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Selected aspects of attachment parenting in the opinion of college students

Wybrane aspekty rodzicielstwa bliskości w opinii młodzieży akademickiej

Abstract

Aim. This paper aims to learn about the opinions of university students of education on selected aspects of attachment parenting as well as to present those opinions. The problem is not only important from the point of view of the individual histories but it also has a wider, societal dimension. The more rational and healthy parental decisions there are, the better off society gets. The detailed research problems posed in this paper include the opinions of attachment by the respondents regarding the preparation for parenthood; what importance they attribute to hugging the child by the parent; what the opinions of the respondents on positive discipline are, and what their knowledge of the perils related to physical contact is.

Materials and methods. The study was conducted using a diagnostic interview with a group of 124 education students at the University of Zielona Góra.

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Results. The results show that respondents lack knowledge of the importance of physical contact in child development. The reluctance expressed by male respondents to educate themselves as well as prepare for fatherhood may be considered a serious social issue. The fact that, at the same time, they don't accept positive discipline and approve of corporal punishment, which is expressed by over half of the male respondents, seems especially worrying.

Keywords: attachment parenting, touch, positive discipline, corporal punishment, academic youth.

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem artykułu jest poznanie i zaprezentowanie opinii studentów na temat wybranych aspektów rodzicielstwa bliskości. Zagadnienie to jest istotne nie tylko z perspektywy indywidualnych losów, lecz ma także wymiar ogólnospołeczny. Im więcej świadomych, zdrowych zachowań rodzicielskich, tym zdrowsze społeczeństwo. Szczegółowe problemy badawcze postawione w pracy dotyczyły tego, jakie są opinie badanych osób na temat przygotowania do rodzicielstwa, jak respondenci oceniają przytulanie dziecka w relacji rodzic-dziecko, jakie są opinie badanych studentów dotyczące pozytywnej dyscypliny oraz jaka jest wiedza respondentów dotycząca zagrożeń związanych z dotykiem.

Materiał i metody. Badania przeprowadzono metodą sondażu diagnostycznego w grupie 124 studentów Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego.

Wyniki. Uzyskane wyniki badań wskazują na niski poziom wiedzy respondentów dotyczący znaczenia stymulacji dotykowej dla rozwoju dziecka. Brak potrzeby edukacji w obszarze rodzicielstwa oraz brak chęci i gotowości do przygotowania się do roli ojca wyrażone w opiniach badanych mężczyzn można spostrzegać jako duży problem społeczny. Niepokojący jest także brak akceptacji dla pozytywnej dyscypliny przy jednoczesnej aprobacie kar fizycznych wyrażony przez ponad połowę respondentów płci męskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzicielstwo bliskości, dotyk, pozytywna dyscyplina, kary fizyczne, młodzież akademicka.

Introduction

An introduction to the idea of attachment parenting (AP) is the concept of continuum by Jean Liedloff. Her idea is that we can define the concept of a continuum as a continuity, a process. A person's life consists of the fact that the child takes as natural what he/she comes into contact with immediately after birth. The individual's subsequent life will be based on what he/she is familiar with. One of the behaviours necessary to satisfy the continuum, according to J. Liedloff, is to provide the necessary amount of physical contact to the infant through breastfeeding, carrying in the arms, in slings or sleeping in the same bed. The consequence of not satisfying this need is a perpetual sense of restlessness in the individual and an endless search for happiness (Liedloff, in: Reniecka, 2011, pp. 131-134).

The father of the idea of attachment parenting is John Bowlby, who showed that emotional isolation during childhood results in negative consequences in adult-

hood (Bowlby, 2007, pp. 231-240). Based on the continuum theory, paediatrician Dr William Sears developed the idea of attachment parenting, which also refers to the results of the research that J. Bowlby conducted. The premise of attachment parenting is to create conditions conducive to the formation of a secure attachment style in the child. As a result of the popularisation of this thought, the international organisation Attachment Parenting International was conducted to promote this idea even more widely. The organisation has formulated several principles: 1) Prepare for pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood; 2) Feed with love and respect; 3) Respond with sensitivity; 4) Provide invigorating touch; 4) Ensure safe sleep, physically and emotionally; 5) Provide constant loving care; 6) Practice positive discipline; 7) Strive for balance in personal and family life (Reniecka, 2011, p. 133).

