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Transformations of the modern family and the problem of social orphanhood

Introduction

Worldwide transformations taking place in all areas of social and economic life cause people to experience a multitude of diverse phenomena whose power of influence is unprecedented. Globalisation processes generate an entirely new model of society based on full autonomy of an individual, the right of free choice, as well as pluralism of norms and values. Globalisation as a complex, multi-level process, with the principle of the compression of time and space lying at its basis, inevitably leads to cultures strongly interpenetrating one another, both on the level of broadly understood media communication and in the area of mass migrations[1]. Changes occurring in the world always ultimately affect specific persons living in their families in particular places, countries and cultures which create their little homelands. The progress of civilisation provides contemporary people with numerous possibilities to realise their personal potential and intentions. For the vast majority of members of any society, one of the most desirable and important spheres of personal and social life is the family, in which parents and children create a community built on the foundation of mutual love and solidarity. It is always the first and natural society for any person; a society in which they are born and build meaningful relationships with other people. Therefore, the family is ‚for a person, in a way "an ecological (cultural) niche which enables their both biological and psycho-

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[1] A. Łuczyński, "Wychowanie religijne w rodzinie w kontekście współczesnych przemian społeczno-kulturalnych," in: *Rodzina – historia i współczesność,* eds. B. Kiereś, M. Gromek, K. Hryszan, Lublin 2018, p. 64.

logical-personal development[2]." As an institution and a social group, it always constitutes an element of social structure which is extremely sensitive to any changes occurring within the sphere of culture, as it is burdened with performing the basic functions of educating and socialising the young generation.

The transformations taking place in the contemporary family do not always have a positive influence on its functioning. Family often encounters numerous difficulties, which can lead it to dysfunctionality, or even pathology. In the complex social situation in which the family performs its basic tasks, it is not easy to precisely indicate the causes of pathological phenomena occurring in the family environment. The negative consequences of confusion, alienation and loneliness of a person in various components of the environment often lead to the dysfunctionality and disintegration of family life, which has the most negative impact on the youngest members of the family. As a result, the phenomenon of social orphanhood is growing from year to year, and its extent is difficult to determine. It does not only concern the situation when children are abandoned by their parents, but also when children and adolescents, living in the family home, strongly experience the lack of parental feelings, which constitute the basis of emotional bonds connecting the family and are necessary for a proper socio-moral development of an individual. The phenomenon of social orphanhood nowadays constitutes one of the fundamental problems of child care. It is a cause for concern to educationalists and carers due to its extent, various forms in which it manifests itself and the difficulties related to preventing it and diagnosing the situations which cause it. Therefore, there is a need for intensive research on the family, as well as on the educational and socialising tasks and functions it performs in the changing multicultural societies. Thus, perspectives on the future make it necessary to offer constructive resistance against all that destroys the sensitive tissue of family life and what exposes its youngest members to the risk of loneliness and social orphanhood.

1. The family in the age of transformations

Nowadays, the family is subject to a strong pressure from globalisation processes, which often change its current way of functioning. More and more often, it results in introducing a state of tension into family life, which makes many families feel insecure in the face of the emerging new lifestyles and relativisation of many norms and values which have been in force to date[3]. Therefore, when

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[2] M. A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek*, Lublin 1974, p. 290.

[3] T. Wach, "Wykluczenie społeczne a jakość wychowania rodzinnego młodzieży," in: *Głodne dzieci w Polsce*, ed. Cz. Kępski, Lublin 2011, p. 161-163.

attempting to draw a picture of the contemporary family in the dynamically changing reality of the world, it should be pointed out that it cannot be done without considering the postmodern cultural context in which the family is functioning. Postmodernity, as a new current of thinking and perceiving reality, brings about the deconstruction of traditional values as well as of social and family hierarchies, and the dominance of the material over the „spiritual" in the everyday functioning of the family[4]. As a result of the ongoing changes, the family ceases to be perceived as an institution or group with permanent and universal values, and appears to be one of a number of loose forms of social coexistence in which a person can satisfy his or her basic needs. Mutual relations in such a family are usually shaped in an atmosphere of full freedom and constantly developing autonomy of an individual[5].

