



Intergenerational Transmission of Values Among Three Generations of Polish Women: The Moderating Role of Religiosity

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Abstract: This article examines the intergenerational transmission of values in Polish families, focusing on three generations of women: grandmothers, mothers, and daughters. The point of departure is the axiological transformations observed in European societies, particularly the processes of secularization and individualization. The study involved 417 women from 139 three-generational families, in which the hierarchy of values was analyzed using Max Scheler's theory. The findings reveal an increase in the importance of hedonistic and esthetic values across successive generations, accompanied by a decline in the significance of religious and secular sacred values. In religious families, however, the pace of these changes proved slower, with greater intergenerational similarity in value systems. Religiosity emerged as a significant moderator in the dynamics of axiological transformation. On this basis, the article draws pastoral conclusions that emphasize the need to support families in the process of religious and moral education. The results contribute to the broader discourse on value change in post-traditional societies, providing both a foundation for pastoral reflection and a point of departure for further interdisciplinary research.

Keywords: intergenerational transmission, values, religiosity, three-generational family, family pastoral care

The issue of social and cultural change is an area of contemporary interdisciplinary research. A particular focus of this research is the transformation of the value system and the related life-changing decisions of successive generations (Hofstede 2007, 12). The older generation is concerned with passing on the principles and rules of social, civic, and family functioning to the younger generation, which for centuries has determined the path and conditioned both the existence and identity of individual communities, societies, and nations (Budzyńska 2016, 23; Sikora and Górnik-Durose 2013).

The existing living conditions are associated with the rapid acceleration of civilizational progress, as expressed in the rapid exchange of information concerning the achievements of individual cultures in terms of world view, religion, beliefs, values, and priorities (Budzyńska 2016, 23; cf. Rudnik 2014; Popielski 2008, 7–9). The transmission of values formerly passed on within the family in isolation from the rest of the world is becoming unstable, having to compete with conflicting messages and,

as a result, ceasing to be the seed of fundamental truth developed over generations (cf. Farnicka and Liberska 2014, 185–202; Liberska and Matuszewska 2014, 115–19). Currently, Polish society prefers the nuclear family model to the multigenerational family model of the past, which further weakens the transfer of values from the grandparents' generation to the grandchildren's generation (Liberska and Matuszewska 2014, 117).

For this reason, in pastoral theology and its subdiscipline, family ministry (Kamiński 2013, 24), it is necessary to empirically verify the current mechanisms of value transmission. Determining both the direction of changes in the hierarchy of values and the importance of religiosity for the stabilization of intergenerational transmission is valuable knowledge on the basis of which we can formulate pastoral conclusions concerning a better understanding of the directions in which the younger generation is heading, the importance of particular values in their lives, and the role of previous generations in their transmission. It is imperative to understand the mechanisms of transmission by women in order to adequately plan educational and development programs in the work of family counselors and pastors, and for the exercise of pastoral ministry as necessary in situations of intergenerational crises expressed by the radical break of the younger generation from the moral and religious values that have been meticulously cultivated by previous generations of Polish families (Wałęcka-Matyja 2022, 65).

This article aims to deepen knowledge about the changes occurring in the intergenerational transmission of values and to outline the basis for creating programs that support families in effectively transmitting values and fostering intergenerational cohesion.

1. The Sociocultural Significance of Values: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Values are beliefs that relate to desired goals or behaviors that extend beyond routine, everyday situations (Wojciszke 2014, 546). They shape both the decision-making and the evaluation of events or attitudes, and are organized into a hierarchy that reflects their relative importance to the individual. Values are the subject of various philosophical and theological concepts and the focus of empirical research in the social sciences. Values play a fundamental role in shaping individual and collective identity, form the basis of moral norms, regulate social relations, and guide human actions (Frankl 1984, 19).

Philosophers ask questions about the nature of values, their origin, hierarchy, and role in the lives of individuals and communities (Gołaszewska 2008, 81). Axiological discourse was undertaken as an attempt to organize the categories of values,

developing increasingly complex classifications of values. Max Scheler considered values to be ideal entities, existing objectively, independently of the cognizing subject. He proposed a classification that divided values into four broad categories: (1) hedonistic values (pleasures and pains); (2) utilitarian values (related to life and health); (3) spiritual values (truth, beauty, moral good); and (4) religious values (the highest, concerning holiness). The author believed that this hierarchy is objective and that the cognition of values requires appropriate emotional and spiritual “openness.” (Scheler 1973, 9) Referring to this theory, Józef Tischner noted that values continually organize an individual’s relationship with God and other people. Values are not abstract entities, but always embody a specific life situation (cf. Tischner 1993, 7–16).

