

Monika Tylka, Paweł Konieczny

The Experience of the Parents' Absence and the Declared Life Aspirations of School-age Young People : Summary of Research Findings

Pedagogika Rodziny 5/2, 173-188

2015

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.



DE GRUYTER
OPEN

Pedagogika Rodziny. Family Pedagogy
nr 5(2)/2015, ss. 173–188
DOI: 10.1515/fampe-2015-0027

Monika Tylka

Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski

Paweł Konieczny

Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski

The Experience of the Parents' Absence and the Declared Life Aspirations of School-age Young People. Summary of Research Findings

Abstract: The family, in its numerous structural and socio-emotional characteristics, creates a unique environment conditioning the formation of evaluative orientations, life plans and aspirations of the young generation. Experiencing the parents' absence in one's upbringing significantly diversifies the aspirations manifested by the young people. The undertaken empirical research shows that children from single-parent families more often appreciate the value of health, honesty, faith and tranquillity; they also more often express their aspiration to be financially independent, as well as their intention to undertake university studies and work at the same time. Young people who experience their parents' physical absence more often have no intention to get actively involved in the work of the church they belong to, and they ascribe a significant influence on their own views and opinions to themselves.

Key words: family, aspirations, young people's life aspirations, the parents' absence, educational and professional aspirations, material aspirations, living aspirations, personal aspirations, social aspirations.

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the family home, in which both parents are presents, constitutes the most beneficial natural environment for the development of a child. It makes it possible to fulfil their needs, to provide them with patterns of behaviour and to shape their personality. The role of the family environment is also to a large

extent visible in shaping young people's goals, desires, interests and ambitions. As far as parental roles are concerned, modern pedagogy stresses the rule of complementarity, that is the way in which the parents complement each other in terms of performing their inherent but different functions. It also points out that it is impossible to replace one parent with the other, in spite of their best intentions and great efforts, as the "non-transferability" of parental roles ensues from the nature of femininity and masculinity [Błasiak, Dybowska 2010, pp. 105–106].

In the age of globalisation and as a result of current ideological and socio-cultural trends, there has been an increase in the number of single-parent families, in which only one of the parents brings up the children on his or her own. Apart from the long-known category of families which are permanently incomplete due to the death of one of the parents, biological incompleteness (the situation when one of the parents leaves the other to bring up the child on his or her own practically from when the child is born), divorce or separation, there are more and more cases of families in which the parents are temporarily absent as they are living away from their place of residence for financial reasons. In the context of the issue of such families' functioning, more researchers are focusing their attention on the threats connected with the lack of parents in the process of bringing up children and teenagers as well as of their growing up.

In many of its structural and socio-emotional characteristics, the family stands out among those groups and institutions which not only condition an adequate course of the educational process, but also determine the direction of the young generation's start in life. It constitutes a unique environment which exerts significant influence on establishing evaluative orientations, aspirations and life plans of the young generation. Its characteristics which are worth pointing out include the presence of the parents and other traits of the structure, such as the psychological climate, to a large extent interdependent on the presence of parents, and the type of relationships shaped by this fact. We claim that it is these factors, even more than the parents' education and profession or their verbal educational influence, that constitute the fundamental variables determining young people's different types of aspirations, especially in the sphere of prosocial involvement.

Analyses focusing on this dimension of dependencies - between the experience of parents' absence and young people's aspirations (including prosocial aspirations) - are all the more justified as in the contemporary socio-cultural background one of the most alarming phenomena is the increase in the number of single-parent families, while the significant cause behind it are the migration processes related to the need for seeking employment.

The analyses undertaken here shall focus on the selected aspects of these interdependencies, firstly presenting the role and significance of the presence of

parents in shaping young people's life aspirations on the basis of the findings to date in the area of social sciences, pedagogy in particular. Secondly, selected aspects of the conceptual stage of the study shall be presented, including mainly the research questions which directed the undertaken empirical study.