The young generation does not negate the need for the existence of the family; however, their notion of family life significantly differs from the functioning of traditional family communities based on a lasting marriage relationship and a determined rhythm of family life. The structure, functions and tasks of the modern family are subject to significant modifications, as are the strength and quality of bonds between particular family members[6]. What seems to lie at the basis of the new view of the family are, on the one hand, deep transformations of the contemporary culture and morality, and, on the other, the young generation's belief that professional career is the best manner of self-realisation. What is also significant in this respect, is the influence of the media, which promote a specific style of marital and family life. This new image of the family is characterised, among others, by a small number of children, the right to divorce, spouses' and parents' main concern being their professional career and following their lifelong passions, as well as transferring a considerable part of responsibilities related to bringing up children to specialised care and educational institutions[7]. Nowadays, the family has to compete with other so-called goods and values which are deeply rooted in the consumerist and hedonistic lifestyle dominating in the countries of "the rich West." Today, young people more and more often ask: is starting a family worth it, and if it is, what will I get in return? Undoubtedly, such a view of marital and family life attests to the fact that family members

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[4] P. Sztompka, *Socjologia. Analiza społeczeństwa*, Cracow 2004, p. 574.

[5] R. Doniec, "Relacje rodzinne a wyznaczniki partnerstwa w modelach i kulturze wychowawczej rodziny," in: *Partnerstwo w rodzinie. Istota i uwarunkowania relacji między rodzicami a dziećmi*, ed. J. Truskolaska, Lublin 2009, p. 155-156; A. Łuczyński, "Wychowanie religijne…," p. 66.

[6] L. Kocik, *Wzory małżeństwa i rodziny. Od tradycyjnej jednorodności do współczesnych skrajności*. Cracow 2002, p. 265-295.

[7] W. Wieczorek, "Moralne problemy rodziny w kontekście przemian kulturowych XIX i XX w. na podstawie dokumentów konferencji Lambeth," in: *Rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań społeczno-kulturowych*, eds. J. Gorbaniuk, B. Parysiewicz, Lublin 2009, p. 31-34.

are usually unwilling to subordinate their endeavours and aspirations to the family community. If young people nowadays decide to start a family, they do it under the condition that should marital or family difficulties and problems appear or mutual love end, they may consider divorce. However, in many cases, in the name of the so-called right to full freedom and independence - without any legal commitments - young people do not enter marriage, but live together in non-marital relationships, leaving an option for themselves to freely end the relationship and start a new one[8]. Therefore, the family becomes increasingly more open to changes which, until recently, were unthinkable; and so values, norms and patterns of behaviour can be subject to change and do not constitute an indisputable point of reference or the basis of family life any more. Until recently, the family was strongly rooted in the entire cultural heritage it originated from and co-created. Today, it does not inherit values as it used to, but it can or even has to choose everything, in a way creating everything from scratch. In many cases, it leads to relativisation and distortions of family life, and, consequently, to the disintegration of the family[9]. However, it should be stressed that for many spouses and parents it constitutes a challenge not to yield to the rash "modernisation" of the family life, but to build one's family, with a firm inner conviction and consistently, in a modern way, at the same time not rejecting traditional and universal values and patterns of behaviour. It is an extremely difficult task which requires from parents a deep awareness and knowledge of the goals they want to achieve in family life[10]. A traditional model of family life does not have to be obsolete and incongruous with the present day. What is only necessary is parents' creative effort to breathe a new life into this model, which will result in bringing what is good and modern to the family and trigger a sense of mutual solidarity in all family members.

Therefore, the condition of the modern family depends to a large extent on parents' moral and social responsibility, as well as on the strength of intra-family bonds between its particular members. Affirmation of every person in the family in a way constitutes the condition for the existence of subjective interpersonal relations and a communal family bond. It protects the family from unfavourable social phenomena penetrating into its "interior" and leaving their mark especially on the educational aspect of family life. In a healthy family, parents and children constantly learn from one another how to communicate their thoughts and feelings, how to develop their sensitivity to other people's needs, gaining self-confidence and trust in contacts with other people in return.

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[8] A. Kwak, *Rodzina w dobie przemian. Małżeństwo i kohabitacja*, Warsaw 2005, p. 82-96.

[9] A. Łuczyński, "Dzieciństwo w kryzysie a wspierająca rola rodzicielstwa zastępczego," in: *Głodne dzieci...*, p. 77-78.

