, creativity) contributes to the progress of human civilization, while negative deviation entails a violation of moral norms of society, destroys the physical and moral health of individuals, and negatively affects the upbringing of the next generation. This explains the emphasis of scientific research on negative deviation as a social issue.

The theory of deviation based on an interdisciplinary approach offers a generally accepted classification that includes three interrelated traditional groups based on psychological, biological, and sociological approaches. Legal (criminological) theories also have their own subject of study in the scientific field of deviation, a delinquency. Classifications of deviation theories in psychology are based on philosophy, personology, social psychology, and sociology.

As a human science, anthropology covers the whole variety of behavioural manifestations in an individual's socialization, including behaviour deviating from the norm. The social phenomenon of deviation is studied by sociology, psychology, biology, criminology, medicine, and pedagogy. Based on interscientific research, pedagogy, or social pedagogy in particular, focuses both theoretically and practically on the upbringing and socialization process of children with deviant behaviour. Educationists and practitioners have developed technologies to prevent and correct deviant behaviour in children and adolescents. The interdisciplinary approach to this study allows us to scientifically substantiate the inclusion of socio-pedagogical theories of deviation in generally accepted classifications (Sadvokassova, (2016); Kasen, Mynbaeva et al. (2014), since, first of all, the essence of deviation, in Gilinsky's (2004) own words, is expressed in behavioural acts that should be considered, taking into account biological, sociological, psychological theories of deviation to begin with. In this study, the authors explore deviant behaviour as behaviour deviating from the norms of interpersonal relationships accepted by society in psychological and pedagogical aspects, i.e., deviation as a manifestation of the behavioural component in an individual's socialization process. Based on the analysis of the concepts of deviant behaviour, deviant behaviour and other synonymous categories in deviantology, *this study interprets the "deviant behaviour of children and adolescents" as "a behavioural component in the social*

*structure juvenile personality not corresponding to the norm of society and manifested in positive or negative forms.”*

This study aims at developing professional readiness of teachers to interact with negative manifestations of deviant behaviour of children and adolescents. Examination to identify the readiness of teachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour has been performed in 2024 as part of the project “Psychological and Pedagogical Conditions for the Development of Professional Readiness of Teachers to Interact with Children with Deviant Behaviour”. The study engaged 498 teachers from five regions of Kazakhstan. The range of experience of teachers who underwent examination is 1 to 30 years. 44.3% of those were teaching moderators, 32.2% teaching researchers, and another 23.5% were teaching experts.

Teacher readiness is an integral concept that includes pedagogical and psychological substructures. The pedagogical substructure determines theoretical readiness (knowledge of the phenomenon of deviation, manifestation forms, diagnosis, and correction methods) and practical readiness (developed skills). Studying pedagogical component of teachers' readiness to interact with children with deviant behaviour required an online examination using questionnaires.

The first questionnaire is aimed at examining the development of teachers' knowledge of deviations in children. It includes closed-type questions revealing the level of teachers' theoretical knowledge in deviantology, as well as mixed-type questions aimed at identifying teachers' requests for certain types of support, namely, educational, psychological, methodological, etc.

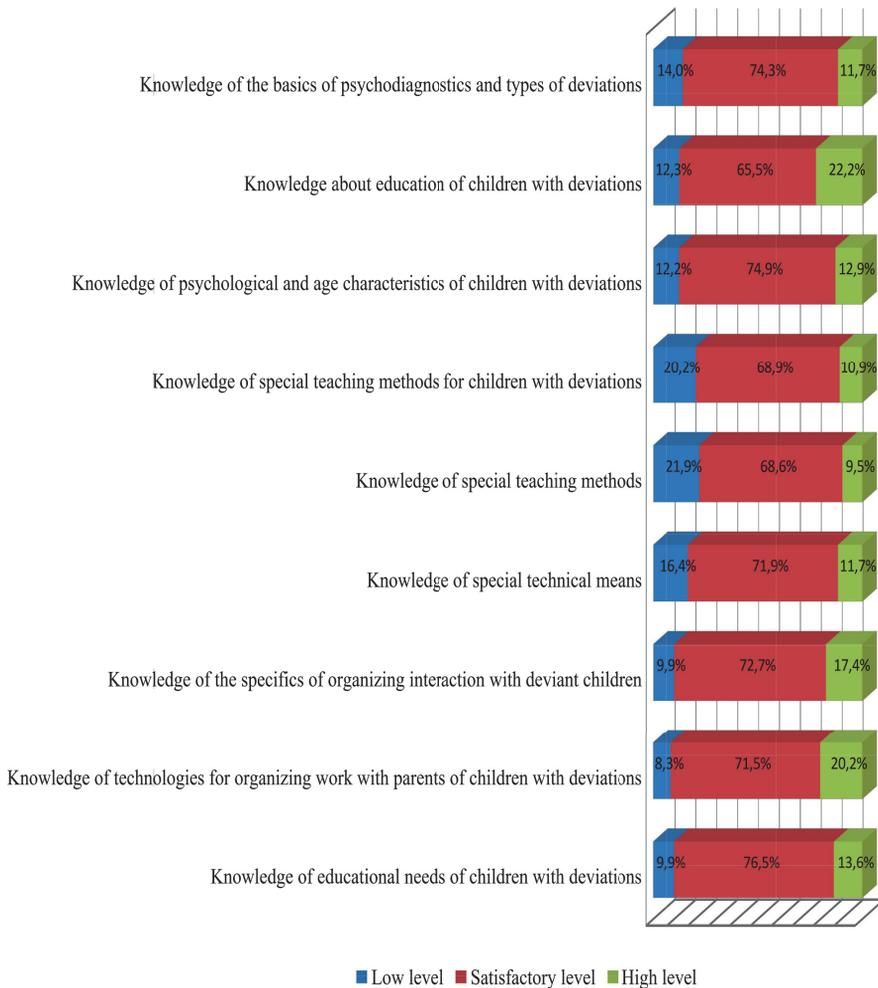
The second questionnaire is aimed at assessing the development of teachers' skills of interaction with children with deviant behaviour. This questionnaire will allow us to examine the level of development of the following teacher skills:

- Analytical and prognostic skills,
- Design skills,
- Organizational skills,
- Communication skills, and
- Reflective skills.

## Difficulties in interaction between teachers and children with deviant behaviour

The assessment of teachers' knowledge of the features of interaction with children with deviant behaviour has shown criteria presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Criteria of Development of Teachers' Knowledge of Deviations and Features of Interaction with Children with Deviant Behaviour



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

76.4% of the surveyed teachers have shown a satisfactory level of knowledge in the basics of psycho diagnostics and the main signs of deviations in children. 13.6% of teachers have a high level of knowledge in this area, and another 9.9% of teachers do not possess the required knowledge in the area. 71.5% of teachers have only a general idea of what education for children with deviations is and how it differs from education for other categories. 20.2% of teachers have a clear idea of the features of educational space for this category of children. 8.3% of teachers have no idea how educational environment differs for children both with and without deviations.

Most teachers (72.5%) show a satisfactory level of knowledge of psychological patterns and characteristics of age and personality development of children with deviations. 17.4% of teachers show a high level of knowledge in this matter, and another 9.9% of teachers do not have knowledge in this matter.

71.9% of teachers show a satisfactory level of knowledge of the methods of psychological and didactic design. 16.4% of teachers show a low level of knowledge about the methods of psychological and didactic design. 11.7% of teachers show a high level of knowledge in this matter.

68.6% of surveyed teachers have only a general idea of special teaching methods for children with deviations. 21.9% of teachers have no idea of specific methods that need to be used to work with children with deviant behaviour. 9.5% have a clear idea of features and methods of applying special methods to work with this category of children.

The majority of teachers (68.9%) show a satisfactory level of knowledge of special technical means for working with children with deviations. 20.2% of teachers show a low level of knowledge of special technical means, and only 10.9% of teachers note a high level of knowledge in this matter.

74.9% of surveyed teachers show a satisfactory level of knowledge of features of organizing children's interaction. 12.9% of teachers have specific and clear ideas about the features of organizing interaction for this category, and another 12.3% of teachers do not have knowledge and have no idea about the features of children's interaction.

65.5% of teachers have only a general idea of the technology of organizing work with parents of children with deviations. 22.2% have clear and specific ideas about working with this category of parents, and another 12.3% of

teachers do not know and do not understand how to organize work with this category of parents.

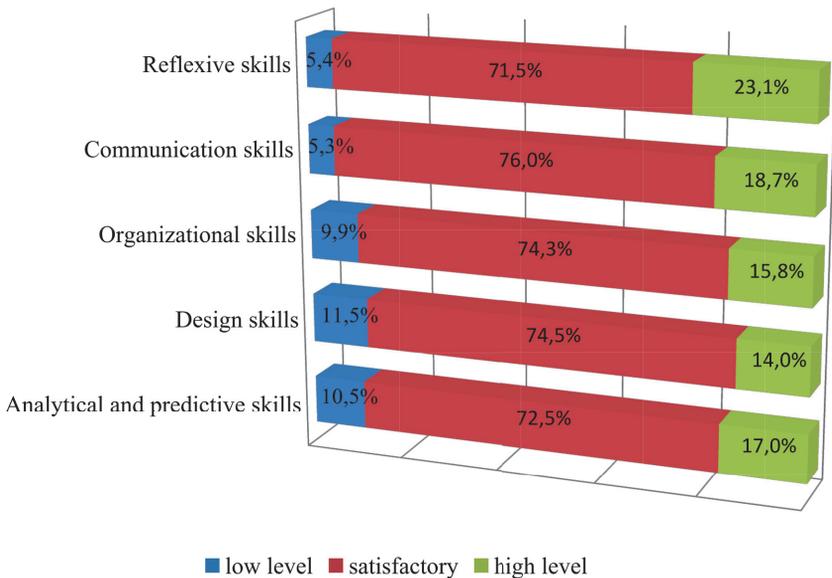
Most of the teachers surveyed (74.3%) show a satisfactory level of knowledge of specific educational needs of different categories of children. 14% show a low level of knowledge about this, and only 11.7% of teachers show a high level of knowledge about children with different types of deviations.

In general, the assessment of teachers' knowledge of interaction and working with children with deviant behaviour allowed us to conclude that most of the respondents only have general ideas and knowledge of working with deviant children, and only a small part of teachers have specific subject knowledge.

The pedagogical component of teachers' readiness to interact with children with deviant behaviour also includes a skill development criterion.

The survey has revealed the following criteria of the teachers' skill development, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Criteria for Assessing the Level of the Teachers' Professional Skills



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

In terms of analytical and prognostic skills, the majority of surveyed teachers (72.5%) can generally analyse children's behaviour but also find it difficult to assess specific manifestations. They use general knowledge of deviations to address methodological issues without diving deep into specific features of deviation. They tend to analyse specific situations but do not always consider the results of the analysis in the process of subject interaction with deviant children, which can lead to conflicts. They generally analyse the results achieved of children with deviations. They are able to make a general forecast of the child's socio-psychological development without considering specific manifestations of deviations, which affects the effectiveness in the development of a further educational route. 17% of teachers can analyse and assess the behaviour of children with deviations, use specific subject knowledge considering the specifics of deviation, can analyse and assess situations and use this data to build safe interaction with this category of children. They show a high level of skills in development of an educational route based on the analysis of the child's current development level.

A small percentage of teachers (10.5%) do not possess the skills to analyse and assess the behaviour of children with deviations, find it difficult to use knowledge of deviations in specific situations, are not focused on analysing and evaluating children's behaviour, and use the same template in interaction with them as for children without deviations. They find it difficult to make a socio-psychological forecast for the development of children and are not inclined to build a clear educational route.

In regard to design skills, 74.5% of teachers are inclined to plan lessons but find it difficult to evaluate the results, formulate lesson objectives clearly but find it difficult to choose specific conditions for their implementation, model tools but do not always clearly know which tools to use. 14% of teachers are inclined to clearly construct and plan lessons and have specific criteria for evaluating the results. They set specific tasks and choose conditions for their implementation, use specific methodological tools for working with children with deviant behaviour. Amongst surveyed teachers, 11.5% have trouble organizing the educational process for this category of children. These teachers find it hard to plan and evaluate lessons and they also use a limited set of tools.

In regard to organizational skills, the majority of the surveyed teachers (74.3%) can manage children's behaviour and activities in conflict-free situations when there are no distinct deviant manifestations. They generally

make quick decisions in non-standard situations, although these decisions are not always effective. They organize dialogue interaction but only from a single position of the child – as a “student.” They present tasks for children clearly and concisely but not always in plain language, focusing more on children with no deviations. They can create a correctional environment, but they use a limited set of resources available in the educational space, which affects the effectiveness of correctional actions. 15.8% of teachers are able to manage the behaviour and activities of children in any situation, are able to act quickly and effectively in non-standard situations, can build a dialogue with a child, considering possible roles and positions of both the teacher and the child. They present the material concisely, clearly and in an accessible way for different categories of children, create an effective correctional environment, use all the required educational space resources, which minimizes risks in the training and interaction this category of children. 9.9% of respondents cannot manage the behaviour and activities of this category of children and tend to overlook some manifestations, find it hard to build a dialogic interaction. They prefer to formalize interaction based on a monologue when the active participant is the teacher. They have pronounced difficulties in presenting tasks and find it hard to form an effective correctional environment.