The role of the parents in shaping young people's life aspirations

Family environment is considered to be one of the most important determinants of a person's future way of life [Ścisłowicz 1994, p. 26]. The content and level of aspirations are considerably influenced by the parents' education, the family's social status and material conditions, family origins and traditions, educational climate, the parent's profession and the traditions related to different occupations. Other relevant factors are patterns of behaviour and criteria for evaluating other people, formulated in the presence of the young person and adopted by him or her. On the other hand, the intentional influence of the parents who want to evoke desirable aspirations in young people sometimes turns out to be the projection of their own aspirations which were not achieved for some reason, in relation to their children [Lewowicki 1987, pp. 34–35].

T. Lewowicki presents the results of the research concerning the influence of the manner in which a family functions, the educational atmosphere and the mutual relationships between the parents and the children on aspirations. These results lead to the conclusion that "some parental attitudes constitute a factor which strongly determines children's aspirations" [Lewowicki 1987, p. 140]. The attitudes of tolerance or indifference presented by the parents, characterised by a high level of freedom granted to the children, condition a lower level of children's aspirations (in comparison to the studied group). At the same time, it was observed that a warm emotional relationship parents have with their children which accompanies such attitudes also favours low aspirations. On the other hand, the attitudes of expectations and protectiveness, characterised by a low level of children's latitude, result in a higher level of their aspirations. A high level of children's aspirations is maintained when parents are demanding and have a cold relationship with their children, as well as when they are protective of the children and show a warm attitude towards them. It can be concluded, therefore, that parents' emotional attitude towards their children is not decisive in terms of the level of their aspirations, which is rather determined by the level of latitude granted to the children by the parents [Lewowicki 1987, p. 141]. For adolescents' level of aspirations, the mother's attitude is more significant than the father's [Sikorski 1997, p. 28].

The parents' influence on shaping aspirations is also stressed by A. Janowski, who claims that an individual's aspirations are often perceived as a simple result of the parents' efforts. In terms of the manner in which the family can affect

a person, he distinguishes three types of influence. The first is the social and status influence and covers the motifs passed down from generation to generation which create the frame of young people's specific situation [Janowski 1977, pp. 191–193]. The parents' social position is the determinant of the lowest possible social status to be achieved by the children. The second type of influence is material and concerns the objects comprising the standard of family home furnishings, as well as abilities of and experience in using them which can be employed when realizing one's life aspirations. The third type is the influence of the parents' intentional efforts on children's aspirations, comprising the parents' views and opinions, their convictions, patterns of participating in culture or ways of spending free time.

In relation to the factors which are formulated under the influence of the parents' conscious impact, the level of acceptance of the parents as the source of a given norm or aspiration is essential [Janowski 1977, pp. 191–193]. When a child has a positive emotional attitude towards the parents and can see the positive effects of their behaviour, he or she is highly likely to choose a similar strategy, e.g. will follow the same career path as the parents who find their work satisfying [Gurnik 1987, p. 411]. It needs to be added, however, that "some aspirations can also develop in certain cases of aversion to the family home as an expression of the tendency to reject the parents' influence" [Janowski 1977, p. 193].

When the parents' influence on shaping various types of aspirations is analysed, it can be observed that this influence is not uniform. The level of educational aspirations of young people is to a large extent conditioned by the family [Opolska 1986, p. 100]. On the other hand, it does not seem to be the decisive factor in terms of directing these aspirations. It could be explained by the fact that educational aspirations are connected by the family with living aspirations and therefore become valued and supported as a necessary means of realizing life goals concerning one's social role and status [Janowski 1977, pp. 192–193].

Educational aspirations are included in the group of more important human aspirations, which results from the fact that educating and upbringing constitute one of the basic domains of human activity [Szymański 1989, p. 60]. W. Danilewicz treats the level of the parents' education as one of the most sensitive indicators of the educational functioning of a family. The example set by the parents and the emphasis placed on education inspire the children to choose a school and a profession which will offer them a possibility of achieving the same or a higher social position. The results of the presented research indicate that educational aspirations of secondary school students, both from two-parent families and families which are separated because of the parents' external migration, are the same in terms of receiving higher education, in spite of different structures of the family and the parents' level of education. Such a state of affairs can be related

to the migrating parents' endeavours to provide their children with better living conditions [Danilewicz 2005, pp. 285–286].