[10] P. Magier, "Kulturowy kontekst wychowania dziecka," in: *Rodzicielstwo. Wybrane zagadnienia kontekstów edukacyjnych*, ed. D. Opozda, Lublin 2007, p. 104-106.

Through a selfless gift of themselves for their children, parents should provide the most beneficial conditions possible for their comprehensive development, and, at the same time, gain the possibility and a plane of realising their own potential. Thus, the educational function of the family has its source in this "affiliation" of parents and children with each another. Parents, when bringing a new person to this world, are in a way „automatically" required to create favourable conditions of their education and socialisation[11]. It can be stated, therefore, that the educational condition of the family in the age of modern socio-cultural transformations depends, to a large extent, on parents' pedagogical skills and competencies, as well as on the quality of intra-family bonds between particular family members.

Today, "parenthood" may be seen as a human experience incomparable to any other. It can trigger limitless resources of goodness and love in parents, but for many of them it can also stand for a reality they are unable to cope with and which becomes an educational ordeal for them and their children. Therefore, we should consider where the causes of such educational helplessness of parents lie, often leading to the child's spiritual loneliness, and sometimes even to abandoning or openly rejecting him or her. The reasons behind this state of affairs can be seen in the "model" of parenthood which is becoming widespread today and in which parents more and more often give primacy to their own needs over the needs of the child[12]. Life dilemmas of many young people are manifested in the sense of being deeply torn between the desire to be a parent and the overwhelming desire to adapt to the contemporary lifestyle[13]. Therefore, parents, unable to cope with their own freedom, are in a way torn between what is "their own" and what results from the parenting obligation towards the child. As a result, it deepens their educational helplessness and ambivalence of parental attitudes. In this situation, many families feel lost, and some of them become entirely or partially disintegrated, thus generating the phenomenon of child's emotional and spiritual loneliness and putting them at risk of social orphanhood. For the child, it stands for the loss of what is the most valuable - the capability of loving and being loved; it is a state destabilising all of his or her current life and having an adverse effect on his or her future[14].

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[11] A. Łuczyński, *Młodzież zagrożona wykluczeniem. Prewencyjny potencjał rodziny*, Lublin 2018, p. 84-85.

[12] A. Łuczyński, "Rodzicielstwo zastępcze wobec niewydolności wychowawczej współczesnej rodziny," in: *W poszukiwaniu jakości życia współczesnej rodziny polskiej*, ed. G. Makiełło-Jarża, Cracow 2009, p. 256.

[13] A. Adamiec-Zgraja, "Fenomen rodzicielstwa człowieka przełomu wieków. Szansa czy zagrożenie dla rodziny?," in: *Rodzina w kontekście współczesnych problemów wychowania*, ed. B. Muchacka, Cracow 2008, p. 159.

[14] A. Łuczyński, "Rodzicielstwo zastępcze…," p. 256-257.

2. Social orphanhood

The family, as a natural environment of the development and education of a child, often faces problems which make it unable to properly fulfil its basic functions. In many cases, it is the reason for dysfunctions or pathologies in the family, or a situation when the family limits, distorts, or entirely gives up fulfilling its basic tasks and responsibilities towards its members. In the everyday functioning of the family, it is reflected among others in deprivation of children's needs (physical, emotional, educational), parents' authoritarian approach to bringing up their children, addictions (to alcohol, psychoactive substances, gambling), aggression and violence, as well as coming into various conflicts in the family and marriage, which often lead to the breakup of the family. The consequences of the malfunctioning of the family particularly affect children, who suffer their traumatic consequences as they are the least prepared to cope with difficult situations. As a result, parental rights may be terminated or limited, and children may be placed away from their biological family, where they function as social orphans.

The phenomenon of orphanhood has been present since the family was created as a separate cell of social life. An analysis of social orphanhood on the basis of literature makes it possible to observe that nowadays it is subject to a peculiar metamorphosis. As socio-cultural transformations are advancing, this notion has been extended to include new scopes and variations of meaning. In its different varieties, it is inextricably linked to the functioning of the family in which a child is born and with which he or she remains in various relations throughout all his or her life. Certain consequences for the child's development and education may ensue from this fact, depending on the family's educational condition. Thus, the original understanding of the term "orphanhood" referred to children deprived of the care of their parents as a result of the death of the latter[15]. On the other hand, cases in which parents deserted their children were referred to as "abandonment," indicating that it is a situation in which the child has nobody who would successfully replace his or her parents[16]. Both abandonment and orphanhood, that is the separation of the child and parents, lead to the child's loneliness. Thus, loneliness is the most general notion describing the lack of actual care for the child[17].