The popes of our time have emphasized the need to cultivate universal human values as the essence of pastoral work. The resulting encyclicals and papal works address moral, social, and spiritual values in both individual and social dimensions. In his encyclicals *Veritatis Splendor* (cf. John Paul II 1993) and *Evangelium Vitae* (cf. John Paul II 1995), John Paul II presents moral values as inalienable, emphasizing, above all, the dignity of the human person and the value of life as the foundation of morality. *Fides et Ratio* (cf. John Paul II 1998) further organizes the relationship between faith and reason in today’s world, emphasizing the importance of truth, knowledge, and meaning, as well as the value of dialogue between science, which serves humanity, and faith, which safeguards its dignity. The successors of John Paul II emphasize Christian values as the core of European culture, while acknowledging the threat posed to them by pervasive relativism (cf. Benedict XVI 2005; Francis 2015, 2016, 2020).

In Christian theology, values are primarily associated with ethics and the revealed truth about human dignity. Values are understood as moral signposts leading to the ultimate good, which is God, who is the ultimate value (Szymik 2008, 97–99).

Values in social sciences are treated as stimuli for all actions, motivations, belief systems, and cultural norms. In psychological terms, Milton Rokeach proposed dividing values into: (1) terminal values (life goals, e.g., happiness, freedom); (2) instrumental values (ways of acting, e.g., honesty, responsibility) (Rokeach 1973, 11). Shalom H. Schwartz developed a universal theory of values, distinguishing ten types of universal values (including kindness, tradition, power, and self-transcendence), and characterizing their interrelationships (cf. Schwartz 1992, 46–65). In turn, the sociological approach, as represented by Talcott Parsons, analyzes values as an element of the cultural system that regulates the actions of individuals, or values as symbolic capital transmitted through habitus (cf. Parsons 2013, 536–45; Bourdieu 1990, 25–29). Determining the values of a given society allows us to define the direction in which that society is heading (Kapica-Curzytek 2024, 237). In an interdisciplinary context, it is also important to refer to the multitude of pedagogical concepts that highlight the role of education as a process of shaping a hierarchy of values in accordance with the norms and traditions accepted by society (Lewowicki 2015, 7).

To summarize the interdisciplinary perspective, it is worth noting that the realization of values is deeply rooted in the axiological structure of human beings, and this structure determines their understanding of the meaning of life. Philosophy, theology, and social sciences offer a rich conceptual apparatus for analyzing values. Their common denominator is the recognition that values shape human life, decisions, and relationships. The theories of Scheler, Schwartz, and Tischner are particularly useful for research on the intergenerational transmission of values, as they enable the analysis of both the objective hierarchy of values and their subjective experience and transmission. Scheler's model of values considers individual values universally as objective entities, known and discovered by a person through acts of intuition (cf. Perz 2020, 77–78). Piotr Brzozowski used Scheler's concept to construct a catalog of values and measure them using the Scheler Value Scale (SVS) (cf. Brzozowski 1995). Scheler's catalog of values, derived from philosophy, provides the original basis for describing the universalism of values in the context of interdisciplinary research methodology, thus providing greater opportunities for measuring and interpreting results.

2. Intergenerational Transmission of Secular and Religious Values in the Family

Intergenerational transmission is considered one of the fundamental processes shaping both individual and family identity. Many studies have shown significant similarities in the construction of identity between generations within a family, with the greatest similarities between parents and children, followed by grandparents and grandchildren (Sabatier and Lannegrand-Willems 2005, 378–79; Halicka 2014, 127–29).

The intergenerational transmission of values within the family is a complex process that involves not only parents and children, but also grandparents, who exert both direct and indirect influences. As Marinus H. Van Ijzendoorn points out, transmission within the family occurs both genetically and socially—through support, socialization, and modeling of behavior, which the author refers to as the “socialization of the socializing person.” (Van Ijzendoorn 1992, 76) Family values and identity can be transmitted from grandparents to grandchildren directly or through parents, and can also be transformed under the influence of sociocultural conditions. This phenomenon fits into a broader theoretical context, analyzed, among others, by Klaus Boehnke (2001), Ariel Knafo and Schwartz (2009, 240–242), and Ute Schönpflug (2001, 174–77), who point to diverse paths and ranges of value transmission—from religious and political values to family and cultural norms. Research also indicates that collectivist values are transmitted more effectively than individualistic ones, which may stem from their integrative function and their roots in community structures (Schönpflug and Yan 2013, 68–69).