The family as a whole, and “especially the parents are one of the most important factors determining the young people's choice of profession” [Hurlock 1965, p. 269]. Apart from the parents' wishes, other significant factors in a young person's choice of his or her future occupation include the cultural atmosphere at home, the parents' environment and the example set by them as well as their education [Hurlock 1965, p. 270]. The structure of the family, its size, composition and the quality of its functioning fundamentally condition the course of children's school career, therefore establishing the chances of realizing their professional aspirations [Kupczyk 1978, pp. 59–60].

J. Kupczyk examined the influence of young people's family situation on their professional aspirations. He concluded that young people who come from single-parent families more often end up in childcare centres or youth detention centres, fail at school or in the socialization process than their peers from two-parent families [Kupczyk 1978, p. 59]. These factors lower unfavourably the level of young people's educational career and affect the process of shaping their professional goals and the possibility of realizing them. A high level of aspirations concerning the future occupation was presented only by young people from two-parent families. In turn, the researched group of young people from families in which one of the parents was absent for various reasons was characterised by a very low level of these aspirations [Baran 1995, pp. 50–51].

A similar situation can be observed in the case of professional aspirations and earning patterns among young people from two-parent families and from families separated because of the parents' external migration. The results of the research clearly indicate that it is teenagers from two-parent families who have higher aspirations, which may be conditioned by their parents' higher level of education and their profession [Danilewicz 2005, p. 289]. On the other hand, young people from families whose members have migrated abroad are much less likely to have high professional goals. A considerable group of the respondents were still unable to specify their professional plans. Opinions concerning emigration after starting a family differed between the two groups. Young people from two-parent families tend to see many more benefits offered by migration (a higher standard of living, an opportunity for professional success and learning about the culture of a given country). Young people from incomplete families would be less likely to emigrate. The observation of the situation in the family ensuing from one parent's temporary absence, experiencing the effects of separation and the familiarity with the conditions of working abroad make young people unwilling to expose their own families to the negative consequences of emigration [Danilewicz 2005, pp. 288–292].

In the process of making the decision concerning the future field of study and profession by young people, various types of adults' influence which can be characterised as intentional upbringing processes are of key significance [Czerwińska-Jasiewicz 1997, p. 27]. They are a result of young people's inability to make such important decisions which establish their further way of life on their own. For that reason, most parents usually help them to make that choice [Czerwińska-Jasiewicz 1997, p. 47], at the same time conditioning the realisation of their children's educational and professional aspirations.

Sometimes, a child's choice and the parents' preferences may come into conflict. In this situation, various values appreciated by young people are violated [Czerwińska-Jasiewicz 1997, p. 49]. However, even major conflicts over differing ideas about young people's future do not deprive them of the possibility of having a positive start in life [Sokolowska 1967, p. 32]. Quite often "the emotional connection with the parents may, irrespective of their suggestions or pressure they exert, affect their children's willingness to imitate their way of life, which is most clearly observed in the continuation of the parents' occupation on the same or a higher level" [Milczarek 2011].

The analyses and research results presented here reveal that the family is the first social group shaping life aspirations of its members. The parents, wishing to properly prepare their child for his or her future life, present to them life goals, patterns of success and social roles as well as manners of behaviour in different situations. In this way, they shape in the child personality traits and attitudes which comply with social expectations [Szefer-Timoszenko 1981, p. 50].

Research issues

The subject matter of the presented research are life aspirations of third grade pupils from six secondary schools in Cracow. These pupils, nearing the end of their secondary education, were about to take their final exam and make a number of other significant decisions and choices which to a large extent would condition their future lives. For that reason, life aspirations in such respondents tend to be quite well specified.

The basic research issue can be expressed in the following question: to what extent does the experience of the parents' absence differentiate young people's life aspirations? The analysed goals of the studied pupils are specified as educational, professional, material, living, personal and social aspirations.

The research was conducted at the turn of March and April 2011 in Cracow with the technique of a random student survey, using a specially devised questionnaire, on the sample of 136 pupils.

The majority of the studied group were girls (68.4% in relation to 31.6% boys). As far as the variable of family structure is concerned, 78.7% respondents are

brought up in two-parent families with both parents present; 15.4% of the studied pupils come from single-parent families; in the case of 3.7% of the respondents the parents are temporarily absent because of their economic migration; 1.5% students come from orphaned families, and 0.7% are temporarily brought up without their parents for health and family reasons.

Young people's educational-professional aspirations and the experience of the parents' absence

Taking into account the directions of aspirations, their different types can be identified. Aspirations which play an important role in young people's mental development include educational aspirations. They can be defined as intentions concerning the results of one's school work, the grades received, graduating from a particular school and the related level of education. They are closely related to professional aspirations which concern one's future occupation, the activities it involves, working conditions and the position held. On account of the dependence of those two types of aspirations, they tend to be termed in literature as educational-professional aspirations [Skorny 1993, p. 31].

In the study of educational aspirations of young people, it was assumed that an expression of these aspirations are plans to continue education after graduating from secondary school. No intention to carry on education in a postsecondary school was considered as a lack of educational aspirations. The analysis of the collected research material leads to the conclusion that young people often have educational aspirations.

Educational aspirations of the studied pupils are mainly specified in the form of university studies (59.6%). The intention to continue education at the university level is slightly more often expressed by girls (62.4%) than boys (53.5%). Among the respondents who plan to undertake university studies, young people from families which are temporarily incomplete (66.7%) outnumber those from two-parent (62.2%) and single-parent (43.5%) families. The reason behind such a state of affairs may be the young people's conviction that their only chance to find employment is to possess a high level of education and professional qualifications, as they deduce from observing their own parents, who e.g. are living abroad for financial reasons.

When educational-professional aspirations of young people are examined, the motives behind continuing secondary school education and choosing the future occupation cannot be ignored. Among the studied pupils, the decisive motive behind continuing secondary school education are their interests and passions (34.6%). Quite a numerous group of respondents (33.8%) cannot indicate a specific reason for continuing secondary school education. It can also be observed that young people are willing to attend school at the instigation of their friends

(24.3%). In less frequent cases, it was the mother who contributed to the child's decision to enrol in a secondary school (13.2%). Only few respondents based their choice on the opinions of their siblings (6.6%), a teacher (6.6%), the father (5.1%) as well as the media and the internet (3.7%).

In the group of young people who declare that they undertook secondary school education on the basis of their interests and passions, respondents from two-parent (35.5%) and single-parent (34.8%) families outnumber those from temporarily incomplete families (16.7%). In turn, the overwhelming majority of respondents who were unable to indicate a specific reason behind continuing education come from temporarily incomplete families (83.3%) in comparison to pupils from two-parent families (32.7%) or single-parent families (26.1%). Boys (30.2%) are more prone to be persuaded by friends than girls are (21.5%). In this group, pupils from two-parent families (25.2%) slightly outnumber those from single-parent (21.7%) and temporarily incomplete (16.7%) families. It is more often girls (14.0%) than boys (11.6%) who are persuaded by their mothers. A reverse trend is observed in the case of the father, who persuaded 9.3% boys and only 3.2% girls to continue education in a secondary school. In the group of respondents who took their mothers' advice, a large proportion of young people from temporarily incomplete families is noticeable (16.7%).

Another type of motives concerns the young people's choice of profession. The analysis of the empirical data leads to the conclusion that secondary school students mostly rely on their interests and passions when choosing the future occupation (36.8%). The university studies/courses one plans to attend are the second most chosen motive (22.1%). The criterion of earnings will be decisive for 16.9% of the respondents. In turn, 11.0% of students are still unable to indicate the most significant motive in choosing their profession. 6.6% of the respondents will make their choice on the basis of their willingness to help other people and the prestige of the future occupation. However, none of the students plan to follow in their parents' footsteps or base their decision on the possibility of promotion. Among the young people who state that their choice of future profession will depend on their interests and passions, there is a higher proportion of girls (39.8%) than boys (30.2%). In this group, the respondents from two-parent families constitute a majority (37.4%). The respondents who plan to apply the criterion of earnings more often come from two-parent (18.7%) or temporarily incomplete families (16.7%) than from single-parent families (8.7%). Among the respondents who were still unable to indicate the decisive motive behind choosing their profession, there is a predominant proportion of boys (14.0%) over girls (9.7%). Indecisive respondents more often come from temporarily incomplete families (33.3%) than from single-parent (13.0%) or two-parent (9.3%) families. The

willingness to help other people will condition the choice of profession mainly in the case of young people from single-parent families (13.0%). This motive will be less frequent among the students from two-parent families (5.6%). However, this group contains no representatives of pupils from temporarily incomplete families. Such a situation can be the result of life experiences which young people from single-parent families might have, as depending on the reasons behind the parents' absence they may have received help in their lives from people who offer professional assistance (e.g. in the case of a parent's death). The prestige of a given occupation will be more important for boys (11.6%) than girls (4.3%), and for the respondents from temporarily incomplete families (16.7%) than from single-parent (13.0%) or two-parent (4.7%) families.

Young people's material-living aspirations and temporary or long-term absence of the parents

Material-living aspirations are one of the types of life aspirations to the realisation of which young people prepare as early as in the secondary school. Material aspirations, also referred to as economic aspirations or aspirations concerning one's possessions can be expressed in the form of the desire to own specific objects, to acquire a high financial status as well as to obtain high earnings, one's own or family members' [Skorny 1993, p. 31].

The research results expressed in percentages show that the studied pupils are characterised by high material aspirations. As many as 77.9% of the respondents wish to have a high salary in the future. 12.5% would like to obtain average earnings, while for 9.6% of the studied group it is not an important issue. The intention to obtain high earnings is more often expressed by boys (88.4%) than girls (73.1%) and more often by pupils from temporarily incomplete (83.3%) and two-parent families (82.2%) than by pupils from single-parent families (56.5%).

Another type of material aspirations the study focused on were aspirations concerning future accommodation. The analysis of the data leads to the conclusion that the respondents would like to live in their own house (61.0%), while the percentage of pupils from temporarily incomplete (66.7%) and two-parent families (65.4%) is higher than of young people from single-parent families (39.1%).

Living aspirations are closely related to material aspirations, as they concern both material and financial issues, the desired place of residence and standard of living. They are usually defined as aspirations related to "the way of life, the ownership of various objects, the preferred ways of spending free time" [Janowski 1977, p. 101].

In order to examine young people's living aspirations, the following question was posed: "What are your goals concerning your future livelihood?" The results

show that the vast majority of the respondents (90.4%) want to be financially independent in the future. 100.0% of pupils from temporarily incomplete families can be found in this group. This situation can be explained by their observation of the difficult material situation at home, the desire to have their own money as well as young people's efforts to relieve their parents of a part of their responsibilities; maybe also their inclination to imitate the patterns of earning abroad presented by their parents. A much smaller proportion of the respondents would like to be supported by their husband/wife (5.1%). Only very few would like to be supported by their parents in the future (4.4%).

Another issue analysed in the research are living aspirations concerning the future place of residence of the studied pupils. A vast majority of them intend to live in a big city (67.6%). A considerably smaller proportion would like to live in the countryside (18.4%) and only 14.0% would like to live in a small town. Such a state of affairs can be explained by young people's conviction that living in a big city provides one with a better access to employment and education, which will be of importance for one's future family.

When the variable of gender is taken into account, it can be observed that boys (76.7%) outnumber girls (63.4%) in the group of the respondents who plan to live in a big city. The reverse situation occurs in case of living in a small town, where girls would like to live slightly more often (17.2%) than boys (7.0%). Similarly, in the case of living in the countryside, such an aspiration is slightly more often expressed by girls (19.4%) than boys (16.3%).

When young people's living aspirations concerning future place of residence are analysed in view of the family structure, it can be observed that the respondents who intend to live in a big city more often come from single-parent families (82.6%) than from temporarily incomplete (66.7%) and two-parent families (64.5%). The countryside is more often chosen as the future place of living by young people from temporarily incomplete (33.3%) and two-parent families (20.6%) than by those from single-parent families (4.3%). Taking into consideration the abovementioned data, it can be concluded that the aspirations of the studied young people concerning the place of living do not differ considerably on account of family structure, as pupils from all types of families would preferably live in a big city.