An important starting point for reflections on the problem of social orphanhood in the age of modern socio-cultural transformations will be the notion of loneliness, understood as an actual lack of care for the child from his or

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[15] K. Kozdrowicz, "Sieroctwo," in: *Elementarne pojęcia pedagogiki społecznej i pracy socjalnej*, eds. D. Lalak, T. Pilch, Warsaw 1999, p. 268.

[16] M. Schütterly-Fita, *Dlaczego są opuszczone dzieci?* Wrocław 1992, p. 94.

[17] J. Izdebska, *Dziecko w rodzinie u progu XXI wieku. Niepokoje i nadzieje*, Białystok 2000, p. 254.

her biological family, endangering his or her proper development. A sense of loneliness in an adult whose personality has already been formed may cause states of melancholy or sadness, but it does not have such a destructive effect on this person's psychological structure as it occurs in the case of a child. It is confirmed by the opinion of M. Łopatkowa, who states that "aggravated states of loneliness may admittedly also bring damage to an adult's psyche. They may, but not necessarily so. They always do in children. In adults, loneliness may sometimes be a matter of choice, not of necessity. In children, it is never a matter of choice, as it is contrary to the nature of childhood. (...) The sense of loneliness in children may also have various degrees of intensity and varying extents. A child may feel entirely lonely (...) or partially lonely. Partial loneliness occurs when one person among those close to the child is gone, but the others remain[18]." Therefore, long-lasting states of loneliness in the life of a child always present a risk for his or her normal development and upbringing.

The issue of child's loneliness is inextricably linked to the problem of orphanhood.

Today, the former notion of "abandonment" of the child by his or her parents, mostly because of unforeseen circumstances or certain dysfunctions, has been replaced by the term of "social orphanhood." In other words, in order to distinguish between different situations in childrenlives, the traditional term "orphanhood" has been supplemented with an adjective: "natural" (authentic) or "social." In general understanding, as well as in academic terms, orphanhood is therefore divided into two types: natural and social. The understanding of natural orphanhood in pedagogy today is unambiguous and does not raise any objections. "Natural orphanhood (...) is generally understood as the life situation of a child who has lost his or her parents as a result of their death. Therefore, a natural orphan is every child whose parents have died; a half-orphan - a child who only has one parent, as the other has died[19]." On the other hand, social orphanhood is a term which is not as unambiguous as natural orphanhood. Its complex character was indicated years ago by S. Kozak, who stated that "this arguable term is used to describe the phenomenon of the lack of parental care, resulting mainly from disorders in the functioning of the family: a lack of concern for the child, parents' criminal activities and demoralisation, as well as their alcoholism and serious parenting errors[20]." Therefore, a social orphan is a child who is deprived of adequate parental care, even though at least one of his or her parents is alive.

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[18] M. Łopatkowa, *Samotność dziecka*. Warsaw 1989, p. 6.

[19] I. Pyrzyk, "Kontrowersje wokół sieroctwa społecznego na gruncie pedagogiki polskiej," in: *Sieroctwo społeczne – przyczyny, objawy, skutki i sposoby jego zapobiegania w aktualnej rzeczywistości społecznej kraju*, ed. T. Sołtysiak, Włocławek 1998, p. 16.

[20] S. Kozak, *Sieroctwo społeczne*, Warsaw 1986, p. 5.