In terms of teacher communication skills, the survey revealed that the majority of respondents (76%) tend to establish interaction with children considering age-related characteristics but without analysing the specifics of deviant manifestations. They use a specific, template set of tools to create interaction, and have some difficulties in assessing changes in the mental state of children at different stages of interaction. This category of teachers is characterized by the ability to clearly plan and implement interaction with parents and other participants in the educational process. 24% of teachers have shown high rates of communication skills. These teachers establish interaction based on the analysis of age and psychological characteristics of children considering the specifics of deviation while using a wide range of tools to build interaction as part of individualization of learning. These teachers tend to adequately perceive and interpret children’s signals, which allows them to determine changes in behaviour and states by their external manifestations. It is important for them to build effective communications not only with children but also with parents and other participants in the educational space. Another 5.3% of teachers show low communication skills. They are not inclined to

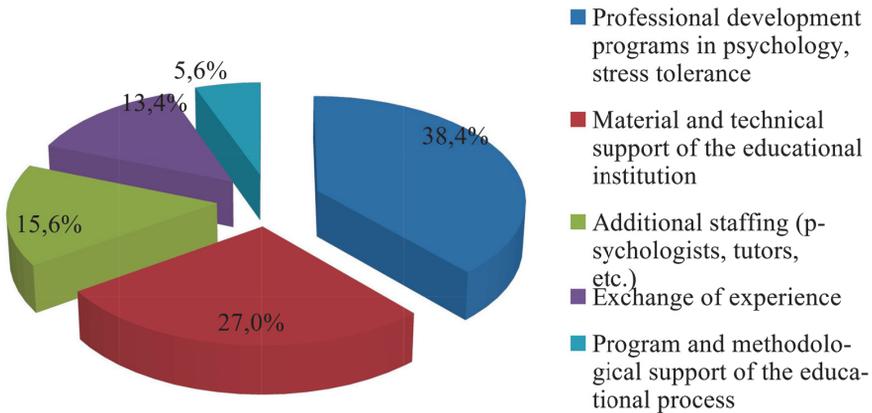
use an individual approach in the process of communication with children. They have difficulties tracking changes in children's behaviour and they use a limited set of tools for organizing interaction. They are not inclined to include communication with parents and other participants in the educational space in the process of communication.

Assessing the reflective skills of teachers, we can note that the majority of teachers (71.5%) are inclined to analyse their professional actions but more often based on the results of their implementation and not for predictive purposes, which affects the effectiveness of methods and tools used. They analyse the achievements and shortcomings in their own work but are not always able to find ways to address issues, which may cause difficulties in the process of further professional development. 18.8% of teachers show a high level of reflective skills. These teachers analyse their own professional actions, are able to predict problem points in interaction with children. They use a wide range of methods and tools, set clear plans for self-training and development in matters of interaction with children with deviations. A small percentage of teachers (5.3%) show a low level of reflective skills, are not inclined to analyse and predict their own successes and failures, use a limited set of tools in their work and find it difficult to determine further paths for professional development.

During the survey, teachers would note how they need practical knowledge of deviations (44.3%), including medical and psychological (developmental psychology, psychology of family relations, social psychology). 33.7% of respondents would like to exchange experiences. 22% express the need for advanced training in diagnostics and correction of behaviour for children with deviations, working with families of children with deviant behaviour. In regard to the assistance required by teachers, the following types of support were noted, graphically presented in Figure 3.

In general, the analysis of survey results has revealed a high need among teachers for practical knowledge and development of skills in communicative, prognostic, orientation, organizational work, and provision of effective and timely social and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents with deviant behaviour.

**Figure 3.** Priority Types of Assistance for the Implementation of an Inclusive Approach in Education of Children with Deviations



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Discussion

As part of this study, there is a need for a scientific interpretation of the key term “professional readiness of a teacher to interact with children with deviant behaviour”. Analysis of sources in the psychological and pedagogical scientific area on the definition under study allows us to receive it as a psychological attitude to a certain activity, as a private psychological phenomenon, as a state of the subject (Uznadze, 1997; Yadov, 2013, etc.) In this respect, Uznadze’s (1997) scientific school considers readiness as an essential feature of the attitude that arises in the behavioural activity of the subject. Some researchers (Dyachenko, Kandybovich, 2005) consider the subject’s psychological readiness in accordance with their professional activity as a form of its reflection in integrity. Accordingly, they argue that professional readiness is a complex personal formation that includes a multi-level system of qualities, states, and properties of the subject, allowing them to successfully conduct their professional activities.

Pedagogical research sees the issue of professional readiness as a set of personality traits that are successfully implemented in the performance of professional and pedagogical functions (Slastenin, 2002), as an integral

personality trait, the origins of which arise in the substructure of experience, i.e., is primarily due to knowledge, skills, and abilities (Platonov, 2016). We feel important to note the definition of readiness suggested by S. L. Rubinstein (2021) that we believe to most fully reveal understanding of the essence of definition under study from a psychological and pedagogical standpoint. It includes several moral and psychological aspects of the teacher's personality, their mental and theoretical abilities, a set of socio-political and psychological knowledge, as well as programmatic methodological skills and abilities necessary for a teacher in their professional activities.

The Kazakhstan's scientific school lead by the scientist and teacher N.D. Khmel has made a significant contribution to the development of the theory of professional readiness. N. D. Khmel's concept substantiates the professional readiness of a teacher as a complex formation that includes both professional qualities of the individual and certain knowledge and skills reflecting three components: motivational-value, content, and procedural. According to N. D. Khmel, pedagogical education's goal is to develop teacher competence (Khmel, 2003).

In modern professional education, a competence-based approach is a priority in the pedagogical process. The issue of the competence-based approach to professional activity is one of the intensively developed problems of domestic and foreign pedagogy. Theoretical analysis of the concept of Professional Competence has shown an ambiguity of approaches to interpreting the concept in the literature on this issue.

Professional competence is considered as "the unity of theoretical and practical readiness to carry out pedagogical activity; "a set of knowledge and skills that determine performance; the volume of skills for completing a task; a combination of personal qualities and properties; a set of knowledge and professionally significant personal qualities; a vector of professionalization," etc. (Vvedensky, 2003). Development of competence in the educational process puts forward not the awareness of the student but the ability to address problems in various areas. The latter definition most clearly reflects the essence of the competence-based approach in our study.

Scientists consider the concept of "professional competence" as a set of professionally significant qualities that allow an expert to successfully perform professional and pedagogical functions while competences represent a range of issues that a professional should be aware of. British psychologist

J. Raven (2002, p. 24) notes that the main components of competence include internally motivated characteristics associated with the system of personal values or types of competence. As a complex psychological formation, professional competence has varieties, namely: social, pedagogical, socio-psychological, communicative, regulatory, informational, ethnocultural, etc. Analysis of the definition of “competence” in psychological and pedagogical literature leads to the conclusion that, basically, scientists consider it as a set of professionally significant qualities that allow an expert to successfully perform their professional and pedagogical functions. Accordingly, the concept of “competence” is considered as the result of the preparation (readiness) of an expert for various types of professional activities. Based on the analysis of the concept and the above conclusions, we came to the following author’s definition of the concept in the context of the problem under study: *By professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour, we understand the teacher’s personal characteristics and competencies in deviantology, possession of psychological and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and abilities to prevent and correct deviant behaviour of schoolchildren.*

The process of developing the professional readiness of teachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour presupposes psychological and pedagogical conditions for its implementation considering the set of methodological principles we have defined above.

The philosophical definition of conditions as an essential component of objects (things, their state, interaction), from the presence of which the existence of a given phenomenon necessarily follows, indicates the importance of identifying specific conditions. The concept of “psychological and pedagogical conditions” is usually considered as a set of objective and subjective factors required to ensure the effective functioning of all areas of the educational system. They depend on the choice of goals and objectives, principles of training and education, and determine the corresponding content, organizational forms, methods (techniques), ensure their continuity, integration, and interconnection, consider specifics of the means used in the school’s educational process.

In the context of the study, by psychological and pedagogical conditions we mean *psychologically and pedagogically substantiated features of organization of the pedagogical process that determine the effectiveness of the process of*

*developing professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour.*

During the study, we believe the following psychological and pedagogical conditions are necessary for the process of developing professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour have been identified and substantiated:

- Condition 1: Examination of the current state of professional readiness of teachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour,
- Condition 2: Development of a model of professional readiness of teachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour, and
- Condition 3: Educational and methodological support for the process of developing professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour.

According to the hypothesis of the study, the psychological and pedagogical conditions we have identified suggest further modelling of the process of developing professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour, and development of an educational module to improve teacher competencies in working with students prone to deviant behaviour.

## Conclusions

Deviant behaviour is the subject of research in many humanities that study various aspects of this social phenomenon. Pedagogy, in particular, is more interested in preventive measures for deviant behaviour in children and effective educational means of preventing it. The causes for deviant behaviour in children are varied and include family issues, aggressiveness as a result of negative dependence on gadgets and drugs, gamification, team relationships, inflated self-esteem, and other social and psychological factors. They can be eradicated by educational influence on children and adolescents by professionals not indifferent to the problems of Kazakhstan's society. The modern educational environment sets serious demands on the personal characteristics and professional qualities of teachers. Constant improvements and acquisition of new knowledge and skills in various areas are required. In this regard, one of the pressing issues of modern pedagogy is the competence in managing deviant behaviour. This requires the creation of conditions for advanced training and professional retraining, considering educational

space's needs and characteristics. Solution of such an important problem will contribute to the increase of competence potential of schoolteachers to interact with children prone to deviant behaviour, as well as the creation of favourable conditions for the development of children, a comfortable safe environment at school, and the moral health of society in general.

**Abstract:** The following paper explores the issue of professional readiness of teachers to work with children with deviant behaviour. The relevance of this problem is associated with the growth of various forms of deviant behaviour among children and adolescents. The purpose of the study is to identify psychological and pedagogical conditions for the development of teacher's readiness in managing deviant behaviour. The state of knowledge of the problem of deviation is presented based on an interdisciplinary approach. The study uses several basic methodological approaches: axiological, personality-oriented, system-activity, cultural-anthropological, environmental, social-role, interdisciplinary, competence-based, comparative, and basic principles. The paper describes methods and results of an empirical study conducted among schoolteachers in five regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan on this issue by means of a questionnaire. The paper presents theoretical results of the authors' study: a scientific interpretation of the key concepts of "Deviant Behaviour of Children and Adolescents," "Professional Readiness of Teachers to Interact with Children with Deviant Behaviour" based on a competence-based approach. Psychological and pedagogical conditions for the development of professional readiness of schoolteachers to interact with children with deviant behaviour are substantiated. In this article, the authors come to the conclusion on the development of competence in managing deviant behaviour of a teacher on the psychological and pedagogical conditions they have identified.

**Keywords:** deviant behaviour, children, teachers, interaction, professional readiness, competence in managing deviant behaviour.

**Streszczenie:** Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje problem gotowości zawodowej nauczycieli do pracy z dziećmi przejawiającymi zachowania dewiacyjne. Znaczenie tego zagadnienia wynika ze wzrostu różnych form zachowań dewiacyjnych wśród dzieci i młodzieży. Celem badania jest identyfikacja psychologicznych i pedagogicznych uwarunkowań rozwoju gotowości nauczycieli do zarządzania zachowaniami dewiacyjnymi.

Stan wiedzy na temat problemu dewiacji został przedstawiony w oparciu o podejście interdyscyplinarne. W badaniu zastosowano kilka podstawowych podejść metodologicznych: aksjologiczne, zorientowane na osobowość, systemowo-aktywnościowe, kulturowo-antropologiczne, środowiskowe, społeczno-rolowe, interdyscyplinarne, kompetencyjne, porównawcze oraz podstawowe zasady metodologiczne. Artykuł opisuje metody i wyniki badania empirycznego przeprowadzonego wśród nauczycieli szkół z pięciu regionów Republiki Kazachstanu za pomocą kwestionariusza. Przedstawia także teoretyczne wyniki badań autorów, w tym naukową interpretację kluczowych pojęć: „Zachowania dewiacyjne dzieci i młodzieży” oraz „Gotowość zawodowa nauczycieli do interakcji z dziećmi przejawiającymi zachowania dewiacyjne” w oparciu o podejście kompetencyjne. Uzasadniono psychologiczne i pedagogiczne warunki rozwoju gotowości zawodowej nauczycieli do pracy z dziećmi o zachowaniach dewiacyjnych. Autorzy dochodzą do wniosku, że rozwój kompetencji w zakresie zarządzania zachowaniami dewiacyjnymi nauczyciela jest ściśle związany z określonymi przez nich warunkami psychologicznymi i pedagogicznymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zachowania dewiacyjne, dzieci, nauczyciele, interakcja, gotowość zawodowa, kompetencje w zarządzaniu zachowaniami dewiacyjnymi.

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Victoria STRATAN<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0002-1258-6008

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## The role of transformational leadership in increasing the job satisfaction of primary education teachers

### Rola przywództwa transformacyjnego w zwiększaniu satysfakcji zawodowej nauczycieli edukacji podstawowej

#### Introduction

Transformational leadership is a central concept in the educational management literature, recognized for producing deep and lasting changes in academic institutions. This type of leadership has been developed and studied since the 1970s in the works of J.M. Burns (1978) and B. Bass (1985), who proposed a new approach to leadership focused on inspiration, motivation, and the personal and professional development of those involved. In the educational context, transformational leadership plays a crucial role in determining the professional satisfaction of teachers in primary education, where the relationship between school management and department teachers is often a determining factor of the organizational climate. This

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<sup>1</sup> Stratan Victoria, PhD, Associate Professor, “Ion Creanga” State Pedagogical University of Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, e-mail: [stratan.victoria@gmail.com](mailto:stratan.victoria@gmail.com)

form of leadership is based on the leader's ability to motivate, inspire, and support the continuous development of teachers, giving them a sense of belonging, autonomy, and professional fulfilment. P. E. Spector highlights that "*professional satisfaction* represents a set of feelings that an individual has towards various aspects of the workplace, such as the work itself, colleagues, school managers and financial rewards (Spector, 1997, p. 38). The professional satisfaction of primary education teachers is essential for educational success, directly impacting the quality of teaching and the academic performance of young school-age students. Primary teachers often face unique challenges, such as responding to diverse student needs, managing bureaucratic pressure, and balancing curricular demands and children's emotional needs. At this juncture, transformational leadership becomes essential, as it allows teachers to develop their professional competencies in a supportive and collaborative environment, thereby increasing the sense of professional satisfaction.

### Conceptual Framework

We note that several researchers have defined and conceptualized transformational leadership over the decades, each contributing to the understanding of this leadership style, especially in education. In teacher satisfaction, this type of leadership plays an essential role in influencing motivation, involvement, and professional development.

Thus, J. M. Burns is considered the pioneer of transformational leadership, defining transformational leadership as a process by which leaders and followers lift each other to higher levels of morality and motivation. According to Burns, this type of leadership involves a commitment to shared values and personal development, transcending personal interests for the collective good. J. M. Burns states: "Leaders can improve the group's collective efficacy by persuading members that they can accomplish a task well or by exhorting them to do so" (Burns, 2004, p. 415). In addition, researchers G. R. Goethals, G. J. Sorenson, and J. M. Burns state that "persuasion is at the heart of charismatic or transformational leadership, whereby a leader by force of personality and strength of vision convinces followers of the correctness of a particular course of action and, more importantly, raises their individual and collective senses of efficacy that they can achieve desired outcomes." (Goethals, Sorenson, Burns, 2004, p. 415). This model translates into leaders who inspire teachers to

push their boundaries and actively contribute to the educational community. From the perspective of professional satisfaction, according to this researcher, teachers feel more satisfied when encouraged to participate in a common goal, which gives them a sense of belonging and value.

Analysing the specialized literature, we notice that the researcher B. M. Bass extends the concept of transformational leadership proposed by Burns, adding new dimensions to his model. In 1985, the author defined this type of leadership as the leader's ability to influence change through motivation and challenging the status quo. Interestingly, the remark of the authors B. M. Bass and R. E. Riggio, in this vein, regarding the personality of the leader, points out, "Transformational leadership has much in common with charismatic leadership, but charisma is only part of transformational leadership" (Bass, Riggio, 2006, p. 5). B. M. Bass (1985) proposes four essential dimensions: idealized influence (leaders become role models for teachers), inspirational motivation (leaders communicate an attractive vision that motivates the team), intellectual stimulation (leaders encourage innovation and creative thinking), and individualized consideration (leaders provides personalized support to each team member). Concerning professional satisfaction, according to B. M. Bass (1985), teachers who feel that their leaders respect their individual needs and encourage creativity tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction.

In education, K. Leithwood (1995) was among the first to adapt the concept of transformational leadership to educational contexts. In his works, the author highlights six dimensions of transformational leadership: establishing a shared vision, developing shared goals, providing models for behaviour, intellectual stimulation, personalized support, and sustaining a climate of respect. Ch. Day and K. Leithwood mention: "To set a clear direction, a leader must be able to articulate a common vision, create high-performance expectations, and then communicate the vision and expectations effectively" (Day and Leithwood, 2007, p. 157). We note that this form of leadership supports teacher satisfaction by creating an environment where teachers feel valued and supported in their professional development efforts.

B. Avolio (1994) deepened the dimensions of transformational leadership, emphasizing that this type of leadership is not only about change but also about developing authentic leadership based on integrity and trusting relationships between leaders and subordinates. He introduced the concept of "authentic leadership," which is integrated into transformational leadership. Concerning

professional satisfaction, we attest that teachers tend to be more satisfied in environments where their leaders are authentic (sincere, dedicated) and cultivate trust, which reduces stress and increases commitment.

After analysing the concepts offered by Burns, Bass, Riggio, Leithwood, and Avolio, it is evident that transformational leadership is a leadership style that:

- motivates teachers to exceed their expectations.
- creates an environment of support and development.
- improves collaboration and innovation.
- increases the level of professional satisfaction through personalized support and intellectual stimulation.

These factors are highly relevant for primary education teachers, as job satisfaction plays an essential role in teacher retention and the quality of the educational act. Therefore, studying how transformational leadership contributes to teacher satisfaction is necessary to research to identify improvement strategies in this regard.

To strengthen the correlation between transformational leadership and teaching staff job satisfaction, we synthesize the transformational leadership theories and their impact on teaching staff work satisfaction in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Transformational leadership and job satisfaction of teachers

Theory	Author	Main components	Impact on teachers' professional satisfaction
Transformational Leadership	B. M. Bass (1985)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Idealized influence</li> <li>- Inspirational motivation</li> <li>- Intellectual stimulation</li> <li>- Individualized consideration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing satisfaction through individual recognition and support of teachers' needs</li> <li>- Teachers feel valued and supported in their professional development</li> </ul>
Motivational leadership theory	B. Shamir, R. J. House, M. B. Arthur (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a sense of self-efficacy</li> <li>- Alignment of personal and organizational objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Satisfaction increases when teachers see their work aligned with organizational goals and feel they can make a meaningful contribution</li> <li>- Self-efficacy increases professional involvement and commitment</li> </ul>

Applied transformational leadership in education	K. Leithwood (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional development</li> <li>- Collaboration between teaching staff</li> <li>- Autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving satisfaction by providing autonomy and a sense of competence</li> <li>- Supporting collaboration and mentoring among teaching staff contributes to a more satisfying work environment</li> </ul>
Theory of educational change	M. Fullan (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoting continuous change</li> <li>- Creating a continuous learning environment</li> <li>- Supporting innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Satisfaction increases when teachers are involved in the change process and feel part of a continuously developing organization</li> <li>- An innovative and positive environment reduces the risk of burnout</li> </ul>
Transformational leadership and shared vision	J. M. Kouzes, B. Z. Posner (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour modelling</li> <li>- Inspiring a shared vision</li> <li>- Supporting teachers' involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers become more motivated and satisfied when leaders inspire them with a clear vision and ethical behaviour</li> <li>- Communicating clear direction reduces stress and uncertainty</li> </ul>

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

Each theory in the table highlights different aspects of transformational leadership. However, all emphasize the essential role of leaders in cultivating a positive and motivating work environment for teachers.

To summarize, Bass (1985) introduced the notion of transformational leadership, which emphasizes influencing employees through intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and individualized consideration. In the educational context, the respective components contribute to the satisfaction of teaching staff by providing the necessary support for professional and personal development, thus increasing their sense of belonging, value, and commitment to the institution where they work. According to the theory of authors B. Shamir, R. J. House, and M. B. Arthur (1993), transformational leaders create a sense of self-efficacy and alignment between personal and organizational goals. At the

primary level of education, when teachers perceive that their work is valuable and aligned with the school's mission, their satisfaction increases. Also, the feeling of self-efficacy has a beneficial effect on motivation and professional commitment. In the same logic, Leithwood (1995) extended the concept of transformational leadership to introduce the particularities of the academic environment. Cooperation, autonomy, and professional development are essential factors that increase job satisfaction. Transformational leaders can create a more motivating educational environment by supporting teacher collaboration and providing autonomy in pedagogical decisions. Fullan (2001), for his part, emphasizes the importance of leaders in promoting continuous change in academic institutions. Teaching staff involved in innovation processes feel a higher level of professional satisfaction. They feel part of a dynamic organization and are motivated by the prospect of continuous learning and improving the academic climate. Kouzes and Posner (2002) are the researchers who emphasize the importance of a clear vision and the involvement of teachers. A transformational leader, who models positive behaviours and inspires through a shared vision, reduces uncertainty and increases teacher motivation, thereby increasing their job satisfaction and commitment to the common purpose of the educational institution.

## Research Methodology

The study highlights that, in recent decades, transformational leadership has been recognized as an essential factor in promoting job satisfaction in the educational field. Primary school teachers face various challenges, and effective leadership can influence their performance and psychological and professional well-being. Applying research instruments in this context is essential for understanding not only the level of job satisfaction but also teachers' perceptions, experiences, and expectations.

Thus, **the research aims** to analyse the relationship between transformational leadership and the job satisfaction of primary school teachers in the Republic of Moldova. The study investigates how the characteristics of transformational leadership influence teachers' perceptions, experiences, and levels of professional satisfaction, providing valuable insights for developing educational strategies to support their well-being.

**Research Questions:**

1. How does transformational leadership influence the job satisfaction of primary school teachers, and what specific characteristics of this leadership style are most appreciated by teachers in educational institutions?
2. What aspects of educational leadership are perceived by primary school teachers as necessary for improvement, and to what extent can optimizing these aspects contribute to increased job satisfaction?
3. How can the recommendations of primary school teachers for improving job satisfaction be correlated with the application of transformational leadership, and what impact do they have on their professional satisfaction?

**Research Methodology:** The research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing a correlational design to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and the job satisfaction of primary school teachers. Research methods include literature review, questioning, data analysis, and interpretation.

The primary data collection method was a questionnaire. This method was chosen because it allows respondents to express their opinions and feelings more freely, contributing to a better understanding of how transformational leadership influences teachers' professional satisfaction. The questionnaire was distributed online, with voluntary participation and anonymous responses.

*Purpose of the questionnaire:* To investigate transformational leadership's effects on primary school teachers' job satisfaction.

**The study's sample included** 165 primary school teachers from the Republic of Moldova.

**Research period:** Data collection took place from October to November 2024, with the questionnaire applied to participants (teachers) from professional development courses held at "Academia Educație fără Frontiere" in the Republic of Moldova.

## Analysis of the Study Results

The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaire, correlated with the research questions, leads to the formulation of the following syntheses:

**1. How does transformational leadership influence the job satisfaction of primary school teachers, and what are the specific characteristics of this leadership style that teachers in educational institutions most appreciate?**

The answers given in the questionnaire offer a varied picture of the appreciated characteristics, indicating factors that support job satisfaction, primarily through the lens of transformational leadership.

Main aspects identified:

- **Effective and open communication.** Many responses highlight open and transparent communication as one of the most valued aspects of leadership. Responses such as “*open and transparent communication*” or “*clear and effective communication*” highlight that educational leaders who promote a culture of dialogue and active, assertive listening are perceived positively by teachers. Transformational leadership emphasizes communication, as it facilitates the transmission of organizational vision and goals.
- **Empathy and mutual support.** Empathy and the ability to support teachers in primary education are often scored: “*respect, understanding, empathy, smile, help*” and “*free opinion, mutual support, trust*” denote that educational leaders who care for employees and encourage mutual support create a positive climate. Transformational leadership is based on relationships of trust and mutual respect, which contributes to the increase of positive socio-affective state and teacher satisfaction.
- **Collaboration and team spirit.** “*Harmonious collaboration among colleagues*” and “*team spirit*” reflect the appreciation of collaboration and a cohesive educational environment. In transformational leadership, collaboration is paramount for achieving common goals and the team’s professional development. The collaborative atmosphere supports commitment and involvement, increasing job satisfaction.
- **Clear and inspirational vision.** “*Clear vision, empathy, effective communication*” and “*the ability to create a clear vision*” evoke the value of leaders with a well-defined vision and share it inspirationally. Transformational leadership involves developing a shared vision that motivates the team to achieve their goals and be satisfied at work.

- **Motivation and recognition.** Responses such as “*recognition and motivation*” and “*encouragement, support*” suggest that teachers value leaders who motivate their team and recognize individual efforts. In transformational leadership, encouragement and recognition increase job satisfaction because they provide a sense of appreciation and progress.
- **Ethics and integrity.** Terms such as “*ethics and integrity*” and “*fairness, respect for employees*” indicate the importance of ethical behaviour by educational leaders. Transformational leadership is characterized by exemplary moral behaviour that inspires loyalty and trust.
- **Autonomy and involvement.** “*Freedom to make decisions*” and “*involvement in national, international projects*” show that autonomy and involvement in essential initiatives are relevant motivational factors. A transformational leader encourages innovation and inquiry and provides personal and professional development opportunities.

By defining and communicating an inspirational vision, developing relationships based on trust and support, and constantly motivating the team, transformational leadership increases teachers’ job satisfaction. The answers to this item confirm the essential elements of this leadership style. Teachers appreciate not only leaders’ managerial and strategic skills but also their ability to build strong human relationships, stimulate collaboration, and promote an organizational climate based on integrity, respect, and mutual support. The characteristics of transformational leadership, highlighted in the answers, show that this style positively impacts the working environment in primary education, contributing directly to the satisfaction and motivation of teachers. The appreciation of transformative leadership is essential in consolidating a harmonious and high-performing educational framework.

## **2. What aspects of educational leadership are perceived as needing improvement by primary school teachers, and to what extent can their optimization contribute to increased job satisfaction?**

The qualitative interpretation of the responses highlights diverse opinions and perspectives among primary school teachers. These responses can be grouped into several main themes:

**Communication and collaboration.** Many respondents emphasize the importance of *open communication* and *effective collaboration*. Improving leaders’ *communication skills*, both with staff and parents, is perceived as a key

factor in increasing job satisfaction. Aspects such as creating a *collaborative environment* between teachers at different levels of education and the more active *involvement of teachers in decision-making* were also mentioned.

**Organizational and leadership aspects.** Some respondents suggest that leaders' organizational skills could be improved, especially in *managing* primary education employees' free time and avoiding *discrimination* within the organization. The need for leaders to be more involved in *supporting staff* and promoting *leadership by example* was also mentioned.

**Motivation and recognition.** A frequently encountered aspect concerns the *recognition* and *appreciation of teachers' efforts*. Many respondents emphasized the need for leaders to be more proactive in *motivating* employees through *financial rewards* or fair *performance appraisal*, especially for teachers who work with students with low intellectual performance (with special educational needs).

**Working conditions and resources.** Another common theme is improving *working conditions* and providing *adequate resources*. This includes access to *modern equipment* (e.g., interactive whiteboards, computers), quality internet, and appropriate classroom equipment. The need to reduce the administrative and bureaucratic workload is also mentioned to allow primary education teachers to focus on the teaching activity.

**Personal and relational aspects.** The responses also indicate that leaders should develop *empathy* and *emotional intelligence*, encouraging a *positive work environment*. Respect, equity, and integrity are essential values for interpersonal relations within the organization, whose mission is to maintain and increase the degree of satisfaction of the teaching staff.

**Openness to change.** Although some respondents stated that they were satisfied with the current situation and that there were no significant areas for improvement, many pointed out that *there is always room for improvement*. *Leaders' openness* to change and adaptation to new strategies or technologies is seen as an essential point for progress and for increasing the degree of satisfaction of teachers in primary education.

We note that most responses reflect a positive view of current leadership but highlight areas for improvement. A transformational approach to leadership, which emphasizes communication, collaboration, recognition, and professional development, would significantly contribute to increasing the job *satisfaction* of primary education teachers.

### 3. How can primary school teachers' recommendations for improving job satisfaction be correlated with applying transformational leadership, and what impact do these have on their professional satisfaction?

- **Salary and compensation**

*Financial satisfaction.* Many respondents emphasize the crucial factor of a decent salary in job satisfaction. Adequate remuneration contributes directly to the motivation and well-being of teaching staff.

- **The work environment**

– *Positive atmosphere.* A strong focus is on creating a friendly and inclusive working environment where teachers feel supported and respected by colleagues and management.

Relaxation spaces. Some respondents propose setting up spaces for teachers to relax, which could improve their well-being and professional satisfaction.

- **Communication and Collaboration**

– *Open dialogue.* The teachers emphasize the need for effective communication between the institution, families, and colleagues. This can increase cohesion and facilitate problem-solving.

– *Team-building activities.* Involvement in group activities can strengthen professional relationships and a sense of belonging and satisfaction.

- **Innovation and flexibility**

Innovations in education. Recommendations regarding implementing new teaching methods and appropriate resources can increase teachers' and students' commitment.

– *Flexibility.* Teachers want more freedom in their pedagogical approaches and working time management.

- **Recognition and appreciation**

– *Valorisation of efforts.* Many teachers seek recognition for their efforts through appreciation events or constructive feedback from the educational community, or from the leader.

- **Professional development**

– *Continuous training.* Expressing the desire to participate in training and continuous professional development courses highlights the importance of constant learning in teaching and increasing professional satisfaction.

Comparing these aspects, we observe that the majority of teachers in primary education focus on fundamental elements of job satisfaction, such as *salaries*

and the *working environment*, but also on more subtle, personal dimensions, such as *communication* and *recognition*. Transformational leadership is essential in integrating these aspects because an effective leader can influence the institution's policies and organizational culture, promoting values such as collaboration, integrity, respect, and innovation. The suggestions provided in the questionnaire represent a solid basis for formulating strategies to improve primary education teachers' job satisfaction. These strategies could include but are not limited to, raising salaries, creating friendlier work environments, and promoting open, empathetic, and constructive communication.

The obtained results, which show significant positive correlations between the dimensions of transformational leadership and job satisfaction, have several implications:

- a) *Leadership development*. Educational institutions should invest in transformational leadership development programs for their principals and managers, as this type of leadership can be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among primary school teachers.
- b) *Performance evaluation*. In teaching staff evaluations, it would be beneficial to include criteria measuring behaviours associated with transformational leadership, such as clear vision, openness to innovation, and employee empathy.
- c) *Organizational culture*. Fostering an organizational culture that encourages collaboration, respect, and recognition of individual contributions can amplify the positive effects of transformational leadership on job satisfaction.
- d) *Staff retention*. Since job satisfaction is closely related to employee retention, institutions that cultivate transformational leadership can benefit from more excellent staff stability and reduced recruitment and training costs.

Although our study provides valuable information, there are also limitations:

- *Correlative design*. As the study is correlational, other variables may influence transformational leadership and job satisfaction.
- *The sample*. A larger sample could provide more relevant results. For future research, we recommend a longitudinal study (following the same participants over time).

## Conclusion

Transformational leadership is central to teacher motivation and involvement in primary education. From Burns's moral approach to Bass's sophisticated dimensions of leadership and Leithwood and Jantzi's adaptation to education, the listed models emphasize that transformational leaders increase job satisfaction through personalized support, encouraging innovation, and creating a positive work environment. These theories and models reveal the importance of a transformational leadership style in education, contributing directly to increasing professional satisfaction and fulfilment among primary education teachers.

Most of the surveyed teachers perceived the school's leadership as transformational, associated with clear vision, individualized support, and the promotion of innovative thinking. The analysis of the answers revealed the correlation between the perception of transformational leadership and the degree of satisfaction at work.

Transformational leadership has a central role in increasing the professional satisfaction of primary education teachers through individual support (teachers feel that their opinions are listened to and that they have development opportunities), promoting autonomy and collaboration (teachers have control over their own professional decisions and can collaborate in an environment of mutual support); inspiration and motivation (a clear vision and leadership based on positive values help create an educational climate where teachers feel valued and professionally satisfied).

Transformational leadership significantly impacts the satisfaction of primary school teachers, creating a favourable work environment where employees are motivated to perform and innovate. Capitalizing on this leadership style can lead to greater professional satisfaction, thus reducing stress and professional burnout and increasing the quality of the primary education process.

**Abstract:** The present study explores the impact of transformational leadership on the job satisfaction of primary education teachers. The research is part of an academic context in which transformational leadership has become central to studying organizational effectiveness and employee well-being. Through a literature review, the research nuances the various theories of transformational leadership and how they correlate with teacher job satisfaction. A questionnaire was created and applied to a group of primary education teachers from the Republic of Moldova to investigate the relationship between these two concepts. Analysing the collected information allowed the identification of the leadership aspects most appreciated by the teaching staff and those that could be improved to increase job satisfaction. Also, the study offers concrete recommendations from the teachers surveyed for improving leadership practices in educational institutions. The research conclusions emphasize the role of transformational leadership in creating a positive and stimulating work environment for teachers, thus contributing to increasing job satisfaction and, implicitly, improving the quality of the educational process.

**Keywords:** transformational leadership, teacher professional satisfaction, professional motivation, collective self-efficacy, innovation, organizational culture, educational management.

**Abstrakt:** Niniejsze badanie analizuje wpływ przywództwa transformacyjnego na satysfakcję zawodową nauczycieli edukacji podstawowej. Badanie wpisuje się w akademicki kontekst, w którym przywództwo transformacyjne stało się kluczowym zagadnieniem w analizie efektywności organizacyjnej i dobrostanu pracowników. Na podstawie przeglądu literatury badanie uwzględnia różne teorie przywództwa transformacyjnego oraz ich korelację z satysfakcją zawodową nauczycieli. W celu zbadania relacji między tymi dwoma conceptami opracowano i zastosowano kwestionariusz wśród grupy nauczycieli edukacji podstawowej z Republiki Mołdawii. Analiza zgromadzonych danych pozwoliła zidentyfikować aspekty przywództwa najbardziej cenione przez kadrę nauczycielską oraz te, które wymagają udoskonalenia w celu zwiększenia satysfakcji zawodowej. Ponadto badanie zawiera konkretne rekomendacje sformułowane przez ankietowanych nauczycieli dotyczące poprawy praktyk przywódczych w instytucjach edukacyjnych. Wnioski z badań podkreślają znaczącą rolę przywództwa transformacyjnego w tworzeniu pozytywnego i stymulującego **środowiska** pracy dla nauczycieli, co przyczynia się do wzrostu ich satysfakcji zawodowej, a tym samym do poprawy jakości procesu edukacyjnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przywództwo transformacyjne, satysfakcja zawodowa nauczycieli, motywacja zawodowa, zbiorowa samoefektywność, innowacyjność, kultura organizacyjna, zarządzanie edukacyjne.

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Mark John C. PALANCA<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0009-0006-9666-8591

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## Lived experiences of tertiary religious education teachers: Basis for a synodal instructional model<sup>2</sup>

### Doświadczenia życiowe nauczycieli wyższego kształcenia religijnego: podstawa synodalnego modelu dydaktycznego

#### Introduction

A providential ecclesial movement that may answer several contemporary issues in evangelization is Pope Francis' path of "synodality, which God expects of the Church of the third millennium" (2015, para 5). Synodality speaks of "journeying together" which manifests the real essence of the Church as missionary people of God, which can effectively face relevant issues within and that surround the Church (Francis, 2015, para 6).

In the field of religious education (RE) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a relevant yet perennial question, "Is faith something we can teach authentically?" seeks a new action to be taken. For instance, former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte,

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<sup>1</sup> Mark John C. Palanca, LPT, MAPM, PhD (cand.): University of Santo Tomas – Legazpi, Philippines, e- mail: markjohnpalanca@gmail.com

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a Catholic school alumnus, publicly said that God is stupid (Manahan, 2018). This reflects the reality that some alumni of Catholic schools do not reflect Gospel values. A study entitled, “Young People and the Challenges of Religious Education in the Philippines,” stated that there is a decline in morality and religiosity among Filipino youth (Cornelio, 2018). Ideally, a lesson learned, and one’s conviction must be united and transformed into action. A student may answer objectively the right answer to a specific religious or moral question yet differ from his or her conviction and practice.

Religious education is often challenged by the dynamism of certainty through scientific evidence and obscurity of faith which can be a challenging task to its teachers due to the dichotomic relationship between faith and reason. Although in the Catholic Church, faith and reason go together, a faith that seeks understanding; in Latin *fides quaerens intellectum* (John Paul II, 2001). In Catholic schools, faith is formally taught through a formal religious education subject offering which sheds light on this dichotomy. With this, religious education has its unique components: catechism and evangelization. It must not only exhibit knowledge but must affect authentic Christian living.

Through the years, challenges in teaching religious education have been oftentimes solved by various curriculum development and planning, and various pedagogies. Yet the problem remains the same. With this, Pope John Paul II (1990) in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, reminds the faithful of the need for “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization” because many members of the Church have lived a life away from Jesus Christ and His Gospel (para 33). This concern for a new evangelization poses a challenge to an efficacious religious education formation because it is inevitable to remove the faith factor in the interplay of catechesis and evangelization. Therefore, an essential task such as teaching religious education calls for attention to understanding how teachers conceptualize evangelization and catechism, develop perspectives about Christian living, and integrate their ideas and experiences into their teaching methods and strategies concerning the signs of the times through the light of recent movement in the Catholic Church today, synodality.

With these considerations, religious education in the tertiary, due to its mature learners, the youth of today, who experience most of the moral and spiritual challenges, is an area where new evangelization can focus. At the frontlines of this area are religious education teachers inside the classrooms, “who transform the syllabus from a dead letter into a living experience of

learning the faith' (John Paul II, 1992, para 6). Therefore, RE teachers are called not only to facilitate learning but to be evangelizers of faith. As a result, RE teachers assume two roles, a professional teacher and a preacher of faith, an evangelizer. Therefore, the lived experiences of tertiary religious educators in teaching holistic religious education shed light on how religious education, as formal teaching, and evangelization, as an act of faith, integrate efficaciously to transmit the Catholic Faith to religious education students through the path of synodality.

Existing researches and studies show various efforts to come up with fitting religious education teaching models to address the pressing needs of contemporary demands. It includes various attempts for an integral and holistic formation in teaching religious education, shifting from mere indoctrination towards active learning (Freathy & Parker, 2013). For instance, there are different teaching models in RE, which is appropriate in particular contexts, focusing on welcoming and open exchange of faith experiences, academic exercises, championing social justice, and even being technically focused to efficiently affect the science of education (Newton, 1981). Also, creativity in learning religion is adapted to effect fun yet meaningful experiential toward active learning (Paulino, 2014). Then, there is a shift to a more relational and communal approach to teaching religious education involving two-way communication both from the teacher and the student founded on listening and praying together (Sweetman, 2021). While there is so much emphasis given to how RE is taught and related to students, the orthodoxy of the content must be there; and the divergence of the teacher's personal touch on the subject must be employed not to disrupt the content but to further strengthen its integrity (Flanagan, 2023). In consideration of all relevant research in this study, special attention is given to the unique characteristic of RE, which is not only a mere act of teaching but an act of catechism in the wider realm of evangelization by becoming personal and kerygmatic, developing a friendship with Christ, and becoming communal (Kirkconnell, 2020).

Various research on Religious Education tends to focus solely on the realm of classroom perspectives such as teachers' knowledge of the subject matter or students' perceptions of the subject. A distinct gap that this study is trying to address is understanding the lived experiences, particularly experiences in teaching holistic religious education of the RE teachers, to see the relationship of formal teaching, as focused in the educational realm and approaches, and

the main goal of religious education, which is the propagation of faith to arrive a holistic teaching model that caters not only to classroom-based competencies but faith-based growth and spiritual maturity as well. This study hopefully attempts to bridge the gap of various RE pedagogies about ensuring a lesson learned in RE, is a lesson concretely lived out by its learners by attempting to design an integral and holistic pedagogy in teaching RE in the classroom through the rich experiences of the seasoned RE teachers in Albay.

Although various researches and studies have been made in the field of RE which hoped to achieve assimilating lessons personally and impactfully in lives of its learners; and to achieve ongoing conversion and faith experience while studying its concepts. This study tried to add a holistic and integral approach to religious education by merging the technicality of education through constructivism and evangelization through theological approaches: the interplay of faith and reason, evangelization and catechesis, and synodality; towards a synodal instructional model.

The main objective of the study is to design a synodal religious education instructional model, based on the lived experiences of seasoned RE teachers, that contains the interplay of evangelization and catechesis, with the aid of theology, and religious pedagogy through constructivism that ensures holistic and integral learning towards faith assimilation.

In a synodal sense, this study also promotes a universal language of both teachers and learners, not only in RE, but across all stakeholders of learning to come and walk together as co-journeymen that searches for truth and enlightenment.

## Method

In this study, the phenomena were the lived experiences, particularly in the key informants' instructional experiences, and authentic experiences in teaching RE, of tertiary religious education teachers in the Catholic HEIs of Albay. The data was drawn, using total enumeration by interviewing all the 12 current tertiary religious educators with years of experience in the only two Catholic HEIs in Albay, specifically six tertiary faculties at the University of Santo Tomas-Legazpi and six tertiary faculties from Divine Word College of Legazpi in Albay, via one-on-one individual interviews for a maximum of 30 minutes, using open-ended questions. The key informants were selected as

they are residing in Albay, where a recent census conducted by the Philippines Statistics Authority in 2020 has shown that the “Bicol region accounted for the highest proportion of Roman Catholics at 93.5%; while Albay had the highest proportion among all provinces” (Gregorio, 2023). Additionally, the researcher also observed random classes of the key informants to confirm the interview data. The key informants’ lived experiences in RE help demonstrate their “eureka” moments in teaching RE that is utilized in a fitting instructional design in synthesis with constructivism, faith and reason, evangelization and catechesis, and synodality.

It employed Clark Moustakas’ phenomenological method in gathering and capturing the lived RE teaching experiences of the key informants. Then, the method of critical analysis through foundational research covering theological and constructivist approaches was used to shed light on the gathered phenomena. Finally, a synthesis brought about by the product of these approaches with the phenomenon gave birth to the main goal of this research which is to develop a synodal instructional model.

The researcher has developed the interview questionnaire below by using a general structure of a teaching model in religion; specifically, from the teaching religion models of Robert Newton which contains the following elements: “(1) aim of religious education, (2) principle, (3) teacher, (4) student, (5) curriculum, (6) environment, and (7) evaluation” (1981, p. 5). Also, the researcher has designed the questions about the objectives of this research. See the questions below:

### **Research Interview Questions**

On Religious Education Instructional Experience: In your years of experience in teaching religious education in the tertiary:

1. What has been your main goal?
2. What has been your teaching principle?
3. What do you think are the roles of a religious education teacher?
4. What do you think are the roles of a religious education student?
5. What are your observations of a conducive curriculum design in teaching religious education in the tertiary?
6. What is the best environment for learning religious education?
7. What should be the evaluation or assessment of students in religious education subjects?

On authentic experiences in teaching holistic religious education: In your years of experience in teaching religious education in the tertiary:

1. How can you tell that your students have integrally learned or applied your lessons in religious education? What are your observations?
2. In relation to the previous question, what are your best practices in making that to reality?
3. Can you give and describe an experience/s where you are convinced that a student of yours has holistically learned your RE subject?

## Results & discussion

Theme Development:

The lived experiences, which are developed into themes, of the key informants are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Live experiences

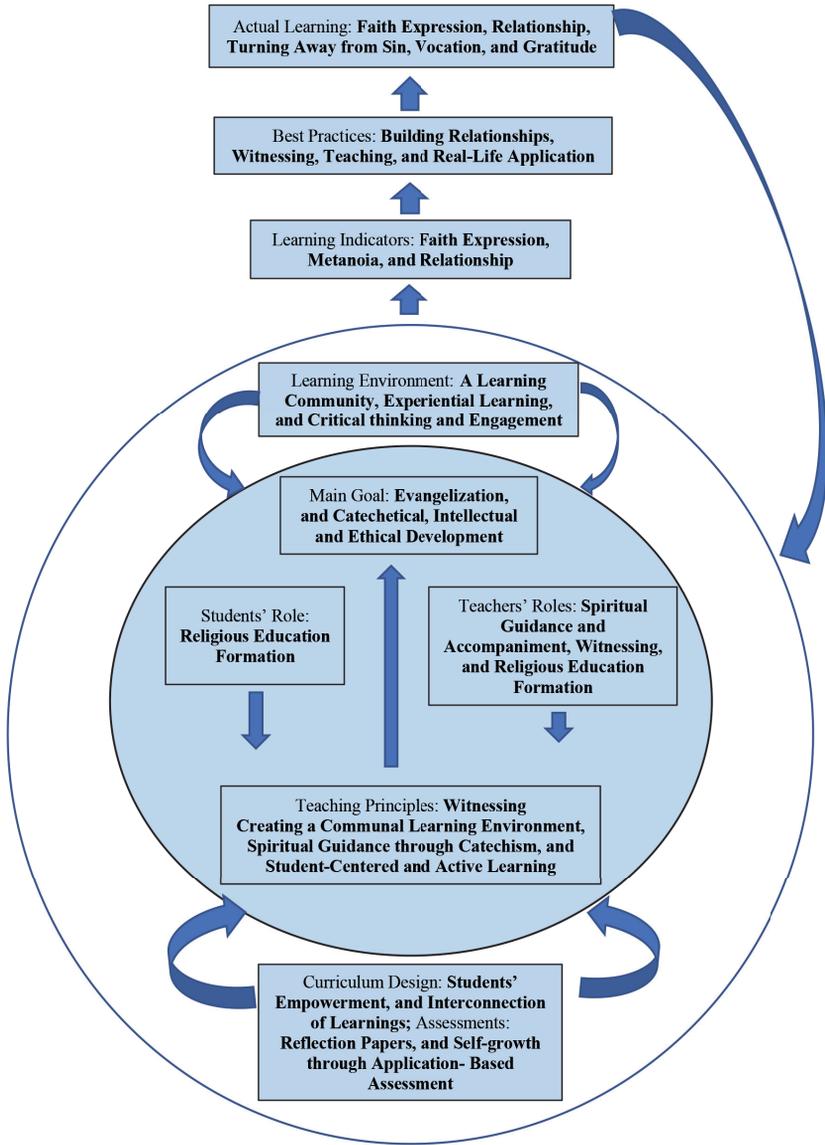
Category	Sub-Categories	Themes
<i>Religious Education Instructional Experience</i>	<i>Main Goal</i>	Evangelization
		Catechetical, Intellectual and Ethical Development
	<i>Teaching Principle</i>	Witnessing
		Creating a Communal Learning Environment
		Spiritual Guidance through Catechism
		Student-Centered and Active Learning
	<i>Teachers' Role</i>	Spiritual Guidance and Accompaniment
		Witnessing
		Religious Education Formation
	<i>Students' Role</i>	Religious Education Formation
	<i>Conducive Curriculum Design</i>	Students' Empowerment
		Interconnection of learnings
	<i>Learning Environment</i>	A Learning Community
		Experiential learning
		Critical Thinking and Engagement
	<i>Students' Assessment</i>	Reflection Papers
Self-growth through Application-Based Assessment		

Authentic Experiences in Teaching Holistic Religious Education	Students Integrally learned or Applied Lessons in Religious Education	Faith Expression
		Metanoia
		Relationship
	Best Practices on Students Integrally Learning or Applying Lessons in Religious education	Building Relationships
		Witnessing
		Teaching
		Real-Life Application
	Actual Holistically Learning of Religious Education	Faith Expression
		Relationship
		Turning Away from Sin
		Vocation
		Gratitude

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

The key informants' main goals have been evangelization and catechesis which are confirmed and made possible by the teaching principles of witnessing, communal learning, and spiritual guidance. The interactions of teachers and students are seen in both its roles that give contexts to the teaching principles. The curriculum design and learning environment also give valid descriptions of the actualization of the main goals, teaching principles, and roles validated by the themes of the students' assessments. Additionally, the themes developed in authentic experiences in teaching holistic religious education give concrete examples and a 360-degree understanding of the instructional experiences. The dynamism of the themes shows the direction of the teaching principles to arouse the learners' faith towards the main goal of evangelization. And, to achieve it, the roles of both students and teachers must be applied through internalization and discernment born out of spiritual guidance and authentic dialogue surrounded by a conducive learning environment and planned-out curriculum. See Figure 1 for visualization.

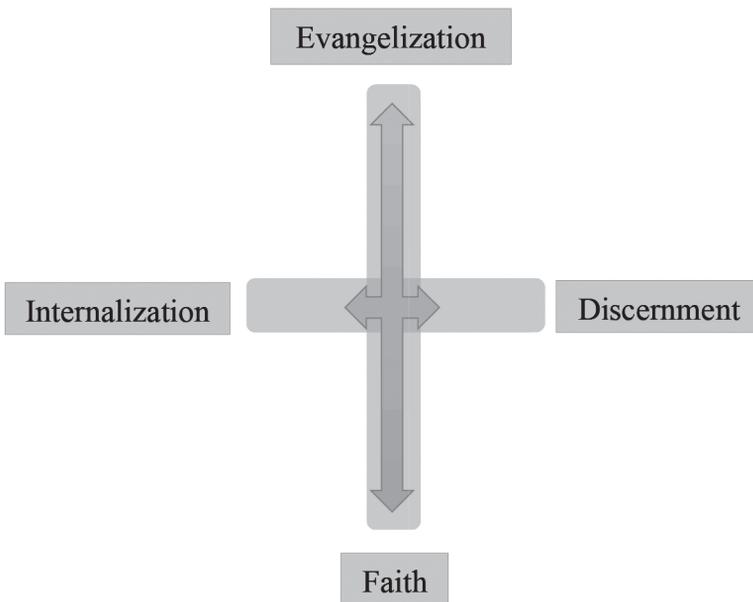
Figure 1. Lived Experiences in Teaching Religious Education



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The themes of the teaching principles are ignited by the openness of the student in learning RE and the action of the RE teacher to nurture the student through the themes developed in the teacher's role. This shows the movement or the attempt of the arousal of faith in the students. As observed in the key informants' teaching of RE, the teachers start engaging the students for them to be ready for class. The teachers do not right away discuss the topic but set the mood for learning by building student-teacher rapport as observed in formal and informal classroom "kumustahan" (inquiring one's state of being). Even though, the end of RE teaching is evangelization, the key informants, as observed in their classroom teachings, do not right away offer the content of the teachings of the Church; rather, the teachers let the learners undergo the process of self-internalization through spiritual guidance facilitated by a community of learning to draw out the learners thoughts and personal meanings. Then, the teachers proceed to the discernment of the learnings in the classroom in the light of the magisterium of the Church which eventually leads to evangelization. Visually see this movement in Figure 2:

**Figure 2.** Learning Movement in RE



**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

## Proposed Synodal Instructional Model

In consideration of the lived experiences of the key informants in their religious education instructional experiences, the disciplines and theories that correspond to the themes, and the related literature and studies, this research has proposed a synodal instructional model in religious education based on four points, namely: faith, internalization, discernment, and evangelization. These points are developed into learning phases that achieve an instructional model in religious education.

The lived experiences of the key informants have developed themes that lead both the learners towards faith and evangelization through the process of internalization and discernment. The first and primary phase in learning holistic RE is the openness to faith. It is followed by a journey of internalization and discernment towards the main goal which is evangelization. The disciplines and theories of constructivism, faith and reason, catechesis, and evangelization correspond to these four phases.

Constructivism supports the making meaning stages that develop in the faith and internalization phases and is redirected in the discernment phase with the deconstruction of privilege and power towards objective and authoritative truth, as to “BE” and applied in the evangelization phase (Grimmitt, 2000; Dettoni, 1995). This deconstruction of knowledge aligns the learners internalized and discerned knowledge to the authority of the truth of faith and lessons in RE; and not on their personally held biases that are incongruent with the authority of objective truths and facts. With this, objective learning does not eradicate subjective learning but empowers it by directing personal convictions into the authority of knowledge and truth. Faith and reason are developed on the first dimension in the faith phase emphasizing on the openness to faith which seeks understanding, then move to the second dimension in the internalization and discernment phases, and reach the third dimension in the evangelization phase (John Paul, 2001). Evangelization and catechesis, ignite the faith phase through the personal and kerygmatic introduction of Christ which then continues towards the internalization phase which is a deeper encounter with Christ through study and research and is validated in the dialogue with the Church’s teaching in the discernment phase through communion in the form of mentorship and is capped evangelization phase forming a meaningful relationship with God (Kirkconnell, 2020),

Finally, synodality is manifested in the faith phase through communion, then in internalization and discernment phases through participation, and towards evangelization phase through the mission. These four learning phases manifest synodality in a religious education setting, thus achieving the objective of this study in developing a synodal instructional model. See Table 2 for easy visualization.

**Table 2.** Four learning phases

Disciplines/ Theories	Synthesized Lived Experiences of Religious Educators (four learning phases)	Constructivism	Faith and Reason	Evangelizing Catechesis	Synodality
Phases/ Stages in Relation to its Goal	Faith	Making Meaning	Believing in a God	Personal and Kerygmatic Introduction of Christ	Communion
	Internalization	Making Meaning	Believing God	Deeper Encounter with Christ	Participation
	Discernment	Deconstruction of Privilege and Power Towards Objective and Authoritative Truth	Believing God	Mentorship	Participation
	Evangelization	“BE”	Believing in God	Meaningful Relationship with God	Mission

**Source:** Authors’ own elaboration

The research also observes the complementarity of this synodal instructional model with the existing religious education pedagogies and formation models in RE subjects. See Table 3 for comparison and complementarity with religious education pedagogies and Table 4 for RE formation models.

**Table 3.** Religious education pedagogies

Religious Education Pedagogies/ Instructional Models	Synodal Instructional Model	Newton's Models in Teaching Religion	Paulino's Active Learning Strategy Model in Religious Education	Dominican-Thomistic Education by Design (DoT-ED)	Catholic Church Classic Method
Phases/ Stages/ Types	Faith	Open Education Model	Information/ experience	Study	See
	Internalization	Academic Model	Information/ experience	Research	See
	Discernment	Educational Technology Model	Formation/ Encounter	Analysis	Judge
	Evangelization	Social Reconstruction Model	Transformation/ Exchange	Action	Act

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

In Table 3, the Synodal Instructional Model's learning phases correspond with Newton's Models in Teaching Religion. The faith phase corresponds to the open educational model through a relational approach in drawing out learners' needs and interests in an openly accepting environment. The internalization phase corresponds with the academic model in terms of a scholarly atmosphere where the teacher facilitates learning in RE toward religious knowledge. Then, the discernment phase corresponds with the educational technology model in the adaptability of the learners to promote changes among themselves. Lastly, the evangelization phase corresponds to the social reconstruction model in making learners agents of social change through evangelization.

In Paulino's Active Learning Strategy Model in Religious Education, the Synodal Instructional Model corresponds its faith and internalization phases with the information/ experience stages through the acquisition and transmission of knowledge through relational and scholarly experiences in the classroom. While the discernment phase corresponds with the formation/ encounter stages to norm and value setting of the authoritative and objective

truth. As well, the evangelization phase corresponds to the transformation/exchange stages through the practice and inculcating of responsibility to the learners.

The Synodal Instructional Model also complements the Dominican-Thomistic Education by Design. The faith phase corresponds to the study phase by stirring up the curiosity and interests of the learners. Next, the internalization phase corresponds with the research phase by looking at the opened horizons and questions in the study phase through research. Then the discernment phase corresponds directly with the analysis phase in terms of the authenticity and conformity of the learners' newfound meaning with the doctrines and teachings of the Catholic Church. Finally, the evangelization phase corresponds with the action phase through the application of the learnings by the learners.

In the Catholic Church's Classic Method of See, Judge, and Act, the Synodal Instructional Model also complements in terms of seeing the learners' context in the faith and internalization phases; judging the learnings through the lens of the Catholic faith in the discernment phase; and acting on the Christian call to social transformation in the evangelization phase.

In Table 4, the Synodal Instructional Model complements the RE formation models and literature in the faith phase through the awakenings of believing, with gratitude, and prayer that forms the affective dimension of the human person which affects more relational attitude and listening. The internalization phase complements respectively in the literature below through the way of truth by preaching it that helps trust God and neighbour that contributes to the cognitive dimension of the learners through Christian discipleship guided by critical thinking that arouses a hunger for formation. Then, the discernment phase also trod the way of truth by preaching it that helps trusting God and neighbour but now affects not only the intellect but the will to conform to the norm of the Church where a tailor-fit formation can be catered to the learners. Lastly, the evangelization phase is borne out of doing, charity, and service that facilitates the corporeal and spiritual needs that are the indicator of an effective Christian Education as a product of praying together.

**Table 4.** RE formation models and literature

Religious Education Formation/ Literature	Synodal Instructional Model	UST-Legazpi ORA Faith Formation Program	Four Essential Dimensions of the Human Person	Christian Education in the 21st Century: Renewing a Transformational Vision	Adult Religious Education and Faith Development
Phases/ Stages/ Types	Faith	Believing/ Gratitude/ Laudare/ Priest	Affective	more relational approaches	Listening
	Internalization	Trusting/ Truth/ Praedicare/ Prophet	Cognitive	Christian discipleship guided by critical thinking	Hunger for Formation
	Discernment	Trusting/ Truth/ Praedicare/ Prophet	Volitive	-----	Tailor-fit Formation
	Evangelization	Doing/ Love/ Benedicere/ King	Corporeal	Effective Christian Education	Praying Together

**Source:** Authors’ own elaboration

The Synodal Instruction Model is a learning pedagogy in RE that is founded firstly on creating a faith community in the classroom, headed by the RE teacher, through personal and communal conversations about faith-related experiences and contexts, and even pressing and valid concerns in their lives about the topics that will be discussed. The goal is to let the class loosen up a bit in the academic atmosphere so that there will be a healthy vulnerability in opening up about the objectives of the class. With these, authentic insights, more participation, and faith topics will naturally flow from the learners to the classroom. This is what the faith phase is all about; to harness everyone’s

participation just like in a recollection or retreat atmosphere and build a learning community that is rooted in faith and trust.

In the internalization phase, the learners are directed by the teachers to question or study their contexts, perspectives, and experiences that are discussed in the faith phase. The learners are asked to look at these named insights with different lenses, list their strengths and weaknesses, and value their worth in their lives to develop a personal conviction that lets them own and express the knowledge of the faith on their terms with the help of study and research. In this part, the class is to develop their own, “*instrumentum laboris*” that will be used in the next phase.

The discernment phase begins in humble acknowledgment that both the RE teacher and the learners are not holders of truth but only God. This learning phase aims to compare and contrast the learners’ learned convictions and truths, the “*instrumentum laboris*,” to the teachings and magisterium of the Church, which is the concrete manifestation of the truth of God in RE. This leads the learners to appreciate the objectivity of truth and knowledge and avoid mere sociological acceptance on matters of faith and morals. It also cautions an authoritative and subjective approach of the teacher to avoid invalidating the personal convictions of the learners in their faith contexts and experiences. At this learning phase, the teacher will share his or her expertise on the RE subject and offer an impartial teaching of RE not to distort the content but to further solidify its integrity and authenticity (Flanagan, 2023). Then, the dialogue of truth happens that leads to the acceptance of a faith content that is not simply forced in a mere indoctrination but has undergone a process of communion, and consultation.

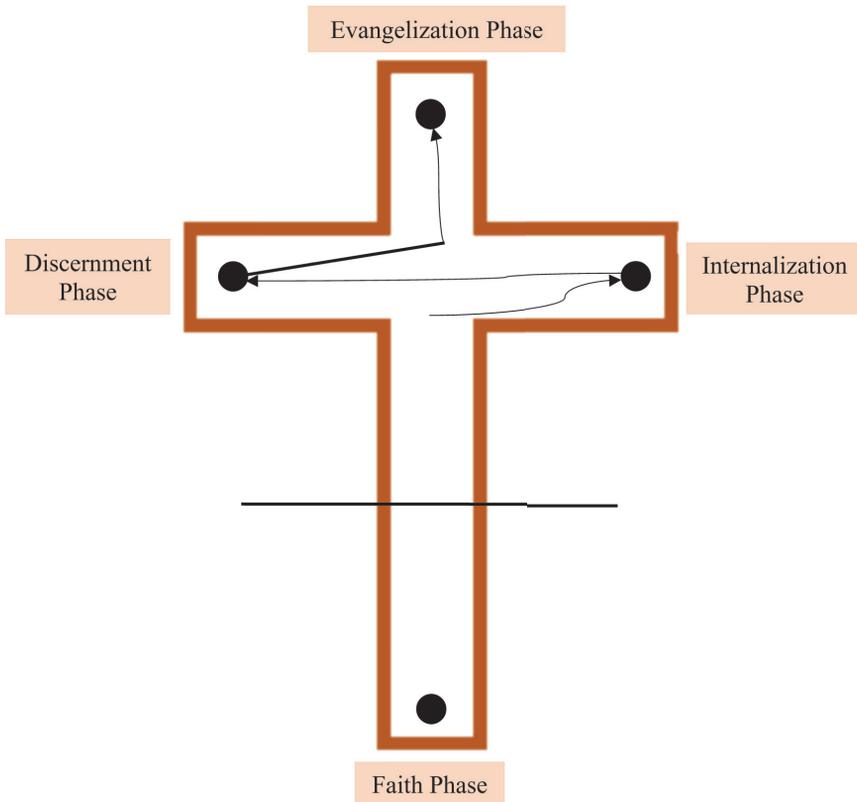
The last phase is evangelization. This is where the learners and the teachers are called, as evangelizers, to witness Christ to the world in prayer, words, and deeds. The goal of this phase is to express the faith learned in the RE subject. This is a missioning phase where the learnings do not only stay in the reflection but are applied in reality. It is a call to make Christ, come alive in the lives of the learners and the teachers.

In Figure 2, there is a figure that has a resemblance to the iconic symbol of the Catholic faith which is the cross. These four phases, when applied, follow the shape of the cross. Thus, this synodal instructional model is like the Christian call to be disciples of Christ as He said in Matthew 16:24, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their

cross and follow me”. Learning RE is different from other academic subjects as it challenges everyone, both the teacher and the student, to journey together with the carrying of their crosses; that is faith towards evangelization.

Here is the visualization of the proposed synodal instructional model which the researcher named “**FIDE method: Faith In Development Education**”. See Figure 3:

**Figure 3:** A Synodal Instructional Model: FIDE (Faith in Development Education) Method



**Source:** Authors' own elaboration

## Sample Learning Guide of FIDE Method

This sample learning guide shows the application of the FIDE method in teaching the lesson about human dignity in the social teachings of the Church. The principle of human dignity is one of the foundational concepts in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The learning outcome for this instructional guide is for the learners to express and realize the importance of the centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer.

**Faith Phase.** The RE class begins in a prayer asking the grace of the Holy Spirit to guide the class in learning prayerfully. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to spontaneously be aware, ask, relate, and share their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity. This will be made possible through a class activity which is entitled, *Kumustahan ng Dignidad*. This activity revisits the students' experiences and perception of their own worth. In particular, the learners are asked to rate their own valuation of their self-worth. Then, the teacher will ask the class to form a circular formation using their seats. This formation will give a conducive sharing atmosphere about the why's of their self-worth. After the sharing, the teacher will gather and summarize the fruit of the sharing and give instructions to proceed to the next activity entitled, *Who Am I?*. This activity gives an opportunity to further express the learner's individual reflection of their human dignity by making them draw and describe themselves on a paper. Then, the teacher will ask them to answer this question, *Is your dignity based on your merits? Why?*, at the back of their paper. Then, the teacher will process the activity by pointing out the idea that human dignity is never merit based but inherent. The teacher will not yet point out to the main concept of the principle of human dignity as it will be fully taught in the discernment phase. In this faith phase the goal is to direct the learners' focus on their own understanding, and experiences of human dignity.

**Internalization Phase.** This learning phase proceeds from the processing of the teacher in the last activity of the previous learning phase. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to examine and analyze their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity through research and study. The teacher will facilitate a debate that focuses whether human dignity is earned or inherent. The class can be divided in four groups,

namely: the audience, the panel, the *earned* group, and the *inherent* group. The groups are tasked by the teachers to research and study their own roles and positions in the debate through research and study in the library. After which, the debate proper will come next. After the debate, the teacher will ask each student to write a reflection paper and position their stand on the debate in their own RE journals or notebooks. Then, the class are asked to make a summarize outline of their stand on the topic for everyone to see.

**Discernment Phase.** This learning phase starts with the teacher acknowledging the learners stand and position on the topic of human dignity from the internalized phase. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to clarify and align their internalized thoughts and experiences with the Church's concept of human dignity. The teacher will compare and contrast the learners' internalized ideas with that of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Also, the teacher will point out the points of alignment and clarification of the students in an open discussion pedagogy. Then, the teacher will solicit ideas from the class on what good it is to acknowledge and practice the social teachings of the Church in relevance to the issues of today about human dignity.

**Evangelization Phase.** This final phase proceeds from the discernment phase to practice and express the class learnings on the topic of human dignity through a creation of a theological and doctrinally sound prayer that addresses the contemporary issues that face the principle of human dignity. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to express and realize the importance of the centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer. In this activity, the learners are able to participate, communicate, and act on the realities that face human dignity from the learnings in class through journeying together in faith and reason. The class will culminate with the class praying, their created prayer about human dignity.

On the next page, table 5 shows a brief summary of the sample learning guide using the FIDE method. It shows the topic taught, which is the principle of human dignity, on top, and the learning outcome below. Under it are the learning phases, objectives, activities, and assessments that make the topic teachable in the classroom.

**Table 5.** Topic

<b>Topic (The Principle of Human Dignity)</b>			
<i>Learning Outcome: The learners are able to express and realize the importance of centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer.</i>			
Learning Phases	Learning Objectives	Learning Activities	Learning Assessments
Faith Phase	The learners are able to spontaneously be aware, ask, relate, and share their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Class Activity: “Kumustahan ng Dignidad</li> <li>▪ Individual Activity: “Who am I?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Class Participation</li> </ul>
Internalization Phase	The learners are able to examine and analyse their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity through research and study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Debate on the Inherency of Human Dignity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflection Paper</li> </ul>
Discernment Phase	The learners are able to clarify and align their internalized thoughts and experiences with the Church’s concept of human dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lecture</li> <li>▪ Open Discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Class Participation</li> <li>▪ Pen and paper test</li> </ul>
Evangelization Phase	The learners are able to express and realize the importance of the centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creation of a prayer about the relevance and importance of the principle of human dignity in the society of today.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Group Performance Task: Prayer Making</li> </ul>

**Source:** Authors’ own elaboration

## Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the best Teacher of faith because he is God, himself. In His life, Jesus can evangelize people even without saying a word just because

of his presence. In the gospels, Jesus is not quick to judge or anger people who err; he is not like the teachers of the law who are strict and rigorous. Rather he starts by welcoming all and inviting everyone to journey with Him. There are instances where His followers would leave Him not because He is a false teacher but because one cannot accept His teachings, just like the rich young man. Teaching religious education is not an easy task, it involves personal configuration to the God who one believes in. The demand of witnessing and following Christ is noble yet a cross to bear.

In this synodal instructional model, both the learners and the teachers are journeying towards faith. If one pays attention to the initials of the four phases, it will give F-I-D-E, and the word *fide* in Latin is faith. Pedagogically, spiritually, and literally, this model is a journey of faith. It proceeds from one's curiosity and interest about the faith enhanced by relational dialogue (faith phase), then developed into personal conviction through research and study (internalization phase), then accustomed to the objective truth, Catholic doctrine, to caution meaningless making meaning (discernment phase), then application process (evangelization phase) which shares an authentic Catholic Christian in deeds and words.

The four learning phases, faith, internalization, discernment, and evangelization, seem to happen in this synodal instructional model as a stage to be completed in a learning process; but in reality, these four phases happen simultaneously in one's heart. The goal of this instructional model is to practice it consciously to apply it seamlessly in life lifelong journey of every believer; so that no one will walk blindly by the false truths that ensnare the ruin of souls in the world. A Christian should not walk alone, he or she must walk together with the whole Church.

Although, the pedagogical design is heavily focus on RE teaching. It is worth noting that this instructional model can be suitable in a generic sense to subject areas that has faith element not in the sense of the spiritual and religion alone; but also building confidence in teacher-student relationship and impacting orthodoxy in sciences through: the means of classroom learning motivation (faith phase); developing mutual dialogue through study and research (internalization phase); gradual attuning on the truths of every sciences, per se (discernment phase); and application of the transfer of learning (evangelization phase).

**Abstract:** Proclaiming the Good News is the primary goal of every religious educator, grounded in authentic and integral teaching of the Catholic faith. This study examined the lived experiences of all the tertiary religious educators in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albay, focusing on their “eureka” moments during their years of teaching religious education (RE). These experiences were captured using Clark Moustakas’ transcendental phenomenology. The findings reveal key themes related to Evangelization, Catechetical development, and Intellectual and Ethical growth, which emerged as the main goal of teaching RE. These are supported by teaching principles of Witnessing, creating a Communal Learning Environment, providing Spiritual Guidance through Catechism, and promoting Student-Centred and Active Learning. These principles guide the direction of RE instruction. The progression of RE learning—from awakening faith to evangelization—is seen through the processes of internalization and discernment. All these elements are illuminated by theological approaches that emphasize faith and reason, evangelization and catechesis, synodality, and the educational theory of constructivism. The synthesis of these theories and experiences led to the development of a synodal instructional model comprising four learning phases: faith, internalization, discernment, and evangelization. These phases can easily be remembered using the acronym FIDE, which is Latin for “faith.”

**Keywords:** religious education, lived experiences, synodality, evangelization

**Streszczenie:** Głoszenie Dobrej Nowiny jest podstawowym celem każdego nauczyciela religii, zakorzenionym w autentycznym i integralnym nauczaniu wiary katolickiej. Niższe badanie analizuje doświadczenia życiowe wszystkich nauczycieli akademickich religii pracujących w katolickich instytucjach szkolnictwa wyższego (HEIs) w Albay, koncentrując się na ich przełomowych momentach („eureka”) w trakcie lat nauczania edukacji religijnej (RE). Do uchwycenia tych doświadczeń wykorzystano fenomenologię transcendentálną Clarka Moustakasa. Wyniki badań ujawniły kluczowe tematy związane z ewangelizacją, rozwojem katechetycznym oraz wzrostem intelektualnym i etycznym, które wyłoniły się jako główny cel nauczania RE. Są one wspierane przez zasady dydaktyczne, takie jak: świadectwo, tworzenie wspólnotowego środowiska uczenia się, zapewnianie duchowego przewodnictwa poprzez katechezę oraz promowanie uczenia się skoncentrowanego na uczniu i aktywnych metod nauczania. Zasady te wyznaczają kierunek dydaktyki RE. Proces nauczania RE – od budzenia wiary po ewangelizację – jest widoczny poprzez wewnętrzne przyswajanie i rozeznawanie. Wszystkie te elementy są oświetlone przez podejścia teologiczne podkreślające relację między wiarą i rozumem, ewangelizację i katechezę, synodalność oraz teorię edukacyjną konstruktywizmu. Synteza tych teorii i doświadczeń doprowadziła do opracowania synodalnego modelu dydaktycznego składającego się z czterech faz nauczania:

wiary, internalizacji, rozeznawania i ewangelizacji. Fazy te można łatwo zapamiętać dzięki akronimowi FIDE, który w języku łacińskim oznacza „wiarę”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja religijna, doświadczenia życiowe, synodalność, ewangelizacja

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Katarzyna WASILEWSKA-OSTROWSKA<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0001-5308-7718

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## **The narratives of homeless men on housing support and the role of a social worker in the process of becoming independent**

### **Narracje bezdomnych mężczyzn na temat wsparcia mieszkaniewego i roli pracownika socjalnego w procesie ich usamodzielniania**

#### **Introduction**

Homelessness is a social problem that humanity has been struggling with for centuries. We know from the pages of history that this term appeared in 1615 in Homer's *Odyssey* and spread in the United States in the 19th century (Bielecka-Prus, 2011). It was also there that the first research on this issue was undertaken. An example of one of the first works is the book entitled *The Hobo* by Nels Anderson published in 1923 (cf. Bielecka-Prus et al., 2011). Since then, research and analyses on this crisis have been undertaken, and effective forms of help for the homeless have been sought (Nelson et al., 2007; Jarrett, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014). To this day, however, it is a big challenge to

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<sup>1</sup> Katarzyna Wasilewska-Ostrowska, PhD, Assistant Professor: Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland, e-mail [katwas@umk.pl](mailto:katwas@umk.pl)

develop a universal definition of homelessness and to identify solutions that would eliminate this problem (Wasilewska-Ostrowska, 2022). This is mainly due to the complexity of the phenomenon itself, as well as its ambiguity (cf. Flike et al., 2022). Many different factors lead to homelessness (cf. Crane et al., 2005; Rukmana, 2020; Zhao, 2023). Biographies of people experiencing this crisis show that each person is different, and many paths can lead to it. However, what connects people experiencing this problem is withdrawal from social, cultural and often professional life. This withdrawal may be a reaction to a negative life event with which the person is unable to cope, or a form of escape in a critical situation. Over time, people stop identifying with the world of others “those who have a house and work” and start looking for their own definition of life and self-define themselves anew. In the process of constructing a new identity, they may be accompanied by a great sense of fear, but also disagreement with the fate that has befallen them. In addition, they may feel loneliness, helplessness and anger at themselves and others: “Homelessness is identified with a sense of loneliness, aimlessness, resentment at one’s fate, associated with entering the world of ‘strangers’, created by others, unknown, hostile. There is a feeling of loneliness, often despite the presence of other people in a similar situation. This emotional emptiness, apart from the feeling of loneliness, is additionally intensified by the feeling of hopelessness accompanying the homeless, the futility of the actions taken, closely related to resentment against their situation. At this stage, we can talk about physical homelessness (rooflessness), which is accompanied by emotional homelessness” (Kostrzyńska, 2016, pp. 230–231).

In Poland, the phenomenon of homelessness was officially addressed only after the political transformation (1989). Previously, people without a roof over their heads were helped by various church organizations, but also by secular ones. The introduction of the Social Assistance Acts (1990 and 2004) regulated the issues related to professional assistance offered to people experiencing homelessness. Currently, such a person can benefit from several possible solutions. Firstly, one can count on support in the form of a shelter. According to the Act on Social Assistance of 12 March 2004 (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593, Art. 17), the task of each commune is to allocate a place in a 24-hour or intervention facility. The first group includes shelters for the homeless and shelters for the homeless with care services - intended for people who, due to illness, age or disability, need partial (but not full) care to meet their needs

(*ibid.*, Art. 48a). People are directed to shelters by administrative decision, preceded by an environmental interview. During their stay, they are supported by a social contract (*ibid.*, Art. 48a) and can be assisted with an individual homelessness program (*ibid.*, Art. 49). 24-hour homeless shelters are open all year round. In addition to basic services (accommodation, meals, clothing, assistance in ensuring personal hygiene), employees suggest activities aimed at increasing social activity and independence of residents. A maximum of 80 people can stay in these places. In shelters with care services, key assistance activities are combined with meeting those needs that people are unable to meet on their own (Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy of 27 April 2018 on minimum standards of night shelters, shelters for the homeless, shelters for the homeless with care services and warming houses). The second group of facilities is of an intervention purpose and can be used by anyone without meeting any additional requirements. These include night shelters and warming facilities. The hostel offers assistance throughout the year, but only at certain evening and night hours. It is intended for no more than 100 people and its task is to offer basic services (a place to sleep, a hot drink, a bath and change of clothes). The facility should also have a room for preparing meals, which can be used as a common room or meeting place. The warming facility, on the other hand, provides its support in the period October-April from 6.00 pm to 8.00 am or around the clock, if there is no night shelter in a given commune. It has rooms where you can warm up and drink a hot beverage, change clothes or disinfect them when it is not possible to replace them. There are also toilets and rooms for administrative work or for individual interviews (*ibid.*). In addition, people in the crisis of homelessness can count on financial and material assistance, meals in soup kitchens, use of the baths and, most importantly, they have the support of specialists. Social workers play an important role among these professionals. They perform many tasks, including diagnosing the problems and needs of people in the homelessness crisis, referring them to facilities, helping in developing individual programs for getting out of homelessness, motivating and supporting them in becoming independent. They also offer social skills training, a social contract and organize support from street workers and assistants for people in the homeless crisis (Podgórska-Jachnik, 2014).

However, institutions alone will not solve the problem of homelessness. There is a lack of stable employment for people exiting homelessness,

insufficient funding for housing programs, and bureaucratic obstacles that make it difficult for people experiencing this crisis to obtain effective support.

In order to meet social expectations, in 2022 in Poland, a government project related to the deinstitutionalization of services was adopted, it meant that the assistance would become more focused on community work and access to housing for excluded people. It did not mean the complete liquidation of institutions, but making the institutions less numerous, and the assistance even more individualized and focused on intervention (so that people do not become dependent on social support and, as far as possible, become active and return to society). The proposed trend is also in line with the housing first concept.

## Research Methodology

The research I conducted was qualitative. The case study method was used (Stake, 1997). The main purpose of the conducted analyses was to examine the narrative of men experiencing homelessness on the causes of their housing exclusion, assisted housing programs and the role of a social worker in their becoming independent. The research questions were:

- What were the individual paths of the men surveyed into homelessness – sources of exclusion?
- How do the respondents relate to housing support?
- What significance do the respondents see in social workers in the system of assistance for people in the homeless crisis?

The research was conducted in 2019–2021 using narrative interviews in three shelters located in the Mazowieckie and Małopolskie voivodeships. The research questions were open-ended.

Six men attended. The respondents agreed to participate in the study, were assured of full anonymity and a change of their names. To ensure a higher quality of research, data triangulation was used. The study participants were:

- Waldemar – 33 years old
- Tomasz – 54 years old
- Michał – 62 years old
- Jerzy – 66 years old
- Wojciech – 46 years old
- Marek – 56 years old.

## Results

### *Individual ways of entering homelessness – causes of housing exclusion*

**Waldemar** has stayed in the shelter for half a year, has vocational education, is a bricklayer, currently not working, spent time in a penitentiary facility, is divorced, has two underage children, takes help of a psychologist and attends support groups for people addicted to alcohol. As he claims, his main problem was the fact that he grew up in an alcoholic family. He could never count on his parents. He was the eldest of the siblings and always did most of the housework. When he entered adolescence, he began to rebel, he ran away to his friends more and more often and spent the most time with them. After graduating from vocational school, he left his family home and moved in with a friend. He also took part-time jobs in construction. He often partied, and then he met his future wife. She impressed him not only with her appearance, but also with her features, she was modest, she had goals in life and dreams that she wanted to fulfil. It was for her that he changed his behaviour, spent less time with his friends, and started looking for a full-time job. Soon it turned out that the girl was pregnant and then they decided to get married. They lived with the woman's parents. When their first child was born, the world became too monotonous for Waldemar. He thought he was too young to spend all day with his wife and a child. In order, as he emphasized, to "diversify" his life, he began to reach for alcohol more and more often. There were conflicts at home, especially with in-laws, which were about the difficult financial situation. The in-laws expected their son-in-law to work more and spend less on his own pleasures. At that time, it also turned out that the wife was pregnant with her second child. The conflicts began to escalate. Waldemar moved in with a friend. There, he drank alcohol almost every day and stopped going to work. However, he had to make a living. Persuaded by a friend, he entered the store and took out a few things without paying for them. This is how he stole for the first time in his life. After that, criminal behaviour became a routine, until he ended up in prison for two years. His wife had kept contact with him, but after some time she made the final decision to divorce. After leaving the prison, Waldemar had nowhere to go. According to him, the reason for his homelessness is primarily alcohol, as well as being in prison and the breakdown of his family.

**Tomasz** has been staying in various shelters and night shelters, he does not work, he has primary education, he is single, he has no children. As a child, the man was brought up in a care and educational institution. As he emphasizes, he does not know what a real family is, he has never experienced love from his parents. In the orphanage, he was often the victim of aggression from his peers. Over time, he learned that he must defend himself to survive. As a grown-up he left the institution and began his adult life. It was not easy for him. At first, he stayed with his grandparents, who were already ill at that time. He lived with them for 2 years, then moved to another city where he found a job. At the age of 22, he came to a farm where he helped the owners, for which he received a roof over his head and food. He lived with them for 4 years, until their tragic death (they died in a car accident). Then their children decided to sell the farm, and he started looking for work again. Tomasz has never started his own family because, as he believes, he does not know if he is suitable to be a father and a husband, as he has never had the right role models. The addiction he fell into led him to a rehab centre, and from there to a homeless shelter. According to Tomasz, homelessness was mainly due to the breakup of his biological family and his stay in a care and educational institution, where he did not have the opportunity to learn many skills needed in his adult life. He could not, in his opinion, find himself neither in his professional nor in his family life. In addition, alcoholism became a problem, which, according to him, makes it difficult for him to return to society.

**Michał** – he has been in an institution for people in a homelessness crisis for 2 years, receives a pension, is divorced twice, has three adult children, does not keep contact with them, admits that he is addicted to alcohol, but is not currently taking therapist's help. He was brought up, as he claims, in a normal family where he never lacked anything. His parents worked, and he, at those times, had what he needed. He might not have respected it a bit because it was all too easy for him. He was an only child, his parents loved him very much and were solving all his problems for him. They were proud of him when he went to high school. After finishing his education, he quickly found a job (in fact, his father helped him with that) and then he met his first wife. He was happy with her, but his coming back from work later and later after drinking started to bother her a lot. After two years, she decided to divorce. Then Michał began to drink more and more, neither conversations with his parents nor with his

superiors at work helped. During that time, he met his second future wife. She was his neighbour whom he had known for several months. She often helped him into his apartment when he couldn't do it himself (due to the state of intoxication he was in). She, as Michał claims, was the impulse to change his life. He went to an AA group and stopped drinking. They had three children. Michał returned to work, over time he was promoted, they could not complain about money. They could afford to spend holidays together, go away for the weekends, and buy each other presents not only at Christmas. Unfortunately, in the early 90s of the last century, the changes that took place in the country meant that the place where he worked got closed, and he became unemployed. As he emphasizes, it was such a difficult experience for him that he began to look for solace in alcohol again. Without a job, with increasing debts he could not cope with and more and more often spent time away from home with friends drinking alcohol. When he returned one day after a three-day absence, he found the apartment empty. His wife informed him that she was filing for divorce. At the same time, his father died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Michał blamed himself for this death, that it was because of the worries he had with him that his heart could not stand it. Two years after his father had died, his mother died of cancer. He was, as he claims, completely alone in the world, and he lost his apartment ending up with one plastic bag on the street. For several years he lived on his recreational plot (which he inherited from his parents). He was often visited there by social workers and city guards. With time, they convinced him to move to a shelter, because there were no suitable conditions on the plot. Michał believes that it is too late for him to change his life. He is ashamed of what happened, he does not want to have contact with children because he believes that the children do not want such a father. His main problem, in retrospect, was that his parents didn't let him grow up and take responsibility for his life. He has never learned to apologize or ask for help. He is ashamed of his life and feels inferior to other people.

**Jerzy** – he came to the shelter because of eviction (he had an indebted apartment), has an alcohol problem and debt bailiffs, is divorced, has one daughter, with whom he sometimes meets. He doesn't like to remember the past. He says that he had a good life, a family, a job and a beloved daughter who was the apple of his eye. He would do anything for her. Unfortunately, as he points out, problems at work, family matters and debts left him with

nothing. He enjoys having contact with his child. The princess (as he calls his daughter) offered him to live with her and her family, but he doesn't want to do it, he doesn't want to be a burden to anyone. Staying at the shelter made him realize that he couldn't do many things on his own. That's how he had been taught by his father that there are male and female jobs, and he stuck to it very much. Now he considers it a mistake, because everyone should be able to do everything or almost everything in the house to be independent. If he were to be born again, he would lead his life differently. He sees the future in dark colours, it is difficult for him to take up any additional work due to his age, and his debts have been increasing. However, he wants to do everything so that his daughter does not have to bear financial consequences for his life.

**Wojciech** – has secondary education, does not work, currently he is under the care of a psychiatrist because he suffers from depression and drug addiction, he is separated with his wife, there are no children. He is very troubled by his stay at the shelter, he does not identify with the people he lives with. As he points out, if it wasn't for his illness, he wouldn't be there. For the situation he mostly blames his father, who was a military man and had been teaching him his principles all his life. He had to do everything according to the instructions of his father, who was never satisfied with him anyway. When he was a teenager, he was constantly criticized, his mother did not defend him because she was also afraid of his father. Wojciech had no right to have his opinion, he even had to go to the school chosen by his father. He never had real friends, always alone, somewhere far away from others. When he was 18, his dad kicked him out of the house because he said he wouldn't support him anymore. He stayed with his mother's sister, who was his godmother, and he could always count on her. It was her who first noticed the symptoms of depression in him and enrolled him in a specialist. Wojciech started taking medication and his condition improved significantly, he found a job and at the age of 26 he married his fiancée. He thought he could deal with the past, but it wasn't that easy. He did not believe in himself, he blamed himself for his failures, there were problems with sleeping, eating, and he went to a psychiatrist again. Wojciech began to believe in the power of pharmaceuticals, without which he could not imagine his life. It even happened that he was hospitalized because he overdosed them. He was then sent to a psychiatric hospital for treatment. As he emphasizes, his wife loved him very much, but she could not stand his changing moods.

She made a new life for herself, although they did not get divorced. Wojciech has a lot of hobbies, he can paint, fold origami, he is passionate about music. However, he hides his talents from the world, he does not want others to think that he is bragging about it. He sees the source of his homelessness in his illness (depression), which, according to him, was affected by the relationship with his father and the lack of support from his mother.

**Marek** – has been staying at the shelter for 8 years. As he claims, he has never had a real home. He grew up in an alcoholic family. From that time, he remembers only alcoholic libations and quarrels, and sometimes even physical aggression of his parents against each other and the children (he had four siblings). At the age of 17 he ran away from home and never returned there (he has had no contact with his family to this day). He moved to a big city, took various jobs to support himself, and sometimes asked people for money or food. He slept in various places; over time he began to commit crimes. Consequently, he was placed in prisons, where he spent a total of 10 years. While incarcerated, he began to have health problems, as the doctors said, it was the result of previous neglect and an inappropriate lifestyle. When he left the prison walls, he had no idea what to do with himself. He went to an organization that helps people in a similar situation to his, and later to a homeless shelter. Marek believes that what led to homelessness was his poorly functioning biological family, as well as the state that did not support such children growing up in a pathological environment.

*The narratives of the respondents on housing support  
and the role of the worker in becoming independent*

The data obtained from the interviews show that the respondents dream of their own apartment, where they could live freely and fulfil their plans. However, they are afraid that this dream may never come true, they think that they have no chance for such a solution: *“I would like to have a roof over my head, a piece of my own place on earth. In retrospect, I believe that this is the most important thing for humans (...). However, I do not believe that I will ever have my own apartment again, people like me are always at the end of the waiting list”* (Michał). The flat is of great value to them, but in their narratives, they share doubts as to whether they would be able to cope with the obligations if they ever got a flat: *“when I still had a family, my only task was to earn money. In the*

*beginning, everything worked out, I had a well-paid job, I often got a bonus, and my wife was happy. Unfortunately, the company started to go bankrupt, I looked into the glass more and more often, and I took out a loan, which I have to pay back to this day. Well, what my wife did, she found another, with a thicker wallet, and I was left with nothing (...). Now I think that apart from tea and sandwiches, I don't know how to cook very much, hmm, it was always done by my wife, and before that my mother, who is no longer alive. I would probably have to learn to make lunches, clean, etc., but at my age, it's a bit too late to learn"* (Jerzy). The respondents also wonder whether their financial situation would allow them to live on their own (taking into account that they currently have debts or insecure jobs): *"It's nice to have your own apartment, you can be free, there are no regulations, and you decide for yourself. However, you need money for this, because even if I get a flat for free, I must maintain it, rent, electricity bills, TV. You must have a good job and a permanent one, and if you are unemployed, the thing you do is go to a social worker and ask for money?"* (Wojciech). Despite their fears, most respondents express a desire to have their own independent apartment. Interestingly, however, they do not take any action to achieve this goal, only one of the surveyed men is on the list of people waiting for a social housing, the rest have not yet entered the office. Moreover, they do not try to solve their social problems, especially economic ones, they postpone it. Only Waldemar emphasizes that what is necessary are changes in life and not making the same mistakes: *"my greatest enemy was alcohol, it destroyed my life. As a child, I looked at my parents who were alcoholics and I hoped that I would not end up like that, but unfortunately, the disease caught me (...). I was impressed by the company, parties, I forgot about my wife and children, I preferred my friends. When I got to prison, only my wife visited me, she did not take my children, because she told them I had gone abroad to work. I promised her that I would change, but unfortunately (...). Now I know that I was to blame for everything, I'm not surprised that she wanted a divorce, I would probably also get a divorce in her place. Now, when I go to therapy, I understand that many things were still inside me from my childhood. However, I must fix it, I want to have contact with the children, I want them to contact me, but I must prove that I am a different person"* (Waldemar). Tomasz, in turn, admitted that he did not want to move out of the shelter. He believes that his own apartment is a big challenge and a threat, as it can lead to person's loneliness or a return to his old habits: *"I'm fine, as it is, I'm in a shelter, I have many friends, I can go out to the city. Well, of*

course, I must stick to the regulations, you know, but I'm not worried if someone will evict me in a moment. How many were there who went to live on their own and then sat at home alone, watching TV for hours and having a beer... And so, they returned to the addiction again. Loneliness is the worst feeling, it hurts the most, and here I don't feel lonely, I can always go to someone, talk to someone and it's better" (Tomasz). Other people emphasize that in order to fully overcome the homelessness crisis, one must prepare for life independence: "a shelter is kind of a school of life, you can learn everything here before you even think about your own apartment (...), before I got here, I neither knew nor understood many things. Only now I do realise how little a man knows and how much is ahead of him in order to become a person" (Michał). When asked if the narrators would accept the assisted housing program, if they were offered them, all except Tomasz agreed that they certainly would benefit. They have heard about such programs being implemented in the country and see them as a real chance to change their current lives. In assisted housing, however, they would expect the help of specialists, and they would like to be able to come to a support institution (shelters) in difficult moments to overcome a temporary crisis, if they experienced one: "I would love to have my own apartment, although I know that difficult times may come. If I had someone, or I could come here, to the shelter, I would always be sure that someone would help me" (Waldemar). Wojciech is convinced, however, that if he received the premises, he would completely cut himself off from the people with whom he is currently staying at the shelter: "I am not saying that I feel bad here, but I know that if I opened a new card, I mean moved from here to my apartment, I don't think I would be in touch with people from here, not that they are bad or something like that, they would just remind me that I had to be here once" (Wojciech). Despite some concerns, the respondents emphasize that if they had the hope that it could be realized now, they would start taking various actions that would allow them to deal with the difficulties (undertaking therapy, looking for a job, improving professional qualifications): "It's hard for me because I don't have any education, and I have a history of being in prison, but if someone told me today that I would get a flat, I would do anything to earn it (...). Even though I'm not that young anymore, I'd take up a course or something to get a job, and then I'd look for any job" (Marek). The respondents pointed out that shelter is needed, but only when it performs an intervention and temporary function. They emphasized that the shelter is needed, but only when it has a preventive and emergency

function. This applies to extremely difficult situations, when you need to provide immediate help. In the long run, institutions do not fulfil their tasks, because people get used to the institution and the rules prevailing in it, and consequently stop fighting to change their current life.

The surveyed men, in turn, when asked about the roles performed by social workers, most often emphasized that these specialists occupy an important place in the assistance system. First of all, their support focuses on talking to them and advising them on many issues: *“I really like talking to our social worker, she can listen and always finds a solution”* (Marek). Michał is very grateful to the worker who helped him with all the formalities to receive the sickness pension: *“If it hadn’t been for our social worker, I could forget about the pension (...). I wouldn’t have gone through it all by myself... It is thanks to him that I have a pension today, it’s not much but always a few coins a month”* (Michał). Wojciech, on the other hand, is encouraged by a social worker to activate socially and professionally. The worker motivates him to develop his potential, show his talents to others and use his passions in his professional work: *“A social worker is one of the few people to whom I showed my work (...). We often talk about what I do in my spare time. He was the first to suggest that I do more of it, and maybe even make money from it”* (Wojciech). During the interview, Waldemar emphasizes that this specialist motivates him to contact children. For him this is very important, but he is very afraid of it: *“I love children the most in the world. I know my wife may no longer love me, but that doesn’t necessarily mean I can’t have contact with my children. I would like to improve my relationship with my children, and the worker began to help me with this”* (Waldemar). For Jerzy, a social worker is a person who supports him financially and helps him receive material help: *“I am in a difficult situation. That’s somehow happened. A social worker, when he comes, always asks if I need anything and if I’m fine here (...). From the beginning, he has helped me get some benefits or something I needed”* (Jerzy). In turn, Tomasz is persuaded by an employee to start addiction therapy: *“I have a problem with alcohol, I’ve already tried some treatment, but it didn’t help me. I was sober maybe a couple of weeks (...). Alcohol is like medicine for me, I see something in it that helps me, but our social worker has been explaining that it doesn’t work like that (...) she keeps telling me to start therapy, but seriously”* (Tomasz).

## Research findings and conclusions

The results of the research I conducted among people experiencing homelessness show that various factors can lead to this crisis. Firstly, it is alcohol which led them to a disease – addiction. Secondly, men indicate that a poorly functioning biological family and the breakup of the family they founded contributed to homelessness. In addition, the respondents point out that their stay in a care and educational institution or a penitentiary had an impact on their current situation. Other reasons mentioned were financial problems (debts), eviction, illness, as well as lack of life skills, responsibility and a proper support system that did not support children growing up in dysfunctional families.

When it comes to the implementation of housing programs, the respondents are clearly ambivalent. On the one hand, they would like to take part in these projects, and on the other, they look for objective or subjective difficulties that would make it impossible. In their opinion, however, the goal (their own apartment) is so distant and unrealistic that they do not believe it will ever be achieved. Importantly, they emphasize that if it were otherwise (the goal would be more real), their motivation to change would increase.

The respondents appreciate the work of social workers and notice especially their tasks in the area of consulting, providing financial and material assistance, supporting in completing various formalities, motivating to undertake social and professional activity, encouraging addiction therapy, establishing contact with the family, as well as developing one's own potential.

An important conclusion from the research is that everyone needs a different kind of help. People in a homelessness crisis often carry for years the burden of their past, which they do not want to accept, have low self-esteem and faith in their own abilities. Being well bruised, they require multidisciplinary help. They need to believe in themselves again, regain self-esteem and independence. It is also worth noting that too idealistic idea about the future and overestimating your own abilities may pose a danger. What is worth recommending are housing programs (cf. Pleace, 2016) and even greater involvement of social workers in the effort to help people experiencing homelessness to become independent (Dębski, 2014). These specialists should be properly prepared to perform many tasks with such demanding clients and, therefore, it is advisable for them to constantly improve their skills and social

competences. A well-prepared social worker is able to change the life of many people, and in relation to excluded people it takes on exceptional significance. These professionals must be noticed and even more appreciated in the social assistance system, because their work brings many opportunities and benefits, primarily for people who remain on the margins of social life.

**Abstract:** This article is devoted to housing exclusion and support for people experiencing homelessness in Poland. It presents the results of research aimed at discovering individual ways of entering this crisis (the causes of exclusion), as well as at getting to know the narratives of men living in shelters about housing support and the role of social workers in the process of getting out of homelessness. The research was conducted using the case study method, with the help of a narrative interview. The data obtained showed that various factors lead to homelessness, primarily family, institutional, financial, housing, health, individual and systemic factors. The respondents expect social inclusion, especially housing, but they are accompanied by fears and uncertainty related to change. They also see the many roles played by social workers with whom they work on a daily basis. Above all they appreciate the counselling, material support, encouragement to do therapy, for socio-professional activation, personal development, contact with the loved ones and assistance in dealing with official matters. The condition for preventing the petrification of homelessness is the help offered to people struggling with this crisis led by specialists and social workers. An important factor in the process of getting out of homelessness are housing programs, which not only give people experiencing homelessness hope to improve their lot, but above all, they are an important motivating factor for any changes.

**Keywords:** homelessness, a person in a crisis of homelessness, deinstitutionalization, housing first programs, social worker

**Streszczenie:** Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony został wykluczeniu mieszkaniowemu i wsparciu osób doświadczających bezdomności w Polsce. Zaprezentowano w nim wyniki badań, których celem było odkrycie indywidualnych dróg wchodzenia w ten kryzys (przyczyn wykluczenia), a także poznanie narracji mężczyzn mieszkających w schroniskach na temat wsparcia mieszkaniowego i roli pracowników socjalnych w procesie wychodzenia z bezdomności. Badania zostały przeprowadzone z wykorzystaniem metody studium przypadku, przy pomocy wywiadu narracyjnego. Uży-

skane dane pokazały, że różne czynniki prowadzą do bezdomności, przede wszystkim rodzinne, instytucjonalne, finansowe, mieszkaniowe, zdrowotne, indywidualne i systemowe. Badani oczekują inkluzji społecznej, zwłaszcza mieszkaniowej, jednak towarzyszą im obawy i niepewność związane ze zmianą. Dostrzegają też wiele ról pełnionych przez pracowników socjalnych, z którymi na co dzień współpracują. Przede wszystkim doceniają prowadzone przez nich poradnictwo, wsparcie materialne, zachęcanie do terapii, aktywizacji społeczno-zawodowej, rozwoju osobistego, kontaktu z najbliższymi i asystowanie przy załatwianiu spraw urzędowych. Warunkiem zapobiegania petryfikacji bezdomności jest pomoc oferowana osobom zmagającym się z tym kryzysem prowadzona przez specjalistów, pracowników socjalnych. Ważnym też czynnikiem w procesie wychodzenia z bezdomności są programy mieszkaniowe, które nie tylko dają nadzieję ludziom doświadczającym bezdomności na poprawę swojego losu, ale przede wszystkim stanowią istotny czynnik motywujący do wszelkich zmian.

**Słowa kluczowe:** bezdomność, osoba w kryzysie bezdomności, deinstytucjonalizacja, programy housing first, pracownik socjalny

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