

## **POSITION OF MEN ON WHOM AN ALIMONY OBLIGATION HAS BEEN IMPOSED. ASPECTS OF INDIVIDUAL SAFETY**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

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The paper presents the nature of alimony obligation as a threat to the safety of an individual. The imposed charges affect the sense of security of the subject, as they cause a high probability of being in a critical position. While the issue concerning the alimony itself is a topical issue, the issue of the safety of indebted alimony fathers is ignored. The first part of the paper deals with the phenomenon of alimony evasion in general. Then the phenomenon of divorce and its consequences for a man were analysed. It also shows the difficulties that occur in attempts to normalize private and professional life.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The special importance of the issue of individual safety was highlighted by U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt in his speech “On the Four Freedoms.”<sup>1</sup> At the time, he clearly stated that “the United States fights for four universal freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear.” The individual values were later concretized and published by the United Nations Development Organization (UNDP) in its Human Development Report “New Dimensions of Human Security.” The document also contains the characteristics of personal security, according to which four main truths can be differentiated: personal security is universal and concerns all people all over the world, regardless of where they live; all of its dimensions are interdependent; it is easier to ensure it through prevention than through later intervention and the elimination of consequences of its violation; the object of its interest remains the person.<sup>2</sup>

Individual safety is threatened in many dimensions. K. Kołodziejczyk paid special attention to these problems. The author claims that the risk of threats should be seen in:

- lack of respect for human dignity, which manifests e.g. in racial discrimination, unequal treatment on the basis of gender, reification of employees and voters;
- domination of evil, manifestation of inhuman behaviours which make man lose his humanity and dignity;
- lack of common ecological awareness, degradation of nature;
- “consumer” society, in which consumption has become a cure for economic and educational stagnation, unemployment and poverty;
- objectification of men by sects promising to achieve happiness, liberation from the inconveniences of this world;
- any obstruction or suppression of the individual by the collective.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Oliver Stone's Untold History of the United States Prequel A* [online video], 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZBRcdy7ndI>, (accessed 6 January 2021).

<sup>2</sup> S. Sulowski, M. Brzeziński, *Trzy wymiary współczesnego bezpieczeństwa*, Warszawa, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2014, pp. 40–49.

<sup>3</sup> K. Kołodziejczyk, ‘Bezpieczeństwo. Kontekst personalno-aksjologiczny’, *Zeszyty Naukowe WSO WL. Nauki o Zarządzaniu*, no. 1, 2009, pp. 140–142.

Maslow considered that human needs arise from the personality's development. In their actions, the individuals strive to maintain a logical hierarchy that includes the areas of physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-fulfilment.<sup>4</sup> As can be seen from the pyramid of needs, for most people, a sense of security or lack of it results from concern for everyday existence. Maintaining health or ensuring a source of income becomes the most important issue. Fear of a global catastrophe is pushed to the background. Thomas Hobbes already claimed that a man is an egoist by nature.<sup>5</sup> That is why it is so important to consider individual safety. In the present paper, the focus is mainly on men who are under alimony obligation. Seemingly such a financial charge should not threaten or disorganize life. However, as it turns out the imposition of alimony may carry several negative consequences. The planes that the obligation affects are so important in an individual's life that they cannot be ignored in the subjective sense of safety.

#### ALIMONY EVASION

Non-payment of alimony is a common phenomenon. The problem of alimony debt affects residents throughout Poland. Data collected in the Debtor Register of the InfoMonitor Economic Information Bureau shows that in May 2020 there were almost 282,000 people who evade their alimony obligation. It was estimated that 94% of these debtors were men. The total amount of arrears was nearly PLN 11,000,500,000 (EUR 2,430,045,807). The statistical Polish child support debtor is a middle-aged man (about 45 years old), living in the Silesia or Mazovia province. According to the data, about 1,000,000 children do not receive financial support from their parent, which was ordered by court. The average debt per charged person in the country exceeds PLN 40,000 (EUR 8,836), and the record holder owes his children almost PLN 700,000 (EUR 154,632).<sup>6</sup>

Women also do not pay alimonies. Although the general opinion is that the father is in debt, there is a group of mothers who do not fulfil their obliga-

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<sup>4</sup> A. Miler-Zawodniak, 'Teorie potrzeb jako współczesne teorie motywacji', *Obronność. Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Zarządzania i Dowodzenia Akademii Obrony Narodowej*, no. 4, 2012, pp. 103–106.