Research conducted among French three-generation families reveals that in societies with a high level of family solidarity and a well-developed model of intergenerational contact, children and young people continue to actively participate in family support networks and declare their willingness to continue family traditions. Strong relationships between family members, frequent contact with grandparents, and the high value placed on the family as a community institution are conducive to maintaining values such as loyalty, care, and belonging (Sabatier and Lannegrand-Willems 2005, 392).

In summary, intergenerational transmission is not a simple process of copying patterns between generations, but a dynamic phenomenon in which values, norms, and family identity are simultaneously transmitted, transformed, and adapted to changing sociocultural conditions. The family remains the primary environment for shaping the identity of the individual and the community, providing a space where tradition meets the need for openness to change and the negotiation of meanings between generations based on a solid foundation of religiosity (McPhail 2019, 2). Based on the above assumptions, the following main hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: The importance of values changes across generations: The importance of religious values decreases (H1a), and the importance of secular values increases (H1b).
- H2: In religious families, changes in value preferences across generations occur more slowly than in less religious families.
- H3: In religious families, there is greater similarity in the hierarchy of values between generations compared to non-religious families.

3. Method

3.1. Measurement of Preferred Values

The SVS developed by Brzozowski (1995) were used to measure the preferred hierarchy of values according to Scheler's theory. The tool allows for the assessment of the subjective importance of 50 specific values/items that correspond to various aspects of human life. Based on these detailed assessments, six dimensions of values and corresponding scales are calculated: Hedonistic (H)—related to pleasure and individual satisfaction; Vital (V)—related to strength, health, and physical fitness; Esthetic (E)—related to experiences of beauty and harmony; Truth (T)—covering cognitive and intellectual values; Moral (M)—concerning goodness, justice, and ethics; and Sacred (S)—covering religious and secular values, higher goals, and ideals. Additionally, within the Sacred (S) value scale, two subscales were distinguished: Secular Sacredness (SS) and Religious Sacredness (RS). In turn, within the Vital Values Scale, the Physical Fitness (PF) and Endurance (En) subscales were distinguished.

Respondents rated each specific value on a 100-point scale from 0 (completely unimportant) to 100 (very important) by entering the appropriate number.

To determine the internal consistency of each scale and subscale within each of the three generations, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated (see Table 1). Across all scales, these indicators suggest a very high reliability of the measures.

Table 1. Internal consistency of value scales (Cronbach's alpha)

Abbreviation	Scale/Subscale	Generation		
		Grandmother	Mother	Daughter
H	Hedonistic Values	0.825	0.891	0.859
V	Vital Values	0.865	0.831	0.850
PF	Physical Fitness	0.745	0.788	0.823
En	Endurance	0.774	0.765	0.741
E	Esthetic Values	0.861	0.841	0.863
T	Truth	0.869	0.868	0.847
M	Moral Values	0.883	0.873	0.907
S	Sacred Values	0.844	0.872	0.898
SS	Secular Sacredness	0.908	0.926	0.936
RS	Religious Sacredness	0.825	0.894	0.924

Source: own research.

3.2. Sample

A total of 417 women representing three generations within 139 families were examined. The sample allows for the detection of effects in a population of $\eta^2 > 0.015$ with a probability of $1 - \beta > 0.90$, at a significance level of $\alpha < 0.05$ with error $\alpha < 0.05$, and an assumed average correlation between generations $r = 0.50$. The average age of the entire sample was 47.4 years (median, 47 years; standard deviation, 21.5 years). Detailed characteristics of the sample by generations are presented in Table 2. Each generation was defined from the perspective of the youngest member (daughter, mother, grandmother).

The largest percentage of the oldest generation lived in rural areas (64.7%), while mothers (53.3%) and daughters (59.0%) reported residence in urban areas more often. The level of education among the respondents reflected the social changes that had occurred over the generations. Among grandmothers, primary education (44.9%) and vocational education (30.4%) were the most prevalent, while among mothers, secondary education (37.0%) and higher education (22.5%) were the most dominant. Daughters most often had secondary education (67.5%) and a bachelor's degree (18.0%).