Young people's personal aspirations and the selected characteristics of the family environment related to the parents' absence

One of the most basic spheres in which human intentions and desires are manifested is personal life. Personal aspirations can be determined by questions concerning the significance of one's emotional or family life, the forms of spending free time, interests, authority figures, the most appreciated values or the most desirable qualities of the future partner.

From the group of aspirations concerning personal life, those related to the young people's most appreciated values shall be presented in the first place. It is essential to take into account young people's preferred values when examining their life aspirations, as the values approved by a given person create a specific hierarchy of values, which in turn affects the formation of the corresponding hierarchy of aspirations in which aspirations are placed on a higher or lower position [Musialska 2010, p. 86].

As the analysis of the data shows, the values appreciated most by a vast majority of pupils are love (74.3%), family (54.4%) and health (47.8%). Freedom was indicated by 45.6% of the respondents, honesty – 27.2%, faith – 19.9%, and education was chosen by 19.1%. The value which was selected the least often was tranquillity, appreciated only by 11.8% of young people in the study.

The differences in answers on account of the gender of the respondents are significant in the case of two values. Tranquillity was chosen almost four times more often by boys (23.3%) than by girls (6.5%). On the other hand, almost twice as many girls (64.5%) as boys (32.6%) indicate that family is an important value. In the case of the remaining values, the differences are not as significant. Freedom is appreciated by a larger proportion of boys (58.1%) than girls (39.8%); honesty was also selected by more boys (37.2%) than girls (22.6%). Love was more often indicated by girls (79.6%) than boys (62.8%); in turn, boys appreciate faith slightly more often (23.3%) than girls (18.3%).

The situation is similar when the family structure is considered. Significant differences can be observed in the case of the value of health, which was most often selected by pupils from temporarily incomplete families (83.3%), while it was chosen much more infrequently by the respondents from two-parent (46.7%) and single-parent families (43.5%). The value of faith was most often indicated by young people from single-parent (26.1%) and two-parent families (19.6%). This value was not selected by pupils from temporarily incomplete families.

Among those who value tranquillity, the respondents from single-parent families (21.7%) outnumber those from temporarily incomplete (16.7%) and two-parent families (9.3%). Honesty is also more appreciated by young people from single-parent families (39.1%) than by those from two-parent (25.2%) and temporarily incomplete (16.7%) families. Family remains the most important value for pupils from two-parent (58.9%) and temporarily incomplete families (50.0%). The respondents from single-parent families indicated family as an important value much less frequently (34.8%), which may be caused by them being burdened with the unfavourable consequences of the parents' physical absence. As a result, they do not appreciate family as a value. In turn, love is most appreciated by young people from two-parent families (75.7%); it was slightly less frequently selected by respondents from single-parent (69.6%) or temporarily incomplete families (66.7%).

In the study of personal aspirations, their conditioning in the form of opinion-shaping factors was also taken into consideration. Secondary school pupils form their views and opinions on the basis of many various factors with which they come into contact on a daily basis. An examination of the opinion-shaping factors of the studied young people allows the researchers to draw conclusions concerning the effectiveness of exerting influence on aspirations, though obviously they are not only the effect of one's views and opinions [Musialska 2010, p. 95]. In order to examine the factors which condition the formation of views and opinions, the respondents were asked the following question: "Who or what has the greatest influence on your views and opinions?" Data analysis leads to the conclusion that the studied secondary school pupils ascribe most significance in forming views and opinions to themselves (61.0%). The mother is less significant in this respect (19.1%), while the father (5.1%) and teacher (4.4%) are even less important. Only 3.7% of the respondents were unable to specify who or what has the greatest influence on their views and opinions; 2.9% indicated a sibling or a friend, and 0.7% selected the media/internet.

Boys (69.8%) were more likely to ascribe decisive significance in forming views and opinions to themselves than girls (57.0%). In the group of respondents who indicated the influence of the father on their opinions, pupils from single-parent families were the most numerous (13.0%).

