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Polish research in review at about multi-child family

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Polskie badania nad wielodzietnością

Introduction

The large (multi-child) family appears to be a matter of importance in many different scientific disciplines. It is presented in various cognitive aspects:

- as a polycategorical pedagogical system (pedagogy)¹,
- in a demographic aspect concerning developmental regularities in its population, describing the worldly, contemporary and future character of the family (demography, social policy)²,
- with reference to the structure and level of relationships between family members (sociology, social pedagogy)³,
- in relation to the factors threatening its regular functioning, e.g. unemployment, poverty (economics, statistics)⁴,
- as forms and types of social involvement with reference to social categories based on age (sociology of family, sociology of education).

Understanding the large, multi-child family as a fundamental unit of society is the common point of reference for the above mentioned aspects⁵.

¹ B. Krześcińska-Żach, *Dziecko w rodzinie z problemem bezrobocia*, in: *Dziecko w rodzinie i w środowisku rówieśniczym*, ed. J. Izdebska, Białystok 2003, p. 147.

² D. Graniewska, *Rodziny wielodzietne w Polsce. Sytuacja społeczno-demograficzna*, „Problemy Rodziny” 1989, nr 1; GUS, *Gospodarstwa domowe i rodziny*, Warszawa 1989, p. 11.

³ A. Kotlarska-Michalska, *Więź w rodzinach wielodzietnych*, in: *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*, t. 14, *Życie rodzinne – uwarunkowania makro i mikrostrukturalne*, Poznań 2002, p. 156.

⁴ R. Milewski, *Elementarne zagadnienia ekonomii*, Warszawa 1994; L. Nowak, *Statystyczny obraz sytuacji ekonomicznej rodzin wielodzietnych*, in: *Sytuacja rodzin wielodzietnych w Polsce a polityka rodzinna*, Warszawa 2006, p. 14.

⁵ *European Social Charter*, Part I, Item 16.

In specialist literature the family is frequently discussed in terms of its parental care functions.

It should be emphasized that both terms “care” and “parenting” referring to the above mentioned functions denote closely associated processes. In the general meaning, “care” refers to activities performed for individuals or objects to protect them from actual or potential threats when they lack or have limited possibilities to overcome dangers or risks themselves. Care for a child, however, refers primarily to activities aimed at providing food, clothing and accommodation, as well as health and life protection. Family efforts to deliver suitable entertainment and satisfaction from socializing are equally important and deserve to be taken into consideration. Care for children also denotes helping them in making use of the goods delivered.

Care and parenting are the processes that mainly occur within a family. It is the family that becomes the first natural environment entered by a child on the day of birth. The family is fully responsible for both satisfying the children's needs and raising them from birth to maturity. The family assists an individual throughout the whole lifecycle and considerably influences his behaviour, attitudes towards other people, as well as his approach to the world of values, system of norms and other behaviour patterns.

The large multi-child family, as the subject of theoretical analysis in this article, provides care for children not only by meeting their basic needs, but also by transmitting and developing patterns of culture and systems of values.

Parenting multi children largely depends on the quality of care provided during the process of child-rearing. In specialist literature it is emphasized that parenting may be harmful to children when it is excessive or insufficient. Proper parenting, as the opposite of excessive or insufficient parental care, involves respecting all the actual needs of children, not only physiological/biological needs (food, safety etc.), but also social needs (e.g. love, support, recognition).

In the process of proper parenting children and young people are not deprived of opportunities to cope with difficulties in their lives. Parents understand the fact that helping children does not mean removing all the difficulties and obstacles from their lives. It is rather accepting and recognizing those problems which cannot be overcome by children as they exceed their abilities. Each parental activity includes proper care for a child. Care may also exist independently of parenting (upbringing), while it would be difficult to separate parenting (upbringing) from care. There is always concern for personal safety of children that are cared for by multi-child parents.