However, W. Sears stipulates that attachment parenting is not a set of rules, but rather an approach to parenting. As a result of various life situations, we may not be able to fulfil all the recommendations, but one should not immediately give up on closeness with one's child. The most important thing is to be aware of the seven pillars of attachment parenting and to act in harmony with yourself. You don't have to use all of the pillars simultaneously; you can focus on a few of the most important ones or use the relevant body of knowledge depending on the situation. The golden rule of parenting is individuality. Each parent and child needs a different approach and intensity of individual stimuli, and attachment parenting is about getting close to the child and staying in that relationship. Furthermore, W. Sears also emphasises the advantages of closeness between parents and offspring. Children raised according to these recommendations are more likely to be skilful, confident, compassionate, and curious about the world, but also trustworthy or form lasting bonds (Sears, Sears, 2013, pp. 10-16).

The role of touch in attachment parenting (AP)

Research shows that women are more likely to show support and attachment through touch. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to express their desires or power through touch (Cashdan, 1998, pp. 209-228). Tender touch is perceived quite differently at different times in our lives. And just as in women or girls affectionate touch is accepted in some form throughout life, in boys there is a message very early on that it is something inappropriate. Because of this, the man isolates himself from the tenderness of everyday life and only has the next opportunity to show it towards his newborn child. Very often, this is the first non-sexual, emotionally charged physical contact between a man and another human being in years.

Hugging is extremely constructive for the child in terms of self-esteem. It reinforces the child's conviction that he or she is worthy of love and helps to awaken

the ability to give love. Hugging is a direct route to building the child's emotional self-awareness. Tender gestures instil gentleness in him as he grows. Conversely, deficiencies in hugging have consequences in terms of the inability to form positive relationships. This is because hugging is a message assuring the child of the presence, of the parents' willingness to be with this child (Rocchetta, 2020, pp. 147-154). Being touched by other people is of great importance not only for our subjective feeling, it also has an impact on human physiology. As a result of physical contact, our heart rate slows down, our breathing slows down, our stress hormone levels decrease and, at the same time, we stimulate our body to produce happiness hormones, i.e. endorphins. It can be concluded that touch calms and relaxes us (Heinrichs, Baumgartner, Kirschbaum, & Ehlert, 2003, pp. 1389-1398). According to research, touch has healing power. A nurse touching an unconscious patient can lower his blood pressure because the patient's body needs touch, the primary form of contact (Angier, 2010, p. 279).

In the case of newborn babies, tactile stimuli are essential. Their absence or deficiency can adversely affect the development of the individual and, in extreme cases, lead to the death of the child. Physical contact provides an opportunity for the young person to experience themselves. It is also believed that touch is an essential sense for the proper development of a child's brain and psyche (Braun, 2021, pp. 176-178). For some people, the physical form of communication is the main determinant of a relationship and if they lack someone's affection, they feel unloved.

Jordan Peterson, in his lecture, highlighted a problem occurring among children who are denied physical contact. He noted that children who have never played 'wrestling' are clumsy. They don't know how to play, react inappropriately to situations and are much more fearful. In comparison, children who have often experienced physical interactions during play have an understanding of how strong they are and from which point their pressure will cause pain to the other person. They also know their own body's capabilities and recognise the difference between an uncomfortable position and one that becomes unsafe. He called this a research experience. Games or play that rely on physical contact give children a field to explore their own and others' reactions about how much they can afford, and when it is appropriate to raise the alarm warning that someone is about to hurt them. If we deny them this interaction, we end up with children becoming clumsy, unaware of their strengths or lacking the ability to play together with another person. Another problem becomes that such children are perceived as unattractive play partners and, even though they are the ones who need the most attention at the time, they do not get it. As they develop, instead of naturally learning to interact with others, they perpetuate anti-social behaviour. The person then becomes inattentive, ignored by society and does not socialise. Therefore, denying a child contact play poses a risk to their future functioning in society (Peterson, 2018).