<sup>5</sup> R. Piotrowski, *Od materii Świata do materii Państwa. Z filozofii Tomasza Hobbesa*, 2000, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków, p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> Biuro Informacji Gospodarczej InfoMonitor, 'Raport – Dłużnik alimentacyjny', *BIG InfoMonitor*, October 2016, [https://www.big.pl/download/alimenty/raport\\_dluznik\\_alimentacyjny\\_pazdziernik\\_2016.pdf](https://www.big.pl/download/alimenty/raport_dluznik_alimentacyjny_pazdziernik_2016.pdf), (accessed 6 January 2021).

tion. With regard to debtor fathers, the percentage of alimony defaulters appears to be negligible. However, it should be taken into account that in the vast majority of cases the courts grant custody of children to mothers. Fathers are most often discriminated against and charged with alimony in this respect. Such a situation means that the percentage estimates alone put men in a bad light. If child care were divided in the proportion of 50% to 50%, the distribution of debts would certainly be completely different. As in the case of men who are obliged to pay, a statistical Polish female child support debtor is about 40 years old and lives in the Silesia or Masovian Voivodeship. The average overdue amount is PLN 27,000 (EUR 5,834).<sup>7</sup>

The phenomenon of not paying maintenance for own children is not only a social challenge, a morally reprehensible act, but also a legal obligation. In Poland, the alimony obligation is regulated by the “Family and Guardianship Code.” The various articles contained therein relate to, among others, the charged subjects, priority of performing the obligation, scope of benefits or property claims.<sup>8</sup> In turn, the Penal Code provides for penalties for evading the obligation to provide maintenance in three forms: a fine, restriction of liberty and imprisonment.<sup>9</sup> Administrative sanctions can also be applied to a person who evades paying alimony. Such penalties are imposed by an administrative authority competent for the debtor’s place of residence, e.g. the head of a commune, mayor or president of a city. These include: the transfer of information to the register of debtors, temporary retention of the driver’s license, obligation to register at the employment office.

Applications for the prosecution of alimony debtors are submitted not only by their former spouses. Often such actions are taken by municipalities, which are obliged to pay for the debtor benefits from the Alimony Fund. Under current Polish law, a parent who fails to make child support payments for three months may be prosecuted. The Code contains a provision for the equivalent of three unpaid periodic payments.<sup>10</sup>

If the child support debtor, when summoned by the prosecutor, fails to meet the arrears within one month then he or she will be punished. In 2017,

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<sup>7</sup> Biuro Informacji Gospodarczej InfoMonitor, ‘Raport’.

<sup>8</sup> *Act of 25 February 1964 – Family and Guardianship Code, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 1964 no. 9, item 59 as amended.*

<sup>9</sup> *Act of 6 June 1997 – Penal Code, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 1997 no. 8, item 553 as amended.*

<sup>10</sup> *Act of 7 September 2007 on Assistance to Persons Entitled to Alimony, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2007 no. 192, item 1387 as amended.*

Article 209 of the “Penal Code” and the “Law on Assistance to Persons entitled to Alimony” were amended. Earlier laws referred to imprisonment for persistent evasion of payment, but the term “persistent” was ambiguous. Such an unclear legal state made it very difficult for the police and prosecutors. A great solution was to be the imprisonment of alimony debtors by courts, executed by electronic supervision. In this way it would be possible to avoid occupying places in penitentiary institutions by people who are guilty of defaulting on their financial obligations. Overcrowding in penitentiary units is a serious problem. A prison sentence imposed on a maintenance debtor, compared with a sentence imposed in the same way on a murderer, seems unjustified. Moreover, the cost of maintaining one prisoner in Poland exceeds the amount of 3,000 PLN (EUR 660).<sup>11</sup>

The clarification and reinforcement of the regulations of 2017 in popular opinion did not bring the expected effects. According to the InfoMonitor Economic Information Bureau survey conducted in 2018, only one in 20 people noticed the positive change.<sup>12</sup> Thus, further measures were taken. As of 2019, amendments came into force. This time, employment offices were obliged to activate alimony debtors, the allowance paid to the alimony debtor was covered by the half possibility of bailiff enforcement, and higher fines were imposed for obstruction of enforcement. A law charging employers who illegally employ alimony debtors also went into effect on December 1, 2020: “if the employee referred to in § 1(2) (a person who has entered into an employment contract with failure to comply with the written form) is a person against whom enforcement of alimony payments and enforcement of state budget receivables arising from benefits paid in case of ineffective enforcement of alimony payments is pending and he is in arrears with the payment of these payments for more than 3 months – the employer or a person acting on his behalf shall be subject to a fine from PLN 1,500 to PLN 45,000.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Forsal, ‘Ile kosztuje utrzymanie jednego więźnia w Polsