

Beata Skwarek

Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. Witelona w Legnicy
Wydział Nauk Społecznych i Humanistycznych
e-mail: skwarekb@pwsz.legnica.edu.pl

Maria Borczykowska-Rzepka

Krakowska Akademia im. Andrzeja F. Modrzewskiego w Krakowie
Wydział Psychologii i Nauk Humanistycznych
e-mail: bormaj@poczta.fm

Adolescents' perception of parenting styles as a correlate of their styles of coping with stress

SUMMARY

The authors of this paper analyse the issue of adolescents' perception of parenting styles as a factor influencing their styles of coping with stress. Their theoretical considerations are supported by the results of their own research as well as those obtained during the BA seminar led by one of the authors.

Key words: adolescence period, perception of parental attitudes, style of coping with stress.

Introduction

Scientific literature makes it clear that raising children, which is a process of their preparation for performance of particular social functions and confrontation with a wide range of contemporary civilisation threats, constitutes an extremely difficult and demanding task, which involves a number of factors. Undoubtedly, parenting styles and educational methods applied play an important role here. The latter are conditioned by the parents' background, subjective circumstances, the quality of their relationship and individual features of particular children¹.

The complex process of children's upbringing aims at the development of those characteristics which shape their self-awareness (such as self-reliance, emotional stability, optimism and self-acceptance) as well as the ones which affect the levels and modes of implementation of developmental tasks arising at different stages of their lives (which include

¹ M. Płopa, *Psychologia rodziny: teoria i badania*, Wydawnictwo Elbląskiej Uczelni Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej Elbląg 2005, s. 246.

pro-social attitudes, communicative skills, assertiveness and the ability to solve interpersonal problems)². The aforementioned process, implemented by parents on a daily basis, in the course of daily routines, free time activities, work and everyday life problems resolution, is a reflection of a particular family's individual parenting style, resulting from their individual parenting attitudes, which shape their children's perception of the world and attitudes towards the changes taking place in it³.

Theoretical background in the light of source literature

Parenting styles constitute a major factor conditioning children's attitudes. This fact is confirmed by scientific literature, which postulates that "attitudes formed through direct personal experience with the object are generally more deeply-rooted [...], less susceptible to changes and more likely to condition our actions than attitudes formed on the basis of second-hand information"⁴. There is no doubt that at an early stage of their development children mainly adopt the system of values, patterns of behaviour, moral values as well as attitudes demonstrated by adults in their environment. As B. Wojciszke⁵ stresses, even in adulthood, children tend to express opinions, imitate parenting styles and accept the perception of the world similar to those of their parents', despite the fact that in adolescence they become exposed to peer pressure and the influence of the mass media. Apart from that, the ability to form interpersonal relationships and the quality of the latter, as well as the ways of confronting the difficulties connected with the implementation of an individual's major developmental task of the resolution of their identity crisis, condition their future lives⁶.

With regard to the fact that the socialising function of the family, as well as the typology and sources of parenting attitudes have been discussed in detail in source literature⁷, we will limit ourselves to the provision of the definition of parenting attitude as a tendency for specific behaviour towards a child, which manifests itself in a particular parenting style⁸. Mieczysław Plopa claims that "a parenting attitude consists of three components: cognitive, affectionate and motivational as well as behavioural one. The first component manifests itself in the perception of children and evaluation of their behaviour by their parents, the second

² I. Obuchowska, *Wprowadzenie [w:] Dziecko niepełnosprawne w rodzinie*, red. I. Obuchowska, Wydawnictwo WSiP, Warszawa 1991, s. 4.

³ K. Wałęcka-Matyja, *Rola i funkcje rodziny [w:] Psychologia rodziny*, red. I. Janicka, H. Liberska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2014, s. 95–114.

⁴ B. Wojciszke, *Postawy i ich zmiana [w:] Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki. Jednostka w społeczeństwie i elementy psychologii stosowanej*, red. J. Strelau, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2008, s. 84.

⁵ Ibidem, s. 84.

⁶ A. Brzezińska, *Portrety psychologiczne człowieka. Jak zmienia się człowiek w ciągu życia*, „Remedium” 2003, 4(122), s. 1–3; E. Gurba, *Nieporozumienia z dorastającymi dziećmi w rodzinie. Uwarunkowania i wspomaganie*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2013.

⁷ J.J. Arnett, *Broad and Narrow Socialization: The Family in the Context of a Cultural Theory*, „Journal of Marriage and the Family” 1995, 57(3), s. 617–628; M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa, *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Zagadnienia ogólne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2014.

⁸ I. Bielecka-Palenga, *Relacje wewnątrzrodzinne w percepcji nastolatka a ryzyko uzależnienia od Internetu*, niepublikowana praca magisterska pod kierunkiem prof. dr hab. Zofii Dołęgi, Wydawnictwo SWPS, Katowice 2018, s. 19.

one is reflected in the intensity of the parents' expression while the third one manifests itself in the treatment of children by their parents; this includes the modes of resolving the arising problems, confrontation with difficult situations as well as the punishment and rewards system applied by parents"⁹. Therefore, a parenting attitude can be defined through the attitude, affection and behaviour of parents in front of their children. The peculiarities and unique nature of every human being and, consequently, of every family, condition the differences in parenting attitudes arising in each of the three aforementioned aspects. Parents' attitude to children can be either positive (support, acceptance, actions aimed at an individual's development) or negative (lack of emotional involvement, judgement and negative evaluation of children's behaviour, the punishment and rewards system, lack of emotional bond). Another difference concerns the flexibility, intensity and nature of the relationship between parents and children. Particular stages of children's development condition changes in the nature of the aforementioned relation and influence the flexibility of parenting attitudes¹⁰.

The analysis of parenting attitudes described in scientific literature leads us to the conclusion that they are conditioned by a wide range of factors. Nevertheless, as M. Plopa¹¹ points out, "it is the emotional charge, which [...] constitutes the most essential element in both identification and measuring of a parenting attitude"¹², that appears to be of utmost importance. Positive parenting attitudes towards children, full of acceptance and affection, shape their self-image, their self-esteem, and most of all, improve their sense of security and their sense of existence¹³.

The typology of parenting attitudes falls in to two categories: descriptive and factor typology¹⁴. The former includes the elements of the P.S. Slater theory based on pairs of contrasting features of parenting attitudes, such as permissiveness – strictness, warmth – coldness, dependency – separation¹⁵. The latter contains the elements of the M. Siegelman¹⁶ theory, which takes in to account the following factors: love, demands or punishment. Having analysed both typologies of parenting attitudes in detail¹⁷, identifies a set of common features contained in them and classifies parenting attitudes as:

- the attitude of approval, which allows children to perceive their parents as loving, respectful and supportive in difficult situations;
- an overly demanding attitude, which creates in children the image of their parents being uncompromising, expectations and demands-oriented instead of needs-oriented;
- the attitude of autonomy, when parents grant their children enough freedom to develop, are supportive and respectful of their privacy;
- the attitude of inconsistency, observed in parents who are very emotional, moody and easily affected by external conditions;

⁹ M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 245.

¹⁰ I. Bielecka-Palenga, op. cit., 2018, s. 19–20; J. Rembowski, *Rodzina w świetle psychologii*, Wydawnictwo WSiP, Warszawa 1979, s. 55.

¹¹ M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 246.

¹² Ibidem, s. 246.

¹³ I. Bielecka-Palenga, op. cit., 2018, s. 20.

¹⁴ M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 266–269.

¹⁵ Za: ibidem, s. 268.

¹⁶ Ibidem, s. 268 i 271.

¹⁷ M. Plopa, *Rodzice a młodzież. Teoria i metoda badania*, Vizja Press & IT, Kraków 2014, s. 172–177.

- an overly protective attitude, which manifests itself in parents becoming overly caring and overprotective towards their children as well as impeding their development.

It should be stressed that the aforementioned numerous factors affecting parenting attitudes also condition the choice of educational methods applied by parents, which may take various forms, depending on the parents' personalities and environment. The fast pace of modern life, consumerism and modern technological inventions (such as computers, mobile phones or the Internet), are impeding and reducing the frequency of interaction between individual family members. Nowadays parents are facing the challenge of bringing up their children with the use of such educational methods which can "compete with the fascinating virtual reality, which is often much more comfortable, interesting and easier to understand than the real world, which confronts individuals with a number of difficult developmental tasks"¹⁸.

It should also be pointed out that some authors claim that it is not so much the actual parenting attitudes that condition the behaviour and psychological development of children, but their perception by particular individuals, understood as the way of perceiving other individuals¹⁹. The reflections of E. Schaefer or F. Cox²⁰ on boys' perception of their relationships with their fathers deserve some attention. The results of the relevant research reveal that boys who feel rejected by their fathers tend to be classified as aggressive whereas those who perceive the attitudes of their fathers towards themselves as approving find it much easier to form proper interpersonal relationships with their peers. N. Serot and T. Teevan²¹ stress that children who perceive their parents as reserved face serious emotional, relation and assimilation problems when they interact with a group of peers. J. Rembowski²² proves that "there exists a clear connection between children's perception of their parents' styles and their adaptation to schooling conditions. Children loved by their parents have no problems adapting to the school environment. Children who perceive their relationships with their parents as acceptable or neutral mostly demonstrate positive behaviour [...]. Children rejected by parents definitely face problems with adaptation to the school environment and mostly demonstrate negative behaviour"²³. M. Plopa²⁴ performs a thorough analysis of his own research in to the perception of parenting styles by the youth aged 17 to 20. The author draws the conclusion that, regardless of the problems arising in the period of adolescence, the majority of children perceive their parents' attitudes as positive and the parents themselves as autonomous and approving.

The authors of this paper have selected a particular group for their research, the youth at an early stage of adolescence, with regard to the fact that this particular developmental stage is characterised by dramatic changes observed in biological, psychological and social processes, which are interconnected and do not always lead individuals in the right direction, regardless of their own and other people's will, which may result in prolonged and acute

¹⁸ B. Ostrowska, *Nieśmiałość u dzieci i młodzieży*, 2003, <http://www.awans.net/strony/psychologia/ostrowska/ostrowska2.html>, dostęp: 15.05.2019 r.

¹⁹ A. S. Reber, *Słownik psychologii*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Scholar”, Warszawa 2002, s. 80.

²⁰ Za: M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 318.

²¹ Ibidem, s. 293.

²² J. Rembowski, *Więzi uczuciowe w rodzinie*, Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa 1972.

²³ Ibidem, s. 302.

²⁴ M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 318.

stress²⁵. At the same time, the period of adolescence, characterised by frequent mood swings in children, numerous conflicts with their parents as well as wide range of risky behaviours, constitutes a real educational challenge for both parents and the entire society²⁶. The dynamic biological changes taking place in this phase give rise to a number of questions, which intensify the feeling of anxiety in children and increase their excitability²⁷. According to M. Borczykowska-Rzepka and B. Skwarek, "the cognitive processes taking place at that stage, on the one hand, enable individuals to get a good grasp of life and, on the other, they become a source of criticism towards their family and the existing social order"²⁸. The world of adults as they know it and their own old values become unnecessary and unreliable²⁹. The negation of their parents' authority becomes their priority, which, however, may result in a strong loyalty conflict and the disorganisation of the superego. The search for one's identity constitutes a complex and painful process³⁰, which requires the realisation of one's own value, the development of one's confidence and independence. To achieve that goal, adolescents have to become independent from their parents. M. Seligman believes that acceptance of one's own transformation "and the search for one's own identity constitute indispensable conditions when it comes to the sense of fulfilment, happiness and well-being or life satisfaction"³¹. The author claims that individuals should "transform their lives so that they fit in with their true inner selves"³².

Many authors³³ point out that as children's developmental phases progress, they tend to attach less and less importance to the opinions expressed by adults in their closest environment and give preference to their relations with their peers³⁴. Peer influences manifest themselves in children's strong sense of community and clear distinction between them (adults) and us (the youth)³⁵. Clashes between the two worlds (family and peers) give rise to numerous conflicts, which impede the educational process and contribute to difficult situations generating strong, negative emotions leading to distress. According to A. Margasiński³⁶, family relationships, understood as relations between parents and children, can be most effectively evaluated through the prism of parental attitudes and children's position in the family.

²⁵ Z. Dołęga, *Samotność młodzieży – analiza teoretyczna i studia empiryczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2003, s. 62; D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, *Psychologia wobec problematyki zmiany [w:] Człowiek wobec zmiany. Rozważania psychologiczne*, red. D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2002, s. 15.

²⁶ J. C. Coleman, *The nature of adolescence*, Methuen, London 1978.

²⁷ M. Borczykowska-Rzepka, B. Skwarek, *Samotność – zagrożenie dla młodzieży gimnazjalnej [w:] Молодіжна політика: проблеми та перспективи*, red. S. Shchudlo, Państwowy Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. Iwana Franki w Drohobycz, Drohobycz–Przemyśl 2013, s. 147.

²⁸ Ibidem 2013, s. 147.

²⁹ I. Namysłowska, *Adolescencja – wiek dorastania [w:] Psychiatria dzieci i młodzieży*, red. I. Namysłowska, Wydawnictwo Lekarskie PZWL, Warszawa 2011, s. 231–246.

³⁰ F. L. Ilg, L. B. Ames, S. M. Baker, *Rozwój psychiczny dziecka*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 1998.

³¹ Za: D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, *Psychologia wobec problematyki zmiany...*, s. 12.

³² M. E. P. Seligman, *Co możesz zmienić, a czego nie możesz (ucząc się akceptować siebie). Poradnik skutecznego samodoskonalenia się*, Media Rodzina, Poznań 1994, s. 328.

³³ Z. Dołęga, op. cit.

³⁴ I. Bielecka-Palenga, op. cit., s. 14.

³⁵ Ibidem, s. 14.

³⁶ A. Margasiński, *Skale Oceny Rodziny*, Pracownia Testów, Warszawa 2013.

Regardless of the fact that the period of adolescence always has its own individual dimension and relationships within each family have their own particular character and dynamics in the three basic dimensions of coherence, flexibility and communication, the family still remains a shelter, the field where the youth gain life experience, laying foundations for their mental development and psychological well-being as well as the source of their deeply-rooted values, determining their identity, which are relatively fixed and unlikely to become replaced by other systems of values³⁷. Regardless of the instances of behaviour of rebellious nature demonstrated by adolescents towards their parents, the family still constitutes a stable element of social and educational support, enabling the youth to adopt emotional patterns and the system of values constituting their standards of behaviour, evaluation of content and individual experiences in the course of their lives³⁸. It should be stressed that the relationship between parents and children are a key element and shelter during that difficult developmental phase, when the search for and negation of life goals become intertwined, similarly to the search for authority and negation of the latter³⁹. As M. Borczykowska and B. Skwarek point out⁴⁰, during the phase corresponding to the ages of 12 to 16, significant differences are observed among children in the modes of searching and laying foundations for their identity. This process is supposed to bridge the gap between the safe period of childhood and autonomy of an adolescent individual.

All of the above prove that adolescents have to deal with a wide range of problems⁴¹, they are confronted with a major crisis (not only of developmental character) and look for constructive ways of its resolution. An ambivalent nature of relationships within the family⁴², the levels of tension between adolescents and their parents, the search for their own identity or the confrontation with a new school environment constitute some of the triggers for stressful situations which are difficult from a cognitive and/or emotional point of view.

Since time immemorial, man has been faced with crises of developmental and random nature. It must be stressed that crises, constituting an integral part of every individual's social development, are difficult to define. It is because their character is conditioned by a wide range of factors, not necessarily directly related to the human life⁴³. Trying to grasp the essence of a crisis, we should take in to account the ideas expressed by L.A. Hoff, who perceives it in terms of emotional upset making the resolution of a wide range of problems of developmental or random nature with the use of available tools impossible⁴⁴.

³⁷ D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, *Psychologia wobec problematyki zmiany...*, s. 16.

³⁸ M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa, op. cit.

³⁹ M. Borczykowska-Rzepka, B. Skwarek, *Samotność – zagrożenie dla młodzieży...*, s. 147.

⁴⁰ M. Borczykowska-Rzepka, B. Skwarek, *O potrzebie budowania zasobów osobistych młodzieży w okresie późnego dorastania w kontekście stylu życia – na przykładzie poczucia koherencji i stylów radzenia sobie ze stresem* [w:] *Молодіжна політика: проблеми та перспективи*, red. S. Shchudlo, Państwowy Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. Iwana Franki w Drohobyczu, Drohobycz–Zielona Góra 2017, s. 22–25.

⁴¹ J.J. McWhirter et al., *Zagrożona młodzież: ujęcie kompleksowe dla pracowników poradni, nauczycieli, psychologów i pracowników socjalnych*, Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne Parpamedia, Warszawa 2008.

⁴² M. Płopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 318.

⁴³ D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, *Interwencja kryzysowa. Pomoc w kryzysach psychologicznych*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2010, s. 25.

⁴⁴ *Za: Kryzys. Interwencja i pomoc psychologiczna. Nowe ujęcia i możliwości*, red. D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, K. Mudyń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2004, s. 154–155.

L. Brammer⁴⁵, in turn, defines a crisis as a condition of disorganisation, when individuals lose the ability to set goals for themselves, feeling anxious and threatened as a result. It should be added that a crisis is primarily a situation when "an event is perceived as an intolerable difficulty, which is unbearable and makes resolution of problems difficult"⁴⁶. G. Parry⁴⁷ views a crisis as an unexpected, peculiar threat of experiencing negative emotions, the sense of loss of control, the feeling of uncertainty about the future, emotional tension and behavioural changes. All experts in the field generally agree that both developmental and random crises always manifest themselves in an individual's inability to handle highly stressful situations⁴⁸.