Young people's social aspirations and the experience of the parents' absence

Social aspirations concern the activeness within social groups; they are also often related to helping other people and to organising and shaping the life of different communities [Lewowicki 1987, p. 25]. One of the first social aspirations of secondary school pupils to be studied were those concerning the willingness to help people in need. The analysis of the data shows that a predominant proportion of young people (44.9%) would like to help people in need in the future. 34.6% of the respondents expressed their intention to help others with certain reservations. 11.0% are still not sure if they want to help others. 5.1% are little likely to help, while 4.4% have no intention of doing so.

Among the respondents who are willing to help those in need, a greater proportion of girls can be observed (47.3%) in relation to boys (39.5%). Also in the case of pupils who express their intention to help with certain reservations, girls (39.8%) outnumber boys (23.3%). This situation may be the consequence of the dissimilarity between the nature of women and men, as empathy and sensitivity to human misfortune are generally more developed in women.

Taking into account the group of young people who expressed their willingness to help other people, the respondents from temporarily incomplete

families (50.0%) outnumber those from two-parent (45.8%) and single-parent families (39.1%).

Another type of social aspirations the respondents were asked about were their plans concerning active involvement in the work of the church they belong to. Percentage data shows that the majority of the studied young people (45.6%) do not intend to get actively involved in the future in the work of the church they belong to. 16.2% of the respondents are unlikely to do so, while 14.7% of the pupils still have not made any decision. On the other hand, 9.6% plan to get actively involved, and 14% will do so with certain reservations.

When the variable of gender is taken into account, it can be observed that boys dominate both among the respondents who do not plan to get actively involved in the work of the church (60.5%) and among those who definitely declare such involvement (14.0%). Girls are more likely to declare their involvement with certain reservations (17.2%).

Social aspirations of the studied young people concerning their plans to get actively involved in the work of the church are also diversified in terms of family structure. Among the pupils who do not intend to get involved in such activities, the proportion of the respondents from temporarily incomplete (66.7%) and single-parent families (65.2%) is greater than of those from two-parent families (40.2%).

Similarly, in the case of young people who are willing to participate in the activities of the church with certain reservations, the proportion of respondents from two-parent families (15.9%) is greater than of those from single-parent families (8.7%). This group includes no respondents from temporarily incomplete families. Such situation may be the effect of depriving children and adolescents of the possibility of observing examples of involvement as their parents are physically absent.

Final conclusions

The presented research results show that parents' physical absence significantly diversifies the contents of young people's educational-professional aspirations. In the case of educational aspirations, specified in the form of university studies, parents' temporary absence is of considerable significance. In turn, young people who express their intention to study and work at the same time are in most cases those who struggle with a permanent deficiency of the parents' presence at home.

The analysis of the motives behind choosing the respondents' secondary school as well as the motives behind choosing the future profession shows that pupils who experience the parents' temporary absence are very often unable to indicate a specific motive behind continuing secondary school education or the choice of profession. The parents' permanent absence is above all manifested

in the fact that young people use their willingness to help people in need as a criterion for choosing their future profession.

The salary and the prestige of a given profession are decisive in choosing future occupation for pupils who experience temporary as well as permanent absence of their parents.

In case of material aspirations concerning the future salary, the research results show a high proportion of young people who experience temporary absence of their parents and who would like to have a high income in the future. On the other hand, the parents who are permanently absent in the family home affect the shaping of aspirations towards an average salary and young people's opinion that the future income is not an important matter for them. As far as the future accommodation is concerned, the parents' temporary absence often results in children having aspirations related to owning a house, while their permanent absence – the aspirations related to owning a flat.

The research also showed how the physical absence of the parents affects children's living aspirations concerning the future livelihood, as 100% of respondents who experience temporary absence of the parents would like to be financially independent in the future.

When the values preferred by young people who experience temporary absence of the parents are analysed, it can be observed that those most appreciated include health, honesty and tranquillity. In turn, the pupils who experience their parents' permanent absence see honesty, faith and tranquillity as the most important ones. It also needs to be highlighted that physical absence of the parents, both permanent and temporary, has an exceptionally unfavourable effect on young people's choice of authority figures; in fact, it often causes children to have none.

The analysis of opinion-shaping factors on the basis of which life aspirations of the respondents are shaped shows that the children of physically absent parents ascribe the greatest influence on their views and opinions to themselves. Significant opinion-shaping influence is also ascribed to the mother. On the other hand, the father does not play an important role in this respect, though it needs to be noted that young people who owe the formation of their views and opinions to the father are those from permanently incomplete families.