Table 2. Properties of the sample

Variable/Statistic	Generation		
	Grandmother	Mother	Daughter
<i>N</i>	139	139	139
Age			
Min./Max.	60/94	38/64	18/22
M/Me	72.8/72.0	47.6/47.0	22.0/22.0
SD	7.30	5.58	2.62
Place of residence			
Rural area	64.7%	46.7%	41.0%
Urban area	35.3%	53.3%	59.0%
Marital status			
Single (unmarried)	0.7%	2.2%	84.1%
Married	15.3%	35.0%	8.7%
Divorced	21.9%	44.5%	0.7%
Separated	4.4%	7.3%	0%
Widowed	28.5%	3.6%	0%
Informal relationship	28.5%	7.3%	6.5%
Education			
Primary	44.9%	6.5%	6.5%
Vocational	30.4%	26.8%	0.7%
Secondary	15.2%	37.0%	67.5%
Bachelor's degree	2.2%	6.5%	18.0%
Master's degree	7.2%	22.5%	8.2%
Employment status			
Employed	0.7%	67.6%	10.9%
Unemployed	1.5%	14.0%	5.1%
Pensioner	97.1%	9.6%	1.5%
Student	–	1.5%	77.4%
Other	0.7%	7.4%	5.1%
Number of siblings			
0	4.3%	5.8%	11.5%
1	15.1%	22.3%	36.0%
2	25.2%	27.3%	28.8%
3	21.6%	22.3%	15.8%
4 or more	33.8%	22.3%	7.9%
Religiousness			
1—Deeply religious	51.1%	24.5%	12.2%
2—Religious	45.3%	62.6%	66.2%
3—Undecided, but attached to a religious tradition	2.1%	8.6%	10.8%
4—Searching	1.4%	1.4%	2.9%
5—Indifferent	0%	1.4%	5.0%
6—No specific views on religion	0%	1.4%	1.4%
7—Non-religious	0%	0%	1.4%
8—Strongly opposed to religion	0%	0%	0%

Source: own research.

An analysis of the number of siblings indicates that older generations were more likely to have grown up in large families—33.8% of grandmothers had four or more brothers and sisters. Among the mothers, this percentage was 22.3%, while among their daughters, it was only 7.9%. In the generation of daughters, the number of only children in the family increased threefold compared to the generation of grandmothers.

The highest level of declared religiosity was found among grandmothers, with more than half (51.1%) describing themselves as deeply religious, and another 45.3% as religious. In the youngest generation, there was an increase in the percentage of people who described themselves as undecided, indifferent, or non-religious (a total of 20.1% of daughters compared to 3.5% of mothers and 3.5% of grandmothers). For statistical analysis, two groups were distinguished based on the daughters' responses: religious (deeply religious and religious; 78.4%) and not very religious (undecided, but attached to a religious tradition, searching, indifferent, without a specific view on religion, or non-religious; a total of 21.6%).

3.3. Research Procedure

The research was conducted between 2023 and 2025. To qualify for the study, a family had to include at least three adult women in the direct female line, specifically the grandmother, mother, and daughter. This criterion enabled the capture of the dynamics of intergenerational value transmission within a single family. Respondents were recruited by interviewers who reached out to families from various sociocultural backgrounds (large cities, towns, and rural areas). The interviewers made direct contact by visiting the families in their homes in person.

The data were collected via a hand-delivered survey. The questionnaires were completed using the paper-and-pencil interview (PAPI) method, after which the interviewer reported for collection. Respondents answered the questions themselves, and if they had difficulty understanding any terms, they could ask for help from trained interviewers, who explained their doubts without suggesting answers. The duration of a single interview was approximately 30 minutes on average, ranging from 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the respondent's age and individual predispositions. A total of 140 three-generation families were involved. The final study group consisted of 139 families who met the condition of data completeness in all three generations (99% return rate).