Taking all of the above into consideration, it might be concluded that the concept of parental care in a large multi-child family involves the system of experience and services intended to protect and support the development of children and young people. In the narrow sense, it refers to satisfying developmental and educational needs of children, as well as activities performed by individuals and institutions that support them in case of a potential or actual threat to a child when the child lacks or has limited possibilities to overcome the difficulty.

Each family performs the parental care function in a specific way. The level of satisfying the members' needs in typical multi-child families with high socio-economic status is different compared to those multi-child families who suffer from dysfunctions, poverty or unemployment.

Multi-child families in the research review

In the history of research on families raising multiple children several trends might be distinguished.

The first involves diagnostic and descriptive research that focuses on the multi-child family with relation to specific population (its intensity and occurrence). This kind of research reveals factors that determine why persons of particular sex, specific background, professionally active or unemployed are willing to have many children, as well as the processes which are typical of multi-child families. Specific functions of multi-child families, e.g. protective, social, cultural and financial, are also researched. In Poland – the research studies of the above mentioned type were conducted by: Józefa Anna Pielkowa (1980), Jan Woś (1981), Irena Kowalska (1984), Leon Dyczewski (1988), Bożenna Balcerzak-Paradowska (1992, 1994, 1998, 2004), Danuta Staszewska (1992), Danuta Graniewska (1994), Dorota Głogosz (1992, 1994), Małgorzata Dziubińska-Michalewicz (2000).

In specialist literature the issue of multi-child families has been raised by the Institute of Labour and Social Studies for many years. As a result of the research conducted by the Institute, the multi-child family has been defined as a family with three or more children⁶.

⁶ H. Żeglicka, *Rodziny wielodzietne. Seminarium w IPiSS, „Polityka Społeczna”* 1998, nr 3, p. 31.

Such research studies were conducted by Bożenna Balcerzak-Paradowska (1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2004), Danuta Staszewska, Danuta Graniewska, Dorota Głogosz on behalf of the Institute of Labour and Social Studies⁷. The research involved multi-child families in relation to Polish families at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, particularly in relation to the problem of unemployment and contemporary threats and performing basic functions by the multi-child family.

The studies of conference or seminar participants seem to be worth mentioning due to the scope of the research. The conference on “The condition of multi-child families in Poland”, September 2006, focused on raising multiple children and gathered representatives of CSO Demographic Surveys Department, CSO Social Surveys Department, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and participants of conferences organized by the Institute of Labour and Social Studies: Leszek Nowak, Zbigniew Gałązka, Halina Strzemińska, Elżbieta Kryńska, among others⁸.

The representatives of the first trend noticed an average disposable income in multi-child households. For instance, the research study conducted by Leszek Nowak⁹ indicates 735 PLN (Polish currency) monthly average disposable income per capita in 2004. According to Paweł Wosicki¹⁰, who refers to the Adam Smith Centre (Polish: Centrum im. Adama Smitha) reports, 500 PLN is the cost of living per one child in a three-child family and 600 PLN per one child in a four-child family, respectively. Additional benefit granted to families without sufficient income (income lower than legal income criterion) and eligible to receive family allowance amounts to 80 PLN for the third child and additional children. 120 PLN in total, along with the 40 PLN “regular” allowance, covers only 20% of the cost of living expenses on one child.

According to the above mentioned researchers, in multi-child families average disposable income seems to decrease together with the increasing number of children to support. The best income situation involves families without children or single-child families. In childless families and those with a smaller

⁷ B. Balcerzak-Paradowska, D. Staszewska, *Rodziny wielodzietne a bezrobocie, Studia i Materiały IPiS* z września 1992, in: B. Kłos, *Kobieta a bezrobocie (przeгляд badań wykonanych w Instytucie Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych)*, Warszawa 1994, nr 262, Pakiet IP – 46 S, *Materiały i Dokumenty, Sytuacja kobiet w Polsce*, cz. 2, p. 6–12

⁸ H. Żeglicka, *Rodziny wielodzietne*, p. 31–33.

⁹ L. Nowak, S. Golinowska, M. Boni., *W trosce o pracę*, Warszawa 2004; p. 12.

¹⁰ P. Wosicki, *Rodziny wielodzietne muszą odejść?!*, „Głos dla Życia” 2008, nr 4, p. 14–16.

number of children to support, hired labour incomes are the dominant, whereas in multi-child families, particularly with four children, the work income decreased compared to the income based on social benefits or other sources of income, e.g. donations. The increase in income and decrease in the number of children in a family result in a lower level of food consumption, except for essentials. In 2004, considerable differences in the level and structure of family expenses depending on family biological type remained steady. In families with three children to support, the expenses did not even reach the average level; they were 455 PLN per capita. In four-child families the expenses did not exceed 325 PLN per capita. In general, 21% of families raising three children and 40% of families with four children to support are threatened by poverty.

The other trend of the above mentioned research involves an analysis of the environmental factors that influence multiple children families and the influence of multi-child families on the demographic situation in Poland as well as the changes in the approach towards the issue of parenting multiple children. The research on the problems mentioned above was initiated by Irena Kowalska (1980, 2006) and Leon Dyczewski¹¹, and developed by Bożenna Balcerzak-Paradowska, among others.

The analysis of the research findings allows for presenting the current authentic image of the multi-child and childless families (Table 1).

Table 1. The number of children in multi-child families in Poland

Country	Percentage rate compared to all families	The number of children in multi-child families
Poland	17,00%	In total 3 557 200 children up to the age of 24 were supported in three-child (or more) families. 1504 600 of them – 42.3%, lived in urban areas and 2052 600 – 57.7%, in rural areas. This group included 2 152 200 children raised in three-child families, whereas 1 405 000 of children in four-child families (or more).

¹¹ L. Dyczewski, *Rodzina wielodzietna w okresie transformacji systemowej*, „Problemy Rodziny” 1993, nr 6, p. 18–27.

According to the researchers, the structure of families with children up to the age of 24 is as follows: within families with children up to the age of 24 the most numerous groups are single-child families – 2 852 300 and two-child families – 2 203 100 in 2002. It means that each group of 100 families with children up to the age of 24 involves 83 small families including 47 single-child families and 36 two-child families.

Table 2. Children up to the age of 24 supported by their parents according to family type, CSO on the National Census of Population and Housing 2002 (by rates)

Item	Children up to the age of 24 supported by their parents according to the family size				
	total	1	2	3	4 and more
Poland	total number of children				
2002	100.0	26.4	40.7	19.9	13.0

Source: I. Kowalska, *Rodzina wielodzietna w procesie demograficzno-społecznych zmian modelu dzietności w okresie transformacji ekonomicznej*, in: *Sytuacja rodzin wielodzietnych w Polsce a polityka rodzinna*, Warszawa 2006, p. 16.

Having analysed the family model with reference to the number of children, Irena Kowalska noticed a steady decrease in the number of births after 1989. The average number of children born to women between the age of 15–49 does not guarantee generation replacement. Along with the decrease in the number of families, the birth rate decline by 3 may be noticed. The decline in the number of births is not a complete process; it refers to the following youth generations including those affected by the baby boom of 1980s that entered the procreative (child-bearing) age. Together with the decrease in the number of marriages, an increase in the number of extramarital children might be noticed. This fact exerts pressure on the state's social assistance services. According to the researchers, the following factors determine the considerable decrease in the number of births: the decline in the number of marriages, the decision to delay marriage, the decision to delay first child birth, limiting the number of children to one or two within a family, extending education period, unemployment, difficulties in sharing family and work responsibilities, as well as the lack of conception in social policy concerning methods for strengthening family ties. Social research and experience prove that extending a family by the third (or next) child results in a considerable decrease in family income compared to families with a smaller number of children. Although multi-child families suppress general pace of productivity, the significance of mul-

ti-child families for moderating the effects of the decline in Polish population in the recent years noticeably decreases. All the measures of population reproduction indicate evolution in the approach to procreation (child-bearing) as well as behaviour patterns leading to limitations on the birth rate.

The analysis of demographic processes in the recent years provides interesting observations which modify previous viewpoints on environmental factors influencing the number of children born to the family. In the period between national censuses (1988–1995), the fourth and subsequent births to women living in urban areas and having relatively higher level of education seemed to be more dynamic. On the one hand, young generation of women living in rural areas appeared to limit the number of children. On the other hand, it might be concluded that better-educated mothers, being aware of the problems facing multi-child households, make intentional decisions to raise more children¹².

A tendency to be aware of the difficulties in raising multiple children is also noticeable in other European Union countries including Germany and Switzerland. Today the widespread concept of baby-boom is primarily identified with the happy and confident family along with smiling children and pleased parents, and consequently, easier parenting.

Multi children families within the European Union are supported by their countries. For example, in Germany actions leading to efficient family support are taken through child care benefits, possibilities to take advantage of child-care institutions when both parents are employed, or better-paid maternity leave. Based on the Act in support of children (German: Kinderförderungsgesetz) special child-care conditions are created. According to child support policy, by 2013 every third child will have been provided a place in a nursery or will have been cared for during parents' working hours. The State supports possibilities for child-care in case of working parents up to 2013 by investing 4 billion Euros¹³.

In other European countries, the conditions of the state direct assistance to families raising multiple children are quite good. A great number of families with 3–4 children, maternity wards providing assistance to the entire family, frequent birth assistance of the other family members, nurseries which allow mothers to work, lunch breaks at schools after which children participate in school and after-school activities, as well as efficient free time management fa-

¹² B. Balcerzak-Paradowska, *Wokół wielodzietności*. „Problemy Rodziny” 1998, nr 4, p. 10.

¹³ F. Kulpiński, *Zagrożenia wychowawcze w rodzinach wielodzietnych*, „Problemy Rodziny” 1990, nr 4, p. 42.

facilitate proper parenting by non-working mothers. The above mentioned selected aspects of child care prove the changes in the contemporary approach to multi-child families.

Multi-child family assistance provided by different institutions seems to be highly insufficient¹⁴, and more than 50% of these families are not able to function without additional (external) support because Poland allocates only 0.4% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to family benefits, compared to Denmark – 3%, France – 2.6%, Germany – 2.2%, UE in total – 1.8%).

In Poland, the research proves that multi-child families tend to live in rural areas, parents' education level seems to be lower, and finally, parents (mostly fathers) are employed in the public sector, rarely in private one. Such points of view might be noticed in specialist literature, e.g. Franciszek Kulpiński's¹⁵ research conducted by means of a survey in Lubelszczyzna in 1988–1989 in rural and urban areas. Among the respondent multi-child families, most of them were workers' families – 52% of the respondents, peasant families – 43%, and intelligence families – 5%. Having analysed the research results, the author concluded that the most serious problems are visible in multi-child dysfunctional families¹⁶ which do not fully satisfy financial, psychological and social needs of their family members; the low level of education and culture is usually associated with the relatively low social and professional status, little earnings, the number of individuals to support and poor living conditions.

The low level of satisfying psychological needs resulted from being cared for by older siblings (sisters or brothers) when parents were looking for additional employment to meet day to day needs.

The next trend in the research focuses on the impact of multi-child families on individual social life and the most common form of assistance to multi-child families.

Among Polish studies, the research conducted by Józefina Hryniewicz (2006), Leszek Bosak (2005), Bożena Matyjas, Agnieszka Stopińska (2004), Anna Rutkowska (2001), Bożena Borzęcka (2001/2002) is best known.