According to researchers, over-stimulation or lack of tactile stimulation in children can lead to emotional disturbances, muscle impairment, and all manner of disorders of major life functions and ultimately end in the death of the child (Pędziwiatr, 2012, pp. 335-336). However, the relationship of touch to health has not yet been thoroughly analysed. Lawrence Casler proved through experiments that there is an effect of physical stimuli on the body and psyche. He developed a theory indicating that touch conveying a sense of security and social acceptance is essential for psychomotor development. He even dared to state that it is as necessary a component of everyday life for the child as the satisfaction of physiological needs (Casler, 1961, p. 49).

Research into the nature of touch demonstrates that undoubtedly genetic factors determine a person's behaviour, but behaviour and inclinations are also influenced by the way they were handled during childhood and the early years when they learned through socialisation certain behaviours and ways of responding. Children who were surrounded by caring touch by their caregivers in later years showed greater resilience to stress and learned faster than other test groups. The research shows that the need for touch should be considered one of the basic needs. It is assumed that in the complete absence of skin stimulation, the organism would die. During development, there are stages when we recognise touch as more than a sensation, e.g. an infant equates touch with safety. In the period when we begin to communicate in other ways, the need for touch diminishes, but it is still essential for normal development (Montagu, 1986, pp. 239-242).

It is also important to refer to research proving that children who did not receive sufficient tactile stimulation at the right time were later unable to establish an appropriate relationship even with their mother. Sally Provence and Rose C. Lipton compared seventy-five infants in institutional care and an equal group of infants raised in the family home. The logical assumption was that in institutions the baby gets relatively less care and maternal touch. It turned out that the infants in institutional care were unable to behave naturally in the arms of an adult. They were stiff, unable to fit in or arrange themselves as if they were dolls. In contrast, children raised at home cuddled seamlessly into embracing arms (Provence, Lipton, 1962).

Howard Shevrin and Povl W. Toussieng of the Menninger Clinic, based on observations of disorders in their adolescent patients, concluded that the cause of the abnormality is neglect of touch in infancy. If this occurs, a fear of touch, proximity or other people begins to develop, which is defined as a psychological disorder. Such children react inappropriately when threatened by touch: they run away, scream, or are aggressive. In general, however, this manifests itself as avoidance of physical contact with other people (Shevrin, Toussieng, in: Montagu, 1986, pp. 242-244).

The need for touch is not as obvious as physiological needs, and the consequences of not satisfying it are not immediately apparent. For this reason, it is very easy to overlook its absence, and it is extremely difficult to make up for this neglect. Some-

times adult people struggle for years in therapy to deal with the consequences of such indifference, while others live, unaware of the need to free themselves from the negative consequences of this neglect. Today, we already have evidence that tactile stimulation at different stages of human development is essential for both physical and psychological development. This is confirmed by animal studies, but also by research, experiments and observations on humans. Maternal deprivation syndrome, involving maternal deprivation during early development, is characterised by infants' skin being pale and dry instead of firm and pink. Subsequent studies show that the effects of postnatal shock are alleviated more quickly and effectively by maternal care, feeding and cuddling of the newborn (Montagu, 1986, pp. 244-290).

Besides knowing the consequences of a lack of tactile stimulation, it is also extremely important to draw attention to the inappropriate use of touch in parenting relationships. This primarily concerns the use of physical superiority of the parent over the child. The simplest definition of physical violence is to define it as a violation of bodily integrity. Maria Łopatkowa, in her postulates against the beating of children, referred to the fact that parents, as well as guardians, mutilate the childhood of young people by using physical violence against them, even though these acts may be aimed at educational or preventive activities (Łopatkowa, 1990, p. 19).

One of the most controversial corporal punishments is spanking. Speaking of spanking, it is impossible not to mention the thought-provoking words of Anna Golus: "Probably in no other area does a child receive more contradictory messages. He learns that touching certain places is bad and not allowed, while hitting them is good and allowed" (Golus, 2019, pp. 210-211). The punishment of spanking is quite controversial nowadays, the older generation considers it a traditional form of child punishment, but the constitution prohibits us from interfering with the corporeality of another person, even one's child, or perhaps it should be emphasised – especially the corporeality of a child (Łopatka, 2000). In 2018, a panel discussion was held on corporal punishment. The following are the conclusions reached by the participants after the meeting:

1. It is worth being an ambassador for the prohibition of corporal punishment and each of us should take on this role.
2. We should improve communication with children so that we respond appropriately to their needs.
3. Corporal punishment is not only a problem in parent-child relationships, it can occur in any dependent relationship where one party is dependent on the other.
4. Violence does not come from unawareness, violence comes from laziness and capitulation (punishment affects the child faster than talking and explaining).
5. It is important to intervene at an early stage of the problem. The state should educate parents who manifest problems about raising their child, and not only when the problem is already entrenched in the family.