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Thus, fundamental characteristics of social orphanhood include ,among others, the lack of proper care and educational influences from the living parents towards their child, and the child staying for a long time in a different environment than his or her parents' home, without any contact or with insufficient contact with the parents[21]. Therefore, what is today considered as social orphanhood includes all "drastic" situations of lack of care which require the child to be separated from his or her biological family due to severe disorders of the mutual bond between the child and the parents. The type of these disorders provides the basis for distinguishing more detailed types of social orphanhood. One of the categories of social orphanhood perceived in this way is "subjective" (psychological) orphanhood: "it occurs when children who are not entirely abandoned or even not entirely emotionally rejected by their parents believe, nevertheless, that this is the case and are painfully affected by it[22]." It should be pointed out that this category of orphanhood is more and more often found in contemporary families, and it is always related to a serious disturbance or weakening of family bonds, even though the family formally has not ceased to exist. A subjective sense of rejection experienced by the child is also sometimes referred to as "spiritual" orphanhood. It occurs when the child in his or her own home often feels the lack of an emotional bond with the parents, as well as the lack of a sense of being loved and accepted. Spiritual orphanhood is reflected in the family situation and sometimes results from wrong parenting methods adopted by the parents, or from the disorders of the care and educational function of the family. It is most often present in families in which there are some forms of dysfunctions or social pathology, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution, crime, or a very low level of parents' culture and their educational awareness[23]. A child deprived of parents' attention and emotional warmth suffers, constantly feels threatened, and the accompanying anxiety has a destructive effect on his or her personality which is only being shaped at that stage. Feeling spiritually abandoned, the child "becomes insecure, distrustful, is afraid to become close with people, to make contact with them, or feels aversion or even hostility towards their parents, and often towards people in general[24]."

The state of child's spiritual abandonment and loneliness is currently also the consequence of the phenomenon of "migration orphanhood." Uncertainty of the future, the fear of poverty, the desire to provide a prosperous life for children are becoming the focus for many parents and make them look for better

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[21] J. Matejek, *Działalność ośrodków adopcyjno-opiekuńczych w procesie przygotowania i wspierania rodzin zastępczych*, Cracow 2008, p. 168.

[22] A. Kelm, *Węzłowe problemy pedagogiki opiekuńczej*, Warsaw 2000, p. 65.

[23] T. Wach, "Wykluczenie społeczne…," p. 160-164.

[24] B. Matyjas, "Sieroctwo," in: *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, vol. 5, ed. T. Pilch, Warsaw 2006, p. 727-728.

earnings abroad. Therefore, it sometimes happens that one or both parents leave their children in the care of relatives and decide to go abroad to work for a short period of time; however, they often return only a few years later or decide to start a new life and stay there for good. Migration orphanhood is therefore a specific type of "deserting" the child, different from the situation of children neglected or abandoned by the parents from the margins of society. The children of economic migrants were usually given loving care before their parents left the country. Now that they have been abandoned, they miss their parents and hope they will return. Such children are left in the care of relatives or in educational care facilities. The difficulties in determining the legal situation of economic migrants' children considerably hinder finding a beneficial alternative environment for them in which they would be given loving educational care[25].

It should be stressed that the essence of social orphanhood does not lie exclusively in the fact that the child is living in an alternative educational environment, but also in the loss of the emotional contact and psychological bond with the parents. It is this sense of loneliness in the child that is the source of the most painful and dangerous phenomenon generally referred to as anaclitic depression. Thus, we can conclude that the objective factor - leaving the child - is not all that is decisive for social orphanhood, but there is also the subjective factor, or the child's deep conviction that he or she is rejected by the parents and cannot count on their parental love. In the age of modern socio-cultural transformations, social orphanhood is seen as one of the most serious problems related to child care[26]. Therefore, activities need to be undertaken which will limit these unfavourable tendencies through the state's conscious family-friendly policy, propagation of pedagogical knowledge and culture in families, as well as organising broadly understood support (material, psychological, as well as moral), thus contributing to eliminating fundamental sources of social orphanhood and at the same time saving many children from the cruel fate of being "nobody's child."

3. Family conditions of social orphanhood and its compensation

Social orphanhood is an especially undesirable phenomenon in any society, as it directly affects children's proper development and education. Presently, what is very worrying is the increasing extent of this phenomenon, which undoubtedly has its source in the transformations taking places both in the society in general

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[25] S. Kozak, *Patologia eurosieroctwa w Polsce. Skutki migracji zarobkowej dla dzieci i ich rodzin*, Warsaw 2010, p. 230.

[26] A. Łuczyński, "Dzieciństwo w kryzysie…," p. 81-83.

and in the contemporary family. The wide-spreading consumerist and hedonistic lifestyle, erosion of traditional values and customs, the growing anonymity of social life and the increasing pauperisation of many local societies do not favour providing the youngest family members with the optimal conditions of care and education. Against the background of these general causes of macro-social extent, there are micro-social causes which affect the performance of the functions of the family. They are mostly found in the anomalies in the functioning of the family. They can assume various forms, from inefficiency of the family in the economic sphere (unemployment, poverty), weakening and dissolution of family bonds and relationships (conflicts, divorce), to dysfunctional phenomena in the family, which especially include alcoholism, violence and crime.

In the present complex socio-economic situation prevailing in many countries, special attention should be paid to certain phenomena which are becoming widespread in family life and can be the reason for a child's social orphanhood. Therefore, taking into account the changes presently occurring in the structure of the family, its objective living conditions, the general level and qualities of the parents and their attitude to the child, three groups of situations can be distinguished which are the causes of social orphanhood and in which the child has to be placed in an educational care facility or in family-based forms of foster care.

1. Situations in which parents cannot provide care for their children for objective reasons. These parents love their children, want their well-being and happiness and if it was not for unforeseen reasons, they would provide appropriate care for their children. In this case, the most frequent reason for placing children outside their biological family is the poor health of the parents, their mental disease or disability, or sometimes a low intellectual level of both parents which does not allow them to provide the child with proper care and security. In such situations, children may stay away from their family temporarily, e.g. when the parents' health improves, the child will be able to go back under their care.

2. Situations in which the child's family environment represents a low socio--moral level. Living in a family in which parents do not want to take up employment, live in poverty, are often in conflict with the law and do not attach greater importance to parenting issues, a child very often loses the sense of security and experiences numerous tensions and stress. Their parents' behaviour provides them with negative patterns of conduct, shaping erroneous socio-moral attitudes and a distorted hierarchy of values in them.

3. Situations in which the attitude of parents to the child is inappropriate. Parents neglect the child or abuse him or her physically and psychologically. Extreme instances of an inappropriate attitude of parents to children can be found e.g. in families with alcoholic problems. In this case, addiction

destroys all family bonds and relationships. The family does not ensure a sense of security, trust and love. Anxiety and a sense of threat appear, as well as aggression, shame and guilt. Instead of providing support, the family environment becomes the greatest burden and a source of problems for the child. The family bond becomes disturbed, there is a clear lack of close and open interpersonal contacts with family members[27].

The consequences of bringing up a child away from their biological family they have lost, because of chance events or as a result of negligence in parental care and education, are always unfavourable for the shaping of their personality and satisfying their basic needs. Orphanhood is the most difficult form of a child's loneliness, determining their future fate. A number of factors, which are decisive for the consequences of social orphanhood in the life of a child, is usually listed. These include:
- the age at which the child became a social orphan,
- psychological and emotional trauma the child experienced,
- the course of the process of separating the child from the family,
- the quality of contacts with the family,
- the educational value of the new environment in which the child is placed after being separated from the family[28].

Moreover, the literature on the subject distinguishes between two groups of abandoned children, the first one including those orphaned right after the birth or in the first years of their life, while the second - those who experienced it in later years of primary school or as adolescents. The effects of orphanhood are qualitatively different in both these age groups. Taking into consideration the first group of children, research unambiguously demonstrates that children deprived of family warmth and atmosphere almost always show deficits in physical, mental and social development. The effects of these early experiences of deprivation are usually deeper and more difficult to overcome by the child[29]. Therefore, it can be concluded that early and permanent separation of the child from the family constitutes a significant threat for his or her development. The disorders which are most often observed in children who were brought up away from their biological family (in educational care facilities),since their infancy include various physiological disorders, morphological effects, reduction in the ability to think reflectively and abstractly, apathy, emotional immaturity, weak adaptation to acting consciously[30]. Sometimes, there are additionally disorders

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[27] H. Filipczyk, *Dziecko w placówce opiekuńczo-wychowawczej*, Warsaw 1988, p. 21-22.

[28] J. Obuchowska, "Dziecko zagubione w sieroctwie," *Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze*, 1998 no. 5, p. 3.

[29] S. Kozak, *Sieroctwo społeczne*, Warsaw 1986, p. 268.