4. Results

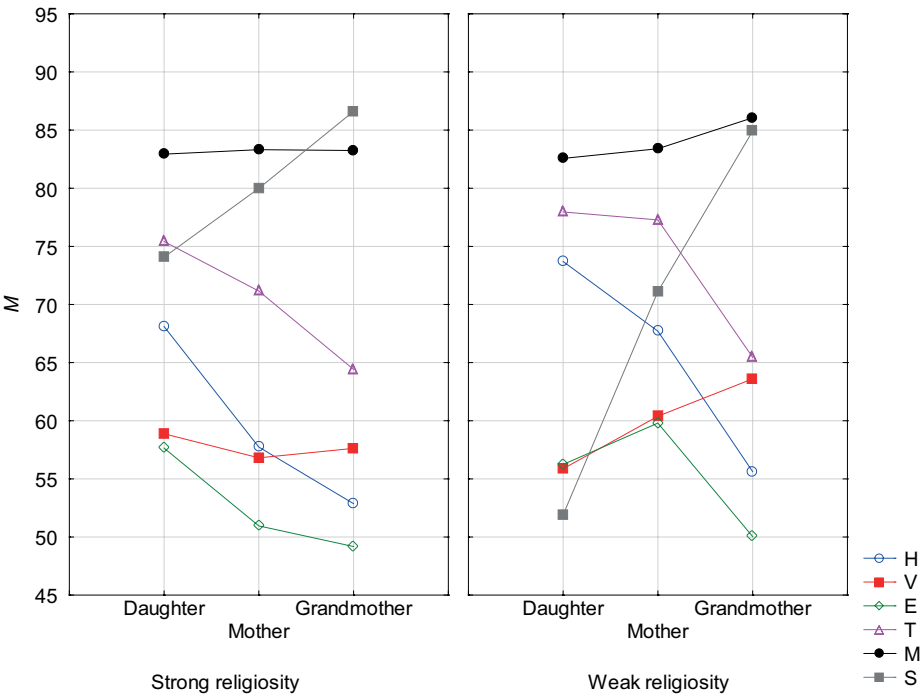
4.1. Dynamics of Intergenerational Changes in Preferred Values Depending on Religiosity

In order to test the hypothesis that the value system changes in successive generations of women from the same family (H1) and that religiosity moderates these changes (H2), a two-factor multivariate analysis of variance was employed. Both generation ($F(12, 126) = 23.21, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.688$), religiosity ($F(6, 132) = 32.794, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.199$), and the interaction between generation and religiosity ($F(12, 126) = 3.882, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.270$) were significant sources of variance in value preferences at the multivariate level. To determine for which specific values these effects occurred, univariate tests were applied. The effects are illustrated in Figure 1.

First, the influence of generation on values was examined, which is independent of a woman's level of religiosity. It was found that the younger the generation, the greater the attachment to hedonistic values (H: $F(2, 274) = 36.613, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.211$), truth (T: $F(2, 274) = 30.140, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.180$), esthetic values (E: $F(2, 274) = 9.099, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.062$) and a decrease in sacred values (S: $F(2, 274) = 74.439, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.352$). Analysis of the results in the subscales additionally showed that the importance of both secular values ($F(2, 274) = 33.062, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.194$) and religious values ($F(2, 274) = 67.229, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.329$) systematically decreases in younger generations. However, no intergenerational differences were found in terms of vital values (V: $F(2, 274) = 1.292, p = 0.276, \eta^2_p = 0.009$) and moral values (M: $F(2, 274) = 1.142, p = 0.321, \eta^2_p = 0.008$).

The influence of religiosity on the dynamics of intergenerational changes in recognized values was found in the case of only two values (moderation effects) (see Figure 1). As mentioned earlier, the younger the generation, the lower the preference for sacred values (S), except that the decline in attachment to this category of values is slower in families where high transmission of religiosity was observed in three generations of women (from $M = 86.62$ to $M = 74.32$) and faster in families where intergenerational transmission of religiosity has been disrupted (from $M = 84.92$ to $M = 51.91$; $F(2, 274) = 15.423, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.101$). A detailed analysis based on subscales showed that this effect is particularly evident in the case of religious sacredness ($F(2, 274) = 25.585, p < 0.001, \eta^2_p = 0.157$): among daughters with low religiosity, the dynamics of the systematic decline in the importance of religious values across generations was significantly higher (from $M = 89.55$ to $M = 47.74$) than in more religious families (from $M = 93.82$ to $M = 83.56$). The moderating influence of religiosity on the dynamics of intergenerational changes in value preferences was also noted in the case of esthetic values (E): A sharp increase in this value occurred already in the generation of mothers in the families of less religious daughters, while in the families of daughters who maintained religiosity, such an increase occurred

only in the youngest generation ($F(2, 274) = 4.420, p < 0.05, \eta^2_p = 0.031$). In the case of the other values, religiosity did not moderate their generational changes.



Note: H—Hedonistic alues, V—Vital Values, E—Esthetic Values, T—Truth, M—Moral Values, S—Sacred Values.

Figure 1. Religiosity and intergenerational differences in values

4.2. Religiosity and Similarity of Value Hierarchies

In order to determine the similarity of value hierarchies between generations within the same family, Spearman's rho correlation was calculated between the value profiles of each pair of generations in each family (daughter vs. mother, mother vs. grandmother, grandmother vs. daughter): the higher the positive correlation, the greater the similarity of value hierarchies. Next, families of religious daughters vs. less religious daughters were compared in terms of the similarity of value hierarchies within each generation pair using the Mann–Whitney U test, as nonparametric correlation coefficients measure the strength of the relationship between variables on an ordinal scale.