Therefore, the ability to cope with stress in their lifetime, especially at times when developmental crises and mishaps overlap (which is often the case in adolescence) seems to be crucial and the analysis of all the factors facilitating this process appears to be essential.

Source literature contains evidence that each stressful situation corresponds to a particular (preferable) strategy of stress resolution applied by an individual and particular patterns of behaviour applied by them to meet the expectations of their environment and counteract their effects.

The process of coping with stress tends to be analysed in terms of style, strategy and process. It involves all the actions undertaken by an individual faced with a stressful situation. As R. Lazarus and S. Folkman point out, the process of coping with stress involves most of all "the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts aimed at meeting peculiar external and/or internal demands, which arise in stressful situations, that is during a particular kind of relationship between an individual and their environment, which is perceived by them as exceeding their capabilities and threatening"⁴⁹. E. Schuchardt compares the process of coping with difficulties and life changes to a long journey, "when individuals exposed to suffering learn to live with a new burden"⁵⁰. "The strategy of coping with stress is understood as a whole set of actions undertaken by individuals in order to confront a stressful situation, which are learnt throughout their entire lifespan"⁵¹.

I. Heszen-Niejodek⁵² describes the style of coping with stress as a relatively stable tendency characteristic of a particular individual illustrating their efforts, perceived in terms of the personality variable. The author defines the style of coping with stress as "a reper-

⁴⁵ Za: R. K. James, B. E. Gilliland, *Strategie interwencji kryzysowej*, Wydawnictwo PARPA 2009, s. 25.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, s. 26

⁴⁷ Za: W. Badura-Madej, *Podstawowe pojęcia teorii kryzysu i interwencji kryzysowej* [w:] W. Badura-Madej, *Wybrane zagadnienia interwencji kryzysowej. Poradnik dla pracowników socjalnych*, Biblioteka Pracownika Socjalnego, Wydawnictwo Śląsk, Katowice 1999, s. 17.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, s. 18–27.

⁴⁹ N. Ogińska-Bulik, Z. Juczyński, *Osobowość a stres i zdrowie*, Wydawnictwo Difin SA, Warszawa 2010, s. 51–52.

⁵⁰ Za: U. Klajmon-Lech, *Postawy rodziców oraz znaczenie ich pedagogizacji w procesie przyjęcia niepełnosprawności dziecka* [w:] *Niesamodzielność. Studia z pedagogiki specjalnej*, red. M. Sekulowicz, M. Oleniacz, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2012, s. 123.

⁵¹ Ibidem, s. 123.

⁵² I. Heszen-Niejodek, *Teoria stresu psychologicznego i radzenia sobie* [w:] J. Strelau, *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki. Jednostka w społeczeństwie i elementy psychologii stosowanej*, Tom 3, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2008, s. 482–483.

tory of characteristic strategies applied in stressful situations by a particular individual, a set of strategies, modes of coping in stressful situations"⁵³.

N.S. Endler and J.D.A. Parker⁵⁴ provide the most commonly quoted classification of styles of coping with stress⁵⁵, which includes: the task-oriented style, emotions-oriented style and avoidance-oriented style. The task-oriented style is characteristic of individuals who, when confronted with stressful situations, try to resolve them through cognitive transformation or actual changes in the existing situation. The emotions-oriented style is typical of individuals who in stressful situations tend to focus on their emotions. The most common emotions include: anger, emotional tension and guilt. Wishful thinking and fantasising constitute characteristic features of that style. The avoidance-oriented style is characterised by escapism in to other activities or social interactions⁵⁶.

It should be stressed that the styles of coping with stress are not uniform and involve various strategies⁵⁷. Even though general tendencies of individuals to confront or avoid the source of stress appear to be inborn, particular strategies of coping with stress tend to become acquired through learning⁵⁸. S.M. Miller⁵⁹ provides another classification of styles of coping with stress, based on the analysis of an individual's attitude to the information connected with the form and source of stress. Consequently, the author makes a distinction between avoidance (ignorance, rejection, repression and negation of information about a stressful event and engagement in "stress free" activities) and search for information. The concept formulated by E. Schuchardt⁶⁰, which illustrates the essence of every single stage of confronting stressful situations in order to facilitate social integration, constitutes another example of approach to stress resolution. The first stage is characterised by insecurity resulting from the post-traumatic shock. The second stage manifests itself in the feeling of security experienced by individuals, who receive support from their closest environment. The third stage is a phase of aggressive behaviour (often combined with autodestruction), which is supposed to help them relieve stress.

It should be stressed that the lack of sufficient personal skills, which include social skills, such as: assertiveness, pro-social attitude, the ability to communicate in situations of prolonged exposure to stress, may lead to: reduced immunity, which results from a close connection between the nervous, endocrine and immunological systems, adjustment disorders, psychosomatic disorders (peptic ulcer disease, hypertension), affective disorders as well as interpersonal and behavioural problems⁶¹.

The conclusion to be drawn from our theoretical considerations is that, in their lifetime, individuals are confronted with a wide range of challenges and problems which they need to face and resolve. To become successful, individuals need to be equipped with the nec-

⁵³ Ibidem, s. 484.

⁵⁴ Za: I. Heszen-Niejodek, op. cit., 2008, s. 480–492.

⁵⁵ S.M. Miller, *Monitoring and blunting: Validation of a questionnaire to asses styles of information seeking under threat*, „Journal of Personality and Social Psychology” 1987, 52, s. 345–353; za: I. Heszen-Niejodek, op. cit., s. 485.

⁵⁶ I. Heszen-Niejodek, op. cit., s. 484–487.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, s. 485.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, s. 484–485.

⁵⁹ S.M. Miller, op. cit., 52, s. 345–353.

⁶⁰ Za: U. Klajmon-Lech, op. cit., s. 123.

⁶¹ I. Heszen-Niejodek, op. cit., s. 513–516; N. Ogińska-Bulik, Z. Juczyński, *Osobowość a stres i zdrowie*, Wydawnictwo Difin SA, Warszawa 2010, s. 52–57.

essary cognitive, social and emotional skills, as well as being able to use their personal resources acquired through socialisation in problematic situations, generating high levels of emotional tension. In stressful situations, even when confronted with low levels of emotional tension, some individuals become unable to act in a coordinated way, while others remain task-oriented and rational in their approach to the problem. The aforementioned differences seem to be crucial in groups of adolescents exposed to prolonged stress and developmental crisis (constituting a form of the crisis of change), who are also trying to meet the challenges resulting from their developmental changes and the expectations of their environment⁶². Experts agree⁶³ that individuals raised by warm, loving and approving parents, who take a very good care of their children, control them appropriately, have realistic expectations towards them and good communication skills, are adequately equipped to deal with numerous stressful situations, which are difficult to confront from a cognitive and emotional point of view. It is so because they have acquired the relevant experience through interactions with their parents at particular developmental stages. It should be stressed that every individual's life has a changeable nature and, consequently, new, unresolved problems may arise at their particular developmental stages⁶⁴. Another important observation is the one that the strategies of confronting new situations applied by individuals largely depend on the way they were treated in their childhood as well as the social and emotional skills developed by them in the process of upbringing⁶⁵.

The above mentioned theoretical considerations constitute a substantive justification for our research conducted since 2016 in to the predominant styles of coping with stress and crisis (which affects all individuals to some extent) observed in adolescents⁶⁶, and in to the evaluation of a number of factors strongly influencing the choice of strategies applied by them in order to relieve stress. The focus of this paper is on one of the aforementioned factors, namely the perception of their parents' attitude towards them by adolescents. Not in accordance with the initial research premises, the results of the author's own research haven't practically been incorporated in to this report. The research was to take shape of epidemiological research including the aim and research problems in accordance with the ones included in M. Żurek's thesis, written as part of the MA seminar under the guidance of one of the authors' of this report. The results presented in the thesis were to constitute the comparative material for the one gathered in the population of 150 students (96 girls and 54 boys) of the Lower and Upper Silesia. The above mentioned disparity was a result of the difficult to predict changes in the education system connected, among other things, with the phasing out of junior high schools. The authors base their empirical considerations on the results of their own research and the data obtained from the students attending a BA course conducted by one of the authors⁶⁷.

⁶² W. Badura-Madej, op. cit., s. 18–20.

⁶³ D. Boyd, H. Bee, *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, Wydawnictwo Zysk-Ka, Poznań 2008; M. Ziemska, *Postawy rodzicielskie i ich wpływ na osobowość dziecka*, PWN, Warszawa 1980, s. 6.

⁶⁴ W. Badura-Madej, op. cit., s. 21.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, s. 21.

⁶⁶ D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, K. Mudyń, *Wprowadzenie* [w:] D. Kubacka-Jasiecka, K. Mudyń, op. cit., s. 7–15.

⁶⁷ M. Żurek, *Percepcja postaw rodzicielskich a style radzenia sobie ze stresem u młodzieży gimnazjalnej*, niepublikowana praca magisterska napisana pod kierunkiem dr n. med. M. Borczykowskiej-Rzepki, Krakowska Akademia im. Andrzeja F. Modrzewskiego, Kraków 2016.

Methodological assumptions

The aim of this paper is to identify the relationship between the perception of their parents' attitudes towards them by adolescents and the predominant styles of confronting stress observed in them. It has enabled us to formulate the main problem, namely to pose the following question: "Does secondary school children's perception of their parents' attitudes towards them affect their choice of the style of coping with stress? What is the nature of this relationship?". The research is based on a set of detailed questions concerning the children's preferred styles of coping with stress, the differences in their perception of their parents' attitudes towards them (mothers vs fathers), the influence of their sex on the aforementioned perception and the modifying effect of social and economic factors on the relationship between the perceived parenting attitudes and preferred styles of relieving stress.

The research involves the use of the Scale of Parenting Styles (-SPR-2) developed by M. Plopa, which is a shorter version of the Scale based on the same theoretical assumptions⁶⁸. It consists of 2 separate parts and constitutes a tool used to evaluate children's perception of their parents' educational styles. Each sheet contains 45 items in the form of diagnostic statements, grouped together in 5 scales corresponding to particular parenting styles, which include: Acceptance – Rejection, an Overly Demanding Attitude, an Autonomous Attitude, an Inconsistent Attitude and an Overly Protective Attitude⁶⁹. The SPR-2 questionnaire used here can be applied both to individual and group research.

Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations developed by N.S. Endler and J.D.A. Parker, whose simplified version was prepared by J. Strelau, K. Wrześniewski and P. Szczepaniak⁷⁰, constitutes another research tool used by the authors to identify the respondents' style of coping with stress⁷¹. This particular tool can be applied both to individual and group research, enabling researchers to evaluate the most common styles. The questionnaire contains 48 questions regarding various modes of behaviour observed in individuals confronted with stressful situations. With the score ranging from 16 to 80, the tool enables researchers to identify respondents' styles of coping with stress, which include the task-oriented style, emotions-oriented style, avoidance-oriented style involving an engagement in replacement activities and avoidance-oriented style involving a search for social interactions⁷². The authors also used a survey developed in cooperation with M. Żurek⁷³, which allowed them to gather relevant information concerning the respondents' place of residence, their sex or their parents' education.

The aforementioned research⁷⁴ was conducted among second and third class secondary school children, residents of both urban and rural areas of Silesia and Lesser Poland. It involved a group of 75 respondents aged 14-15, 24 boys (32%) and 51 girls (68%). All the participants of this research had both parents and attended school regularly. 59 children

⁶⁸ M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny...*, s. 313.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, s. 313.

⁷⁰ J. Strelau, A. Jaworowska, K. Wrześniewski, P. Szczepaniak, *Kwestionariusz radzenia sobie w sytuacjach stresowych*, Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych, Warszawa 2007, s. 69.

⁷¹ Ibidem, s. 19.

⁷² Ibidem, s. 19.

⁷³ M. Żurek, op. cit.

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

(79%) resided in rural areas, while 16 of them (21%) were city residents. 57 of their parents (38%) were holders of diplomas of vocational education, 46 parents (30,6%) were high school graduates and 47 of them (31,3%) were university graduates.

Analysis of results

With regard to a limited scope of this paper, this part only includes the analysis of the results confirming the existence of an important relationship between selected variables.

Educational parenting styles identified based on the Scale of Parenting Styles seem to play a significant role here, with regard to the nature of the subject discussed in this paper⁷⁵.

The descriptive statistics for particular scales of the Questionnaire allow for the identification of the maximum values of particular Scales in the group of Mothers, which amounted to: 6 in the category of Autonomy and Acceptance, 5 for the category of Protective parenting style, 4 for the category of Demanding and Inconsistent parenting styles. Therefore, the results obtained for the category of Acceptance and Autonomy (5–6) can be interpreted as average, while the values obtained for the category of Demanding and Protective parenting styles can be perceived as slightly lower than the average (4–5).

The analysis of the results obtained for the group of Fathers shows that, similarly to the situation observed in the group of Mothers, the highest value (6) was obtained for the category of Autonomous parenting attitude. The value calculated for the category of Accepting parenting style amounts to 5. The value obtained for the category of Inconsistent and Protective parenting styles (3) can be interpreted as one well below the average. For both groups, the lowest possible value amounted to 1 and the highest value amounted to 10.

Our conclusions are supported by the results of the research conducted by I. Bielecka-Palenga among a group of 102 adolescent respondents susceptible to addiction to Internet. The value obtained by this particular researcher for the category of Accepting parenting style amounts to 5 in the group of Fathers and 6 in the group of Mothers. The value calculated for the category of Demanding parenting style amounts to 4 in the group of Mothers and 5 in the group of Fathers⁷⁶ (which can be interpreted as average or slightly below average).

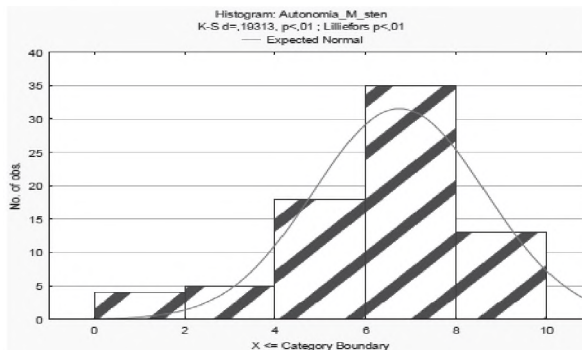


Chart 1. The distribution of results for the scale Autonomia among Mothers – standard ten scale
Source: The M. Żurek, own research, op. cit., 2016.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, s. 21–39.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, s. 21–22; 29–31.

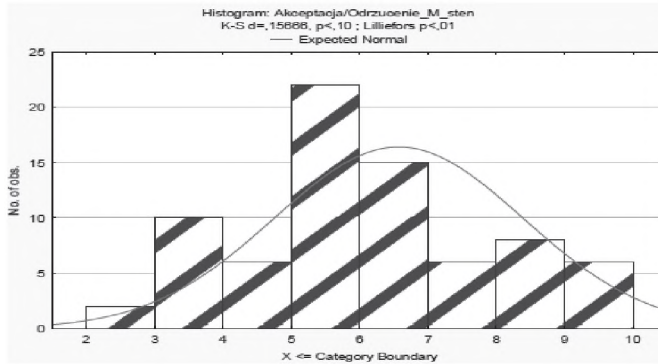


Chart 2. The distribution of results for the scale Approval/Rejection among Mothers – standard ten scale

Source: The M. Żurek, own research, op. cit., 2016.

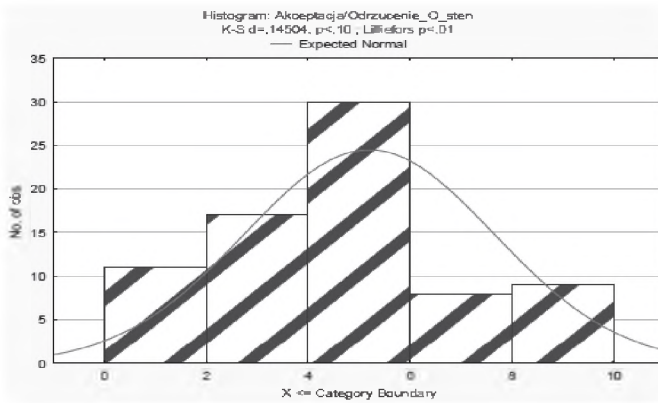


Chart 3. The distribution of results for the scale Approval/Rejection among Fathers – standard ten scale

Source: The M. Żurek, own research, op. cit., 2016.

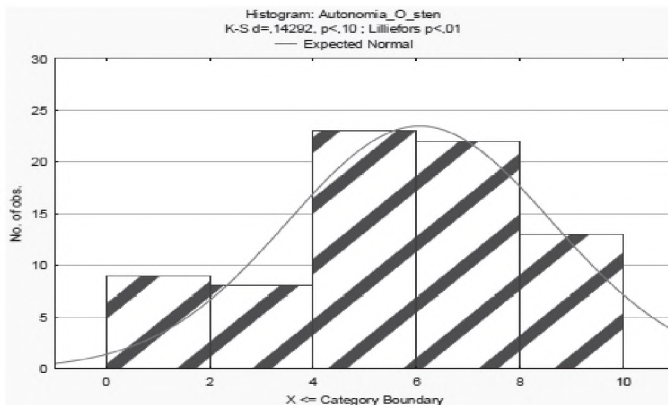


Chart 4. The distribution of results for the scale Autonomy among Fathers – standard ten scale

Source: The M. Żurek, own research, op. cit., 2016.