6. We should publicise the current legislation against corporal punishment so that the public is aware of it.
7. All corporal punishment affects the development of the child, so we should use alternative parenting methods.
8. The concept of parental responsibility should be introduced into the Polish legal system (*Władza rodzicielska...*, 2018).

Methodological assumptions of research

The subject of the research, whose findings will be presented in this paper, was the opinions of young male and female students on attachment parenting. Meanwhile, the aim of the research carried out was to explore students' opinions on selected aspects of attachment parenting.

Due to the research objective thus defined, four research questions were formulated:

1. What are the respondents' opinions on preparing for parenthood?
2. How do the respondents rate hugging the child in the parent-child relationship?
3. What are the opinions of the respondents regarding positive discipline?
4. What is the respondents' knowledge of the dangers of touch?

The study was exploratory research. It was conducted using the diagnostic survey method, with a questionnaire. It consisted of 22 closed questions, four semi-open questions and one open question. The first part of the research was a pilot, which was carried out in February 2022. The proper part was carried out in April/May 2022 in a group of 124 female and male students of the University of Zielona Góra. For the study were invited second and third-year full-time first-year students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Construction who are not parents. For the analysis of the empirical material, all 124 results of the study subjects were qualified.

Analysis of the survey results indicated that there were differences between the opinions expressed by women and men. Therefore, similar numbers of female students (64 students) and male students (60 students) were selected for the survey proper. As numerical results in the paper are mainly presented as counts and/or proportions, for all comparisons, a proportions test was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences. The null hypothesis in each case was that there was no difference between the proportions. Test results where a $p < 0.05$ value was obtained were considered statistically significant.

Research findings

Preparing for parenthood in the opinion of the surveyed students

The research found that preparing for parenthood in advance is an important issue for the vast majority of female students surveyed (89%) and for only 25% of male respondents. This difference is highly statistically significant: the test of proportions used yields a value of $p < 0.001$. A similar distribution of responses concerned the question about parenting education. The question was: "Is it worth taking the time to educate yourself in this field before deciding to expand your family?". The great majority (75%) of the male respondents declare a lack of willingness and readiness to devote their time to acquiring knowledge and skills in the area of parenting. In opposition to the male respondents, the female student participants (71%) express a readiness to develop their parenting competencies through education. As above, the difference is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Regarding preparation for childbirth, the opinions of both groups appeared to be very similar. Both young women (71%) and young men (67%) mostly declared that preparation for childbirth was of great value to them. The test of proportions indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between women and men ($p = 0.81$) in this area. However, detailing the analysed issue in the form of a question on whether not only the mother but also the father should participate in preparation for childbirth and parenthood indicated different opinions of the two groups of respondents. According to the female respondents (89%), the participation of the father is highly recommended in all preparations, while half of the male respondents express the opinion that the father does not need to participate in preparations for childbirth and parenthood. It can therefore be assumed that the female students surveyed prefer a partnership model of parenthood in which the father's role is as important as the mother's. In contrast, half of the male respondents claim that this aspect of life does not require much involvement on their part. The difference between women and men in the opinions expressed is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

In conclusion to the analysed problem, it can be noted that men show significantly less interest in preparation for the role of a parent and parenting education than the surveyed women. The statistical analysis carried out using the test of proportions shows that the difference in question is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). It is interesting that in the question about preparation for the birth process itself, the views of the men overlapped to a large extent with those of the women. It can be assumed that the men assumed that it was the mother's responsibility to prepare for the birth, rather than each parent's.