Families raising multiple children amount to 17% of all the families in Poland, and 33% of all the children up to the age of 24 are those from multi-child

¹⁴ P. Forma, *Uwarunkowania realizacji funkcji opiekuńczo-wychowawczej w rodzinach wielodzietnych*, in: *Opieka i wychowanie w rodzinie szkole i środowisku*, ed. B. Matyjas, R. Stojecka-Zuber, Kielce 2007, p. 197–204.

¹⁵ F. Kulpiński, *Zagrożenia wychowawcze*, p. 42.

¹⁶ P. Forma, *Rodzina wielodzietna a kwestie socjalne*, in: *Rodzina jako środowisko pracy socjalnej. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. B. Matyjas, J. Biała, Kielce 2007, p. 197.

families. It might be concluded that the state's social policy, in terms of social capital and human resources development, should primarily focus on actions and activities that support, or at least not harm, the financial condition of a family raising multiple children. It is the families who will carry the burden of maintaining the demographic potential of Poland and children from these families in the future will suffer the consequences of inevitable effects of the increase in the number of citizens at the retirement age.

A broad analysis of the values which ought to be provided through the means of social policy towards families raising multiple children has been presented by Józefina Hryniewicz¹⁷ among others. According to Józefina Hryniewicz, the analysis of social policy goals and means applied regularly towards multi-children families in Poland cannot be the basis for the explicit set of values assisted and supported by social policy implemented in Poland during economic and political transformation period. A number of inquiries and conclusions have been raised in relation to the means applied in social policy towards multi-child families as there are failures and misunderstandings committed by state bodies and local authorities. Multi-child families most frequently suffer from the negative effects of solutions in the tax law, in the organization and functioning of social services (health service, education and culture).

Members of multi-child families frequently claim that the most important issue is receiving funds for education and providing family members with the sense of security. In their opinion there is no pro-family policy in Poland. The Polish tax system, according to numerous family support institutions, is not pro-family because it ignores the number of children supported by a taxpayer, with the exception of the childless family, single-child family and one-parent family.

They also emphasize that tax policy may become a tool for the state supporting families social policy. The examples of the countries-members of the European Union mentioned above show that it is possible to strengthen and consolidate the subjectivity of the family by means of appropriate mechanisms for tax collection or tax relief.

The implementation of solutions concerning tax policy into the catalogue of instruments or tools to achieve some of the goals of social policy involves the practical aspect of significance of multi-child families, as well as partnership between the state and the family.

The table 3 reveals solutions for the multi-child family, as well as social aid and assistance.

¹⁷ J. Hryniewicz, *Polityka społeczna wobec rodzin wielodzietnych*, in: *Sytuacja rodzin wielodzietnych w Polsce a polityka rodzinna*, Warszawa 2006, p. 5–11.