The results of the research indicate that Acceptance and Autonomy constitute two main parenting styles common both among mothers and fathers. These are the styles which give children a sense of security and help them develop personal skills allowing for a confrontation with stress in the period of adolescence. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the values calculated for those particular parenting styles amount to 6, which is an average result.

Further characteristics of the variables include an analysis of the most common styles of coping with stress observed in secondary school children. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations.

Table 1. The styles of coping with stress (average, median, minimum value, maximum value, standard deviation)

Scale	Average	Median	Minimum value	Maximum value	Standard deviation
Task-oriented style	5,79	6	2	10	2,32
Emotions-oriented style	5,77	6	2	9	1,83
Avoidance-oriented style	5,07	5	1	10	2,06
Engagement in replacement activities	5,2	5	1	10	2,00
Search for social interactions	5,40	5	1	10	2,76

Source: The M. Żurek, own research, op. cit., 2016.

Our conclusions are supported by the results of the research conducted by I. Bielecka-Palenga⁷⁷ in a group of 102 adolescent respondents susceptible to addiction to the Internet. The value obtained by this particular researcher for the category of Approving parenting style amounts to 5 in the group of Fathers and 6 in the group of Mothers. The value calculated for the category of Demanding parenting style amounts to 4 in the group of Mothers and 5 in the group of Fathers (which can be interpreted as average or slightly below average)⁷⁸.

The aforementioned values clearly indicate that children give preference to particular styles of coping with stress. The task-oriented style, with the focus on the resolution of problems and search for information, appears to be dominant. The emotions-oriented style constitutes the second most popular style, which is characteristic of those individuals who, when confronted with situations considered as difficult from a cognitive or emotional point of view, tend to focus on themselves and their own feelings.

Taking in to account the disproportion between the number of boys and girls who took part in the research, one should be critical about the obtained results regarding the children's preferred style of coping with stress and the levels observed on the Scale of parenting styles.

The results of the statistical analysis of the relationship between the children's perception of their parents styles and their choices of styles of coping with stress, which are modified by selected social and demographic factors, seem to be interesting.

The analysis of the influence of the respondents' sex on the relationship between their perception of their parents' parenting styles and their choice of the styles of coping with stress shows that a statistically significant dependence can only be observed in the group

⁷⁷ I. Bielecka-Palenga, op. cit., s. 57.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, s. 57.

of girls⁷⁹. The only statistically significant results were obtained for adolescent girls' perception of their mothers' parenting styles. If they perceive their mothers' attitude as Acceptance, they tend to favour the task-oriented style of coping with stress ($p=,009$) and the search for social interactions ($p=,017$). The Autonomous style corresponds to the task-oriented style ($p=,015$) and the search for social interactions ($p=,003$), whereas the Protective style is closely related exclusively to the search for social interactions ($p=,013$). Their fathers' parenting styles appear to have no influence on the girls' styles of coping with stress⁸⁰.

The respondents' place of residence (rural areas) also constitute an important factor influencing the relationship between their perception of their mothers' attitude towards them as Approving and their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,015$) and the search for social interactions ($p=,033$). The Autonomous style constitutes another example of an attitude influencing the respondents' choice of the task-oriented ($p=,019$) and emotions-oriented style of coping with stress ($p=,015$). No statistically significant connection was observed between the respondents' perception of their fathers' parenting styles and their choice of styles of coping with difficult situations⁸¹.

Other interesting examples of important relationships include the relationship between the parents' level of education and their children's perception of their parenting styles. The following relationship between the mothers' levels of education and their children's choices of particular styles of coping with stress can be observed⁸²:

- a) in the group of children whose mothers are university graduates:
 - no significant relationship is observed between the mothers' parenting styles and their children's choices of the strategies of coping with stress, however,
 - the perception of their fathers' style as Autonomous is related to their choice of the avoidance-oriented style ($p=,0034$),
 - the perception of their fathers' style as Protective is related to their choice of the emotions-oriented style ($p=0,000$).
- b) in the group of children whose mothers are secondary school graduates:
 - the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Approving is related to their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,002$),
 - the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Autonomous is related to their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,024$) and the search for social interactions ($p=,009$),
 - the perception of the fathers' parenting style as Demanding is related to their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,031$) and the search for social interactions ($p=,017$),
 - the perception of the fathers' parenting style as Approving is related to their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,010$), while the perception of the fathers' parenting style as Inconsistent is related to the search for social interactions ($p=,012$),
 - the perception of the fathers' parenting style as Autonomous is related to their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,028$), the emotions-oriented style ($p=,033$) and the search for social interactions ($p=,019$).

⁷⁹ M. Żurek, op. cit., s. 44.

⁸⁰ Ibidem.

⁸¹ Ibidem, s. 44–46.

⁸² Ibidem, s. 51–55.

- c) in the group of children whose mothers are holders of diplomas of vocational education:
- the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Approving and Demanding is related to their choice of the task-oriented style ($p=,014$ and $p=,037$ respectively),
 - the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Inconsistent is related to their choice of the emotions-oriented style ($p=,020$).

The results of the research indicate that the Fathers' levels of education influence the relationship between their parenting styles and their children's preferred styles of coping with stress. However, the children's perception of their mothers' parenting styles is also crucial (a similar relationship is observed for the group of Mothers). The following relationship between the fathers' levels of education and their children's choices of particular styles of coping with stress can be observed:

- a) in the group of children whose fathers are university graduates the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Autonomous is related to their search for social interactions ($p=,019$),
- b) in the group of children whose fathers are secondary school graduates the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Protective is related to the emotions-oriented style ($p=,044$),
- c) in the group of children whose fathers are holders of diplomas of vocational education the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Approving is related to the task-oriented style ($p=,008$), avoidance style ($p=,062$) and search for social interactions ($p=,020$), while the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Demanding is related to the task-oriented style ($p=,020$).

As far as the influence of social and demographic factors on the relationship between the children's selected style of coping with stress with their perception of their parents' styles are concerned, a statistically important relation between the perception of the mothers' parenting style as Approving/Protective and the selection of the solution-oriented style has only been observed in the group of girls who are residents of rural areas and whose both parents are holders of diplomas of vocational education.