Assessment of hugging in the child-parent relationship

One of the basic, and perhaps most important, assumptions of attachment parenting is physical contact in the form of hugging. Recognition and understanding of the child's needs, including the elementary need for safety satisfied by affectionate touch in the form of hugging, is not always present in the parents' consciousness. The analysis of the research described in the paper shows that hugging as an important element of the child-parent relationship is appreciated by both female and male respondents. It should be noted that as many as 100% of female students recognise the importance of hugging, while a smaller percentage of male students surveyed (75%) recognise the high importance of hugging in the parent-child relationship – the difference between women and men is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The gesture of hugging is associated by the surveyed students primarily with showing love (women 96%; men 89%, no significant difference, $p = 0.27$). For female respondents, hugging is also a way of reassurance of presence (83%) and a form of reward (75%). For 76% of male respondents, it is also a form of comfort.

Breastfeeding and the closeness associated with it is another aspect analysed in the paper. In the opinion of the majority of women (76%) and men (74%) surveyed, through breastfeeding the mother can establish a unique bond with her child (no significant difference between genders, $p = 0.8403$). It is worrying that some female students (15%) negate the discussed aspect of attachment parenting as an important behavioural modality conducting a close and unique bond with the child. It is noteworthy that none of the male respondents express such an opinion. While the question about breastfeeding does not polarise the answers of the surveyed group of students, the issue of parents sleeping together with their child until the age of three is highly controversial. Half of the male respondents agree with this way of functioning, while the other half of the respondents have a negative view of co-sleeping between parents and child and consider it not an important part of parenting. The female respondents express both extreme opinions (39% agree, 31% disagree), while almost a third of the respondents (30%) have no opinion on the analysed issue.

In attachment parenting, touch has a special role; its importance for the child's health and proper social functioning has been described above. However, the study shows that eliminating the parent's touch without clear consequences for the child's health is not possible in the opinion of 65% of the surveyed women and 83% of the surveyed men – in the test of proportions, the difference is statistically significant with $p = 0.041$. The study reveals that as many as 30% of the surveyed young women, possibly future mothers, do not perceive the dangers of depriving their child of touch. This may indicate a lack of basic knowledge about caring for a young child. Downplaying the problem of the effects of eliminating touch on the child's health and life may have consequences in the future parenting attitudes of the women surveyed.

Positive discipline

According to the assumptions of positive discipline formulated by Jane Nelsen (2019), respect is the basis of the relationship between adults and children. Discipline does not mean punishment but teaching valuable social skills.

A child's crying is one form of communicating his/her experiences and a way of expressing his/her understanding or misunderstanding of the world. Responding to a child's crying can help a parent to understand the reasons behind a child's behaviour, understand the child's world and teach the child to deal effectively with difficulties that arise. The findings of the survey show that respondents' opinions on this issue are divided. More than a third of the female respondents (35%) and only 7% of the male respondents strongly agree with this type of parental behaviour (statistically significant difference, at $p=0.0004$). No opinion on the continuous reaction to the child's crying is declared by 32% of male and 15% of female students (statistically insignificant difference, at $p=0.05435$). In contrast, opposition to the analysed parental behaviour is expressed by 38% of female and 55% of male students (statistically insignificant difference, at $p=0.0761$).

The surveyed university students, when given a choice among educational methods between the use of punishments or rewards, express very different opinions. More than half of the female students (64%) believe that it is better to use rewards than to punish their charges. This belief is not shared by as many as 49% of the male students and thus recognises that punishments are an important part of the parenting process. The difference in the above proportions in the test is not statistically significant, with $p=0.1132$. A significant proportion of respondents (37% of females and 26% of males) do not express an opinion on this issue. As above, this difference is not statistically significant, at $p=0.3717$.

The positive attitude of some respondents to the use of punishment is reflected in the assessment of the use of spanking as a parenting method, which is still controversial in our society. Although spanking is a form of physical punishment forbidden in our country, for as many as 61% of the male and 8% of the female participants, it is an acceptable form of punishing a child. Disapproval of the use of this form of corporal punishment is expressed by 85% of female and 32% of male students. The differences in the proportions of positive responses among women and men in both of the above questions are highly statistically significant, at $p<0.0001$. The study reveals a picture of young men who, despite changes in the legal system, still adhere to traditional forms of disciplining children. The question that arises is whether they are aware of both breaking the law and "breaking" the child's psyche?