Table 3. Forms of assistance to a multi-child family worldwide

Country	Forms of country's assistance
1	2
USA	<p>twofold taxation system</p> <p>1) Tax exemptions: amounts to decrease the basis of taxation. Tax exemption amount slightly changes annually according to inflation; it currently amounts to \$3200 per child from federal tax rate and slightly less from estate tax rate (both taxes are accounted and paid separately). From the legal point of view, not only children are entitled to tax exemptions, but also the other dependent family members: non-working wife, parents – if they share the same household, etc. Tax exemptions can be received for children if they are students</p> <p>2) Through child tax credits: amount of money deducted from the tax. It was introduced a few years ago and amounted \$500–\$1000 per child depending on the tax year. The child tax credit is available to taxpayers who have a “qualifying child” who has not attained the age of 17 by the end of the taxable year. Child tax credit can be deducted from the federal tax only. Taxpayers may also deduct the child-care costs</p>
United Kingdom	<p>tax relief/allowance</p> <p>Parents receive 16.50 GBP weekly for the first child under the age of 16, and 11.05 GBP for the next every child. Parents with low income are entitled to additional child credit (allowance) deducted from the tax</p>
Sweden	<p>child benefits</p> <p>Parents receive annually 11 400 SEK (approx. 4480 PLN) for the first and second child; 14 448 SEK (approx. 6140 PLN) for the third child; 20 520 SEK (approx. 8710 PLN) for the fourth child; and 22 800 SEK (approx. 9680 PLN) for the each additional child</p>
Spain	<p>tax deductions (tax relief)</p> <p>Parents can annually deduct 1400 EUR for the first child, 1500 EUR for the second child, 2200 EUR for the third child, and 2300 EUR for the fourth child; additional 1200 EUR is granted for a child under the age of 3, and non-wastable tax credit 1200 EUR for working mothers who raise a child under the age of 3; in addition, families with low income may receive child allowance up to 291 EUR per each child</p>
Ireland	<p>child benefit (money transfer)</p> <p>Parents who raise one or two children under the age of 16 are entitled to money transfers of 131.60 EUR per month, 165.30 EUR for the each additional child; additional benefits may be received by families with low income; they are also entitled to tax deduction of 770 EUR per taxable year</p>

1	2
France	<p>child benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free education system • large (multi-child) family card <p>Basic benefits involve discounts on public transport (30% for families with 3 children, 40% for families with 4 children, 50% for families with 5 children) for children under the age of 18; the card entitles the bearer to a discount on activities offered by local cultural institutions, swimming-pools, etc.; national museums are available for free to children and youth under the age of 18. A mother of 5 children after 15 years of work is entitled to retirement. Family card in Paris available for three-child families entitles them to free admission to swimming-pools and parks; it guarantees priority access to canteens, day-care institutions and the right to a loan proved by essential expenses (300 EUR per family on school expenses annually)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the system of social benefits for families affected by a difficult financial situation
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local solutions to support families- extended activity of pro-family associations • additional child birth benefits; disabled children benefits • social benefit for families cared for by parents of advanced age • the right for special assistance in case of job loss by one of the parents • social benefit for individuals with low income • support in housing expenses when they exceed earnings by 20% • monthly ticket cost reimbursement for the unemployed; housing assistance

Source: Author's analysis.

Having analysed the reports on multi-child family environment, it might be concluded that pro-family policy or mechanisms included in tax systems are based on the subsidiary rule in the relationship between the citizen and state in terms of the influence on economic independence of the multi-child family¹⁸.

To sum up, the multi-child family guarantees the continuity of society. It is also a fundamental environment for educational and professional careers of family members.

¹⁸ P. Wosicki, *Rodziny wielodzietne muszą odejść?!*, p. 14–16.

Nowadays, certain changes in the approach towards multi-child families and increase in their number may be noticed. This tendency appears to be visible mainly in urban areas where the number of multi children parents with higher level of education has increased. It is heartening that the awareness of the child's role within the family seems to be rising; consequently, more and more parents are becoming aware of the role of the multi-child family¹⁹.

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł ma charakter teoretyczny. Rozważania dotyczą dotychczasowych polskich badań nad wielodzietnością oraz wyjaśnienia pojęcia „wielodzietność”, charakteryzują także rodziny wielodzietne jako środowisko wychowawcze.

Starano się zwrócić uwagę przede wszystkim na przedmiot badań, w których tłem jest wielodzietność. Wyłoniono czynniki determinujące opiekę i wychowanie dziecka: osobowościowe, środowiskowe, szkolne, socjalno-ekonomiczne. W konkluzji starano się dowieść, że współczesna rodzina wielodzietna i badania nad nią zmieniają się oraz podlegają procesom ewolucji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: rodzina, rodzina wielodzietna, wielodzietność, opieka, wychowanie, badania nad wielodzietnością, rodzinne środowisko.

¹⁹ D. Żukowska, *Świadoma wielodzietność?*, „Nasz Dziennik” 2001, nr 50, 28 February, p. 3.