The statistical analysis of the results has shown that there exist some recurring patterns. The highest value has been obtained for the Approving style, and the task-oriented style of coping with stress, characterised by a search for solutions, seems to be the most common among adolescents. This observation supports the main assumption of this paper that the perception of their parents' particular parenting styles affects the choices of particular styles of coping with stress made by adolescents.

The results obtained through our research allow for an identification of the most common style of coping with stress among the respondents (the CISS Questionnaire) and their perception of their parents' styles (in a group of mothers and fathers) (the SPR-2 Questionnaire). The responses provided by the respondents in the SPR-2 Questionnaire clearly indicate that, despite the rebellious behaviour demonstrated by adolescents, their tendency to separate from their family for the sake of their peers, they still evaluate their parents' educational efforts positively, which finds reflection in their perception of their parents' styles. Approval and Autonomy constitute the two most common parenting styles, both among mothers and fathers. However, some slight differences concerning the Approving style were observed, where the values stood at 5 for the group of fathers and 6 for the group of mothers. The analysis of the results has shown that most similarities are observed in the perception of those styles in mothers and fathers, which create opportunities for an individual's development, reasonable independence in the process of formation of a new adolescent identity and the development of the sense of distinctiveness. The results

suggesting the existence of similarities between adolescents' perception of their mothers' and fathers' styles as Approving and Autonomous, which are slightly inconsistent with the results obtained by other researchers, require further verification, mostly with regard to a clear disproportion in the numbers of boys and girls who participated in this research (from 24 to 51 secondary school children), which could have contributed to the positive evaluation of the fathers' style.

The results obtained through statistical analysis confirm that particular parenting styles result in particular emotional states and developing children's social competence is connected with particular ways of approaching the tasks arising at different stages of their development. The Approving style, which builds trust, openness and teaches children assertiveness, is predominant and related to the task-oriented style of coping with stress. Parents with this particular attitude towards their children care about their problems and desires as well as respecting them. On the other hand, the Autonomous style, which was important from children's point of view, is characterised by treatment of children as individuals for whom the changing autonomy and independence related needs constitute a natural developmental aspect of changes in their lives. The autonomous style allows parents to show their children alternative solutions to their problems and be respectful of other solutions, even though they may not always approve of them.

The results obtained during our research also helped us to identify the style of coping with stress which is the most common among secondary school children. With regard to a peculiar nature of this particular developmental stage and its uncontrollable character, no dominant style of coping with stress can be observed in children participating in this research. Alternatively, they may show a tendency to apply the avoidance style, which manifests itself in distracting their attention from the stressor and their own reactions, using a wide range of protective mechanisms, negating or ignoring information by entering in stress-free forms of activity, which take a form of replacement activities. The task-oriented style, involving gathering and processing of information about the source of stress and aimed at reducing the cognitive and emotional dissonance through confrontation with problems is the most common one among adolescents.

To some extent, we may interpret the results in terms of the children's perception of their parents' styles. The Approving and Autonomous styles favour the emphatic relationship between children and parents, creating a sense of security and preparing them for a search for alternative solutions to problems and concentration on the source of stress. Another important conclusion is that the Approving style, which is connected with the task-oriented style of coping with stress does not exclude the application of the emotions-oriented style or the one focused on the search for social interactions, predominantly present in the group of girls. This phenomenon can be explained by emotional peculiarities of women, who apply completely different methods of relieving stress than men, which include a search for interactions with their family and friends. Apart from that it should be stressed that in the group of adolescents whose both parents were university graduates no predominant style was identified. Those children may simply be very flexible when it comes to applying the most effective style of coping with stress, depending on their awareness of their personal qualities as well as their social and economic status.

Summary

The analysis of the results of our research shows that the majority of adolescents, despite their turbulent search for their own new identity, still perceive their parents, especially mothers, as warm, trustful and full of empathy. However, the fact that fewer respondents perceive their parents' style as Autonomous (even though the value obtained for this particular style is average) indicates that adolescents do not think that their parents fully approve of their actions, opinions and independence. The results obtained for the Protective style, especially common in the group of mothers, show that mothers find it more difficult than fathers to understand their children's need for autonomy, privacy and independence. The values obtained by the authors of this paper for this particular style are convergent with those obtained by I. Bielecka-Palenga and M. Żurek⁸³. It should be pointed out that not many adolescents perceive their parents' style as Inconsistent, which means that they appreciate their stable emotional situation, order and good interpersonal relationships. We should remember that every single style analysed in this paper has particular educational consequences, especially when it comes to interpersonal skills. Particular styles are characterised by particular levels of parents' control over their adolescent children as well as ways of communicating with them. Particular styles are also connected with particular forms of support and decision taking as well as reward and punishment systems. For this reason the identification of an objective picture of adolescents' perception of their parents' styles is essential and justifies further research in to this issue. The social and demographic factors analysed in this research, such as sex, place of residence (rural areas), mothers' levels of education (secondary school graduates and holders of diplomas of vocational education) and fathers' levels of education (holders of diplomas of vocational education) appear to influence the relationship between the children's perception of their parents' styles and their own styles of coping with stress. For this reason they should also be analysed in a separate paper.

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⁸³ I. Bielecka-Palenga, op. cit.; M. Żurek, op. cit.

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STRESZCZENIE

Beata Skwarek, Maria Borczykowska-Rzepka

**Percepcja postaw rodzicielskich przez dorastających w fazie adolescencji
jako korelat ich stylu radzenia sobie ze stresem**

W prezentowanym artykule autorki analizują ocenę postaw rodzicielskich dokonaną przez dorastającą młodzież jako czynnika związanego ze stylem radzenia sobie ze stresem. Rozważania teoretyczne popierają własnymi badaniami oraz wynikami uzyskanymi w ramach seminarium dyplomowego prowadzonego przez jedną z autorek.

Słowa kluczowe: okres adolescencji, percepcja postaw rodzicielskich, styl radzenia sobie ze stresem.

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