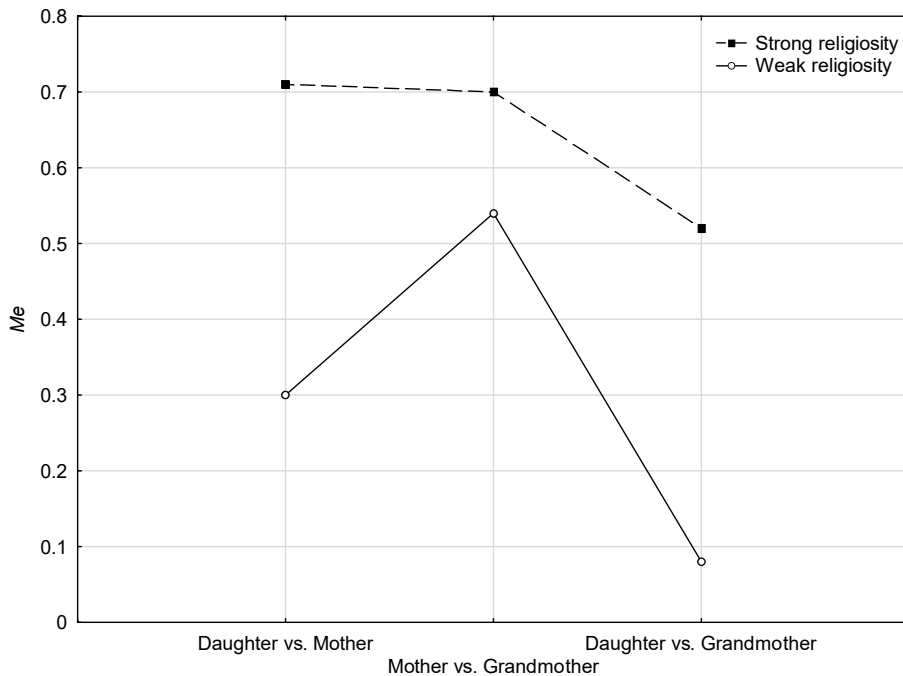


Figure 2. Religiosity and the similarity of value hierarchies across generations

In religious families, greater similarity in value hierarchies was found between each pair of generations compared to non-religious families (see Figure 2): daughter vs. mother ($Me = 0.705$ vs. $Me = 0.300$; $z = 2.554$, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.217$), mother vs. grandmother ($Me = 0.700$ vs. $Me = 0.540$; $z = 2.388$, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.203$), and daughter vs. grandmother ($Me = 0.522$ vs. $Me = 0.079$; $z = 2.952$, $p < 0.01$, $r = 0.250$). The differences found (r) should be considered small but statistically significant.

It is worth noting that in the case of families with religious daughters, the similarity in the hierarchy of values between grandmother vs. mother and mother vs. daughter (see Figure 2) was approximately 50% ($\rho^2 \times 100\%$). This ultimately results in a similarity between grandmother vs. daughter (granddaughter) of approximately 27%. In the case of families with less religious daughters, however, the similarity in the hierarchy of values between grandmother vs. mother was approximately 29%, and between mother vs. daughter was 9%. Consequently, the similarity of values between grandmother and granddaughter is less than 1%, and thus almost completely disappears, indicating clear disruptions in the transmission of values between generations.

4.3. Multidimensional Value Space across Three Generations of Women

Multidimensional scaling was employed to simultaneously visualize the psychological space of value preferences across three generations and their interrelationships. The resulting configuration (Figure 3) captures both the generational dynamics of values and the psychological distance between values.