The next issue analysed based on the diagnostic survey carried out can answer the question asked above. Almost all respondents (except 4% of male respondents who do not have an opinion and 4% of female respondents who disagree with this statement)

believe that the use of physical violence against a child is inappropriate. Thus, it can be inferred that spanking is not classified as a form of physical violence by some of the respondents, which shows the low level of knowledge of the surveyed academic youth.

Respondents' knowledge of touch risks

In the analyses undertaken in this paper, an effort was made to pay particular attention to touch, which is a very important aspect of attachment parenting. The question of whether tactile stimulation is an important part of a child's development was met with very divergent opinions from the university students interviewed. More than a third of the female respondents (39%) and 43% of the male respondents recognise that touch is an important and necessary part of a child's physical and emotional development. In contrast, opposite opinions about the lack of importance of touch in children's development are expressed by as many as 46% of the female and 43% of the male students taking part in the research. In both cases, the differences are not statistically significant, with p-values of 0.7639 and 0.9674 accordingly.

According to research (Pędziwiatr, 2012; Braun, 2021), such an extreme situation as depriving a child of touch can lead to a series of disorders in the child's physical and emotional development and even death. The study found that the level of knowledge of some respondents in this area is very low, as up to 28% of female students and 37% of male students believe that a child deprived of touch can develop properly (statistically insignificant difference, $p=0.4096$).

Against the background of such declared opinions, it is not unexpected that the assessment of the impact of physical games (e.g., grappling, wrestling) on the child's emotional development also varies. For 50% of the male respondents and 39% of the female respondents, physical games are important in the emotional development of the child (statistically insignificant difference, $p=0.2963$). In contrast, the lack of relationship between physical play and the child's emotional development is indicated by 50% of the women and 25% of the men. This is a statistically significant difference, at $p=0.0073$. Thus, the surveyed students appreciate physical play to a greater extent and recognise the developmental potential that exists in it. This may be due to their own childhood experiences, when, according to the educational model, boys were encouraged to play physical games, while girls were encouraged to play steadily with dolls.

Discussion and conclusion

The research paper analysed the opinions of university students regarding selected aspects of attachment parenting. Regarding the posed research problems, the analyses carried out allowed the following summaries and conclusions to be formulated.

The responses of the interviewed women and men reveal a large discrepancy in terms of preparation for such an important and responsible social role as parenthood. The vast majority of female respondents recognise that it is important to prepare for parenthood and to educate themselves about it. The vast majority of surveyed men declare a lack of willingness and readiness to devote their time to preparing for the role of a father and acquiring knowledge and skills in the area of parenting. The differences between men and women in the opinions expressed are highly statistically significant.

Research on young women's and men's attitudes towards having children and preparing for parenthood indicates that parenthood itself remains highly ranked in the hierarchy of values of the individuals interviewed (Zygmunt, 2020, p. 384; Matyjas, 2019, pp. 96-102). However, the detailed analyses suggest that it is the women who show greater determination in pursuing their plans for having and raising children. They are ready to make many sacrifices and subordinate the parental role to other life activities. In contrast, men tend to be attached to the traditional division of roles and do not express as much readiness to engage in parenting as women (Zygmunt, 2020, p. 389; Komorowska-Pudło, 2020, p. 36). Research by Kamil Janowicz (2018, p. 172) shows that young men do not declare a readiness for education in the area of future parenthood. The main form of preparation for such an important role is talking to experienced fathers about raising children.