[30] J. Maciaszkowa, *Z teorii i praktyki pedagogiki opiekuńczej. Opieka rodzinna nad dzieckiem i kompensacja jej niedostatków,* Warsaw 1991, p. 93.

in emotional life consisting in inhibitions which make it difficult for the child to establish and maintain emotional bonds, deficits in motor skills development, and neurotic and characterological disorders. Although some experts in the field claim today that the threats ensuing from orphanhood of children at this age do not necessarily lead to irreversible distortions in the structure of their personality in the future, it is generally believed, however, that a child's sudden separation from his or her family, and especially from the mother, always has a negative effect on his or her further life.

Depriving children of their family environment also has negative consequences in relation to the second group of children and adolescents, orphaned at an older age. The most frequently indicated results are: emotional disorders, symptoms of nervousness, no interest in school education, truancy, lying, as well as serious behavioural disorders, including verbal and physical aggression, running away from home, theft, smoking, contact with alcohol and drugs[31]. Numerous studies confirm that the feelings of orphaned children, especially older ones, are characterised by their superficiality and instability; in some boys, "emotional coldness" is observed, so distinct for the so-called "nobody's children." Many children tend to be very aggressive and undisciplined, and manifest antisocial behaviour such as fights, quarrels, disobedience, vulgar language, destroying clothes and books, while in the group of older girls there is a serious problem of engaging in risky sexual behaviour[32].

Thus, it can be concluded that the consequences of orphanhood are always negative, regardless of the fact whether children were abandoned at an early age or later. Children deprived of their own family environment are at the same time deprived of the sense of security, self-confidence, and, in a way, self-worth[33]. The experience of being abandoned, the lack of one's own home and of the lifestyle of living as a family, as well as the awareness of being perceived as an orphan by the environment, constitute a sense of an orphan's loneliness and deepen the sense of being different and unloved. This state leads to the so-called anaclitic depression, whose symptoms include: losing the ability to experience real social contacts, inability to give and receive emotions, inability to focus attention, weak imagination, egocentrism, limited independence and activeness, poor motor coordination, tendency to fall ill often[34]. The problem of anaclitic depression often manifests itself in situations of serious disorders in parenting activities, leading to the child becoming an orphan and manifested, among others, in the failure to satisfy his or her basic needs. Such behaviour of parents triggers children's reactions whose

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[31] S. Kozak, *Sieroctwo…*, p. 94.

[32] Ibid., p. 97.

[33] A. Bilikiewicz, *Psychiatria*, Warsaw 2003, p. 748.

[34] M. Joachimowska, *Rodzicielstwo zastępcze. Idea Problemy Analizy Kompetencje,* Bydgoszcz 2008, p. 48-51.

symptoms can already be included in the extent of anaclitic depression. However, it should be borne in mind that socially orphaned children who have experienced anaclitic depression are not any worse or less worthy than children brought up in their biological families. Orphanhood does not change the essence of humanity in a child; it remains the same as in any other child (person), but life is much more difficult for an "orphan" as they have been abandoned by the people closest to them.

Recognising the negative consequences of social orphanhood, and, at the same time, indicating the irreplaceable role of the family in the child's life, makes it possible to determine effective forms of compensation of social orphanhood. Presently, as a part of activities aimed at preventing and compensating orphanhood, alternative forms of care are created which are supposed to support or - when it is impossible - replace the family in performing care and educational tasks. They function within the system of foster care as institutional or family--based forms of care[35]. Undoubtedly, it is indispensable for the integral development of a child that he or she grow up in a well-functioning family. Therefore, family-based forms of foster care are preferred today in providing care for orphaned children, as this approach is considered to be the most effective manner of compensating the lack of the biological family. Moreover, activities are undertaken in order to launch and activate many new directions of helping orphaned and abandoned children, in accordance with the following assumptions:

- help should be provided within the environment close to the child, that is, school, family or the closest surroundings, so that the child can grow up and develop in their natural family, cultural and social conditions;
- help should be provided early and be of preventive nature, impeding the occurrence of possible negligence and consequences detrimental for successful development;
- the child should be placed in an educational care facility or in one of the forms of family-based foster care only after all possibilities of providing the biological family with support and assistance have been exhausted, and the child's stay away from the family cannot break his or her bonds with the loved ones;
- it is indispensable that foster children leaving the facilities of complex care be given appropriate assistance;
- the condition for the appropriateness and effectiveness of help and care provided to children is recognising their needs and adapting the care offer to them, making it flexible in terms of organisation and open with regard to legal regulations[36].