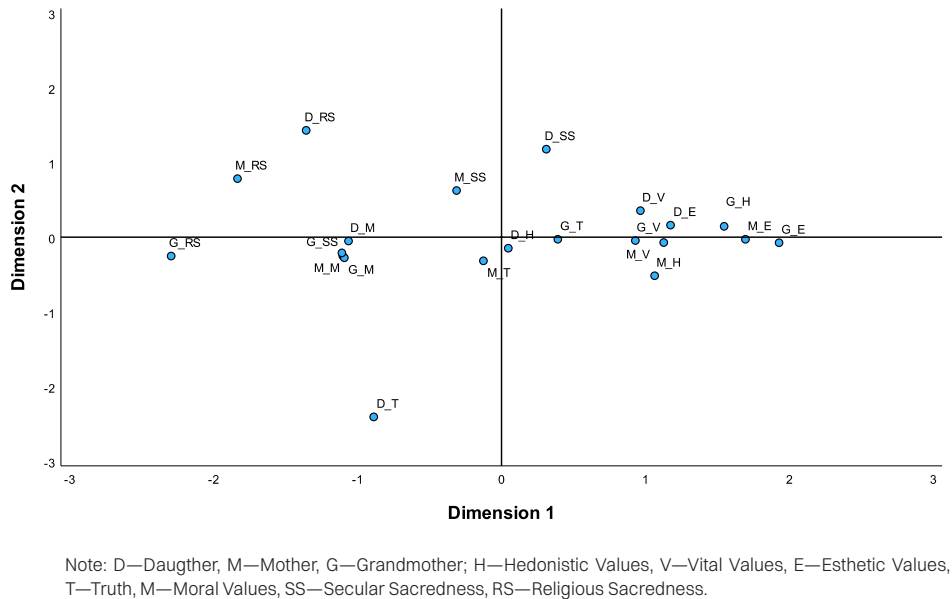


Figure 3. Psychological space of value preferences of three generations of women

Dimension 1 represents a continuum from lower-order values (hedonistic, vital, and esthetic) to higher-order values (religious sacredness, secular sacredness, morality, and truth). The arrangement of values along this main dimension is very characteristic of the older generation. In contrast, among younger generations (mothers and daughters), the distance between secular and religious values, as well as other values, especially truth, increases, creating a second dimension in this space. It can be concluded that, in the case of the older generation, the structure of values is determined by a simple opposition between lower-order values and higher-order values, whereas in younger generations, the structure becomes more complex and multidimensional.

The analysis reveals a growing gap between generations in terms of religious values and secular sacredness, reflecting weak correlations between generations in these areas. We can therefore observe both the direction and the shift of certain

values in a multidimensional space from a group of higher-order values to a group of lower-order values. This suggests a growing diversity in the value systems of younger generations and, simultaneously, their increased axiological pluralism.

5. Discussion

The results of the study confirm that in Polish families, the value system undergoes dynamic intergenerational changes, with religiosity playing an important moderating role in this process. Verifying hypothesis H1, it was found that in successive generations, there is a decline in the importance of religious values and secular sacredness and an increase in the importance of hedonistic and esthetic values. This phenomenon is consistent with numerous studies on secularization and individualization in European societies (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 11–20). In the Polish context, it is particularly significant that despite the historically strong roots of Catholicism in social structures, younger generations are increasingly adopting value patterns characteristic of post-traditional societies, where the importance of autonomy, self-fulfillment, and individual experiences prevails over community and religious values (Mariański 2012, 26).

Hypothesis H2, which treats religiosity as a factor stabilizing the transmission of values within the family, has been partially confirmed. The study results indicate that religiosity slows the rate of decline in attachment to both religious and partially secular values. These findings are consistent with the concept of “religiousness as a buffer,” (Pargament 2001, 201–8) according to which strong religious identification strengthens intergenerational continuity by offering narratives of the meaning of ritual traditions and the social context of these practices in the family. The data from this study indicate that in religious families, there is a higher degree of similarity in the hierarchy of values between individual pairs of generations. This observation corresponds to the conclusions of Van Ijzendoorn, who drew attention to the role of the family in the “socialization of the socializing person,” where parents and grandparents act not only as a source of transmission but also as participants in the process of shaping values (cf. Van Ijzendoorn 1992, 76–99). The closest generations, i.e., parents, play a special role in this transmission, while the grandparents’ generation only plays a corrective role. At the same time, it is worth noting that religiosity does not completely eliminate generational changes—the similarity of value hierarchies in religious families decreases with increasing generational distance. This is consistent with Boehnke’s theory (Boehnke 2001, 241) of dynamic value transmission, which posits that intergenerational transmission is not a simple copying, but rather a negotiation of meanings within the context of new sociocultural conditions (Schönpflug 2001, 175).

Another conclusion from this study is that in the older generation, the relationships between values were arranged in a simple opposition between higher-order values and lower-order values. In contrast, younger generations go beyond this simple opposition, and the configuration of values becomes more complex, and thus also determined by other factors. In particular, we observe a growing importance of esthetic and hedonistic values in younger generations. This phenomenon can be interpreted in the light of Schwartz's theory (Schwartz 1992, 64), which suggests that values related to self-transcendence and conservatism are more prevalent in older generations, whereas values of openness to change and hedonism are more prevalent in younger generations. This transformation is not only psychological but also cultural and social. Brzozowski's research (cf. Brzozowski 1995, 2007) using the SVS also pointed to the declining importance of religious values and the growing importance of pragmatic and esthetic values among young people, related to authenticity, individualism, and the fulfillment of individual needs.

Regarding the importance of sociocultural context, the results of this study confirm that the intergenerational transmission of values in Poland occurs under conditions of significant social change, including urbanization, globalization, and the weakening of traditional forms of multigenerational families. The disappearance of daily contact between grandparents and grandchildren, characteristic of nuclear families, weakens the possibility of direct transmission of values within these generations, despite the continuing solidarity, family ties, various forms of mutual assistance, and exchange of gifts (Attias-Donfut and Arber 2002, 21). This mutual support between generations has been referred to as the "generational contract" by Vern L. Bengtson and W. Andrew Achenbaum (Bengtson and Achenbaum 1993, 13) and is based primarily on moral values and truth.

Another factor that seems to be significant for the intergenerational transmission of values is that, in the reality of Polish family ministry, women more often choose partners who value Christian religious and moral values less than they do (cf. Goleń 2013, 219–21, 247, 348–51, 358–59). This fact may hinder not only respect for the religious and moral values they have adopted and cherish, but, above all, their transmission to the next generation.

In our research, the difference between the similarity of value hierarchies in religious and non-religious families proved to be significant. In families where the last generation lost its faith in God, the similarity of value hierarchies practically disappears over the course of three generations. This means that religion serves as an integrating and preserving force, maintaining a common axiological language. In this context, it is worth emphasizing that the transmission of values is not limited to declared beliefs but is rooted in everyday practices—religious rituals, forms of communication of religious content, educational models, and the testimony of one's own life, which is confirmed by the data—the values of truth and morality proved to be relatively stable in the generations analyzed.

In summary of this discussion of the results, it is important to note certain limitations of this study. First, the sample consisted exclusively of women, which was justified by the thesis that they are the primary channels for transmitting values within the family (Wałęcka-Matyja 2022, 65). However, this limitation restricts the generalizability of the results to the female population only. Second, the study was cross-sectional—the analysis of generational changes was based on a comparison of existing generations, rather than on observing processes over time within the same group of people who transition from one generation to another during the aging process. Further research could take a longitudinal approach to capture the dynamics of change through a biographical perspective. Third, the applied quantitative research methodology enabled the measurement of the hierarchy of values; however, it does not fully capture the qualitative aspects of how they are experienced, which narrative studies or family interviews could complement. Despite these limitations, the study results can make a significant contribution to both family psychology and pastoral theology. They indicate that the process of intergenerational transmission of values in Polish families is transforming but is not disappearing—its language, dynamics, and meaning are changing, and religiosity remains an integrating factor. However, it is increasingly negotiated by younger generations.

From the perspective of family ministry, the results suggest the need to pay special attention to generational differences in the hierarchy of values (Kluczka 2022; cf. Norris and Inglehart 2011). The fact that younger women show less attachment to religious values does not mean a complete loss of axiological orientation. On the contrary, esthetic and hedonistic values, as well as the value of truth, can constitute a new language of meaning and identity for them. The task of pastors and family counselors is not so much to return to the old model of communication, but rather to seek ways to integrate traditional religious values with the new existential orientations of the younger generation (cf. Tischner 1993). Pastors can encourage families to build bonds around universal values and to bear witness to a life consistent with the values they preach (cf. Goleń 2015, 423–58), rather than merely preserving the tradition of religious practices, which in today's cultural space often lose their *sacrum* (cf. Grabowska 2024, 57–91) in favor of esthetics.

From the perspective of family psychology, it is essential for family ministry to acknowledge that religiosity serves as a buffer in the process of transmitting values, but should not be viewed as the sole stabilizing factor. The quality of family relationships, mutual emotional support, and open communication are also important (Bugental, Corpuz, and Beaulieu 2015). In practice, this means that pastoral and counseling activities carried out as part of family ministry should be aimed at strengthening religiosity (cf. Goleń 2013, 351, 360), as well as strengthening marital and family bonds (cf. Kuczmarska 2024, 228–29) and developing the ability to engage in intergenerational dialogue based on respect for differences and generations (Pustulka 2023, 15–16; cf. Wnuk and Marcinkowski 2010, 458–62).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Julia Gorbaniuk: Methodology, Software, Investigation, Data collection, Data curation, Statistical analysis, Writing original draft, Project administration, Bibliography search | **Jacek Goleń:** Methodology, Data collection, Resources, Writing original draft, review & editing, Bibliography search.

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