Both female and male respondents appreciate the importance of hugging and consider it an essential part of the parent-child relationship. Breastfeeding is also assessed by the vast majority of respondents as a behaviour leading to a close and unique relationship with the child. This attitude is confirmed in research by Agnieszka Bień, Agnieszka Kozak, Ewa Rzońca, and Sabina Stadnicka (2017, p. 1262), in which up to 95% of women (mothers-to-be) express a positive opinion of breastfeeding. An analysis of the attitudes of pregnant women and their partners towards breastfeeding showed that a positive attitude characterised almost one in three (30%) of the respondents. A neutral attitude was held by more than half (63.2%) of the respondents and a negative attitude by only 6.8% of the respondents. In the group of women, the percentage of those who had a positive attitude towards breastfeeding was higher than among men ($p < 0.001$) (Doroszevska, Chojecka, Bałanda-Bałdyga, & Pilewska-Kozak, 2022, p. 176). In both studies mentioned above, respondents emphasised that natural feeding primarily strengthens the mother-child bond. In contrast, the issue of co-sleeping between parents and their child until the age of 3 is highly controversial and significantly polarises respondents' answers, as confirmed by the analysis of the source literature (Mitrega, 2014, pp. 65-66; Walter, 2012, pp. 19-22).

In the opinions expressed by the surveyed female students, positive discipline finds significantly more approval than in the opinions of young male students. This is re-

flected in the statistical analysis indicating statistically significant differences between the opinions of women and men in the analysed area. This applies to both responding to a child's crying and using a controversial form of discipline such as spanking in the parenting process. It is worrying that as many as 61% of the male respondents rated physical punishment in the form of spanking as an acceptable form of punishment for the child. The results of a study conducted by Joanna Frankowiak conduct a similar reflection. In a group of 897 students, as many as 45% of the respondents believe that there are situations when a child should be spanked, 23% of the respondents claim that spanking does not cause harm, and in the opinion of 16% of the surveyed students, hitting a child in certain situations is the most effective educational method. Statistical analysis (Mann-Whitney U test) shows that there were significant differences for all three statements. Men score higher compared to women, which may indicate a higher level of male approval of the use of corporal punishment in parenting (Frankowiak, 2021, p. 139). An analysis of the 2018 *Ombudsman for children's report* shows that social acceptance of hitting a child is still worryingly high. As many as 43% of surveyed Polish respondents approve of spanking, and one in four respondents agrees with the statement that spanking has not yet harmed anyone. The report shows a downward dynamic in the approval of spanking. Since 2008, the decline is 35 percentage points (Jarosz, 2018, pp. 9-19). However, despite the slow change in the Poles' attitude towards corporal punishment, its approval unfortunately remains high.

The level of respondents' knowledge regarding the dangers of touch is worryingly low. Nearly half of the respondents do not know the importance of tactile stimulation for child development. On the other hand, as many as one-third of the study participants, both women and men, do not see the risks associated with completely depriving the child of touch. Despite the growing interest in attachment parenting and the popularisation of forms of closeness such as babywearing (Walter, 2012, pp. 19-22), there is still insufficient knowledge concerning the importance of touch and physical closeness in the parent-child relationship.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that the results of the study indicate a low level of knowledge among the respondents regarding the importance of tactile stimulation for child development. The lack of need for education in the area of parenting and the lack of willingness and readiness to prepare for the role of a father expressed in the opinions of the studied men can be seen as a big social problem. Also of concern is the lack of acceptance of positive discipline with simultaneous approval of physical punishment (spanking) expressed by more than half of the male respondents. The declarations of young men may have implications for the future functioning of the families they establish and for taking responsibility for the shape of their parenting. At this point, it is worth noting that research by Alicja Budzyńska and Katarzyna Makaruk (2018, pp. 34-35) shows that nearly half of the students surveyed (1,722 stu-

dents from five Polish universities) experienced physical violence from their parents or guardians. The most commonly experienced form of violence was spanking. Physical punishment was more often used against males than females (51.7% vs 41.6%, $p < 0.01$). In contrast, J. Frankowiak (2021, p. 144) indicates a tendency for students to approve of those physical punishments that they experienced.

The opinions of the young male students expressed in the research lead to reflections on the need to undertake education at the secondary school level in preparation for parenting and, above all, to raise awareness of the importance of tactile stimulation and physical punishment for child development. The transmission of patterns of the use of physical punishment (Simons, Wurtele, 2010, p. 645; Frankowiak, 2021, p. 144) may constitute a significant obstacle to the implementation of the assumptions of attachment parenting. In such a situation, promoting this model involves not only increasing the level of knowledge about the role of touch in child development and the acceptance of positive discipline but also encouraging the individual effort involved in breaking the negative, intergenerational endorsement of violent parenting methods.

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