An interesting fact is that in the case of social aspirations, pupils who clearly declare their willingness to help people in need are mostly those who experience temporary absence of the parents. On the other hand, the respondents who are visibly withdrawn from various areas of social involvement (or lack a distinct stance on this matter) are those who suffer the consequences of their parents' permanent absence. On the basis of the acquired data it can also be stated that young people who experience both types of their parents' physical absence do not intend to get actively involved in the work of the church they belong to. A certain sort of ambivalence is manifested in the declarations of these respondents who

are affected by their parents' temporary absence; they are also most unlikely to provide an unambiguous answer on the subject.

The conducted analysis clearly suggests the need to undertake further research which would explore in more detail not only the relationships between young people's declared aspirations and their experience of temporary or permanent absence of the parents (in most cases related to labour migration). More detailed studies could reveal those mechanisms which seem to be the most responsible for blocking young people experiencing the absence of the parents from being open to constructive prosocial involvement.

Bibliography

- Baran B. (1995), *Samocena i aspiracje perspektywistyczne dzieci z rodzin niepełnych* [in:] *Rodzina a rozwój dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. K. Suszek, Szczecin, pp. 32–51.
- Błasiak A., Dybowska E. (2010), *Rodzicielstwo i jego znaczenie dla procesu wychowania dziecka* [in:] *Wybrane zagadnienia pedagogiki rodziny*, ed. A. Błasiak, E. Dybowska, Kraków, pp. 105–127.
- Czerwińska-Jasiewicz M. (1997), *Decyzje młodzieży dotyczące własnej przyszłości. Uwarunkowania psychospołeczne*, Warszawa.
- Danilewicz W. (2005), *Aspiracje życiowe młodzieży z rodzin pełnych i rozłączonych z powodu migracji zagranicznej rodziców* [in:] *Edukacyjne tendencje XXI wieku w dialogu i perspektywie*, ed. A. Karpińska, Białystok, pp. 283–295.
- Gurnik G. (1987), *Wpływ aspiracji, wzorów i tradycji rodziny na dążenia życiowe młodzieży licealnej*, „Nowa Szkoła”, vol. 7/8, pp. 410–414.
- Hurlock E. (1965), *Rozwój młodzieży*, Warszawa.
- Janowski A. (1977), *Aspiracje młodzieży szkół średnich*, Warszawa.
- Kupczyk J. (1978), *Uwarunkowania aspiracji życiowych młodzieży w starszym wieku szkolnym*, Poznań.
- Lewowicki T. (1987), *Aspiracje dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa.
- Milczarek B. (2011), *Mechanizmy tworzące aspiracje dzieci i młodzieży*, <http://www.edukacja.edu.pl/p-698-mechanizmy-tworzace-aspiracje-dzieci-i-mlodziezy.php>. Accessed on: 19.02.2011.
- Musialska K. (2010), *Aspiracje życiowe młodzieży stojącej u progu dorosłości*, Warszawa.
- Opolska T. (1986), *Wokół aspiracji edukacyjnych*, „Pokolenia”, vol. 8, pp. 97–105.
- Sikorski W. (1997), *Psychopedagogiczne wyznaczniki kształtowania się niewłaściwego poziomu aspiracji u młodzieży szkolnej*, „Opieka – Wychowanie – Terapia”, vol. 3, pp. 26–30.
- Skorny Z. (1993), *Aspiracje* [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna*, ed. W. Pomykało, Warszawa, pp. 29–33.
- Sokolowska A. (1967), *Stosunek młodzieży do jej perspektyw życiowych*, Warszawa.
- Szefer-Timoszenko J. (1981), *Aspiracje w życiu człowieka*, Katowice.

Szymański M. (1989), *Aspiracje rodziców w zakresie kształcenia dzieci – uczniów szkół podstawowych*, „Edukacja”, vol. 4, pp. 59–92.

Ścisłowicz M. (1994), *Aspiracje edukacyjne rodziców a osiągnięcia szkolne ich dzieci*, Kielce.