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[35] L. Winogrodzka, *Rodziny zastępcze i ich dzieci*. Lublin 2007, p. 61-64.

[36] J. Kuźma, "Koncepcje zmian w systemie opieki nad dziećmi osieroconymi i opuszczonymi," in: *Stan i koncepcje rozwoju opieki i wychowania w Polsce,* eds. Z. Brańka, J. Kuźma, Cracow 1996, p. 18-26.

Thus, an abandoned child living in a foster family or care facility should be helped in removing the stigma of orphanhood. The wounds inflicted by parents' brutality before the child left his or her dysfunctional family are especially difficult to heal. The memory of being mistreated remains in the child's consciousness basically throughout their entire life, affecting their social contacts and making it difficult for them to assume parental roles. This is the reason why it is so important, and at the same time extremely difficult, to make an effort as early as possible and restore the sense of self-worth as well as trust in other people to the child who has been harmed, so that they do not have to carry the burden of an injured childhood.

Conclusion

The contemporary family, which is subject to intense transformations, often undergoes various crises, which most strongly affect children brought up there. In the context of family dysfunctions and pathologies, there the problem of social orphanhood almost always appears. It requires special attention from all the environments and institutions which protect the well-being of children, the respect for their dignity and rights. Abandoned and lonely children should be helped in erasing the stigma of an orphan attached to them. The wounds resulting from parents' extreme irresponsibility towards their children are especially difficult to heal. This is the reason why it is so important, and at the same time extremely difficult, for foster carers to make an effort and restore their charges' psychological balance, as well as confidence in their strengths and trust in other people. Therefore, an orphaned child needs to have their sense of dignity restored. They should be given care and educational love in a skilful and competent way, in order to strengthen their conviction that they are important, beneficial and have a great value, thus making it easier for them to overcome their traumas, which is an indispensable condition for a valuable and happy life.

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Przemiany współczesnej rodziny a problem sieroctwa społecznego

Streszczenie

Przeobrażenia, jakie zachodzą w współczesnej rodzinie nie zawsze wywierają pozytywny wpływ na jej funkcjonowanie. Niejednokrotnie rodzina napotyka liczne trudności, które mogą doprowadzić do jej dysfunkcjonalności, a nawet patologii. Negatywne skutki złego funkcjonowania rodziny najbardziej odczuwają najmłodsi członkowie rodziny. Z roku na rok powiększa się w związku z tym zjawisko szeroko rozumianego sieroctwa społecznego. Chodzi tu nie tylko o fakt opuszczenia dzieci przez rodziców ale także o dzieci i młodzież, które pozostając w domu rodzinnym i przeżywają silnie brak uczuć rodzicielskich. W artykule podjęto zatem próbę zwrócenia uwagi na problem sieroctwa społecznego, które często pojawia się w kontekście zachodzący obecnie zmian w środowisku rodzinnym. Wskazano również na pilną potrzebę podjęcia zdecydowanych działań mających na celu pełną ochronę dobra dzieci osieroconych społecznie, którym traumatyczne doświadczenia odbierają radość życia oraz uniemożliwiają im prawidłowe kształtowanie własnej przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, dziecko, sieroctwo, pomoc.

Transformations of the modern family and the problem of social orphanhood

Summary

The transformations taking place in the contemporary family do not always have a positive influence on its functioning. Family often encounters numerous difficulties, which can lead it to dysfunctionality, or even pathology. Negative effects of the malfunctioning of the family are most strongly felt by its youngest members. Therefore, the phenomenon of broadly understood social orphanhood is becoming more and more widespread from year to year. It does not only concern the situation when children are abandoned by their parents, but also when children and adolescents, living in the family home, strongly experience the lack of parental feelings. Thus, the article attempts to draw attention to the problem of social orphanhood, which often occurs in the context of the current changes in the family environment. The article also points to the urgent need for undertaking decisive actions aimed at protecting the well-being of socially orphaned children, whose traumatic experiences take away their joy of life and prevent them from properly shaping their future.

Key words: family, child, orphanhood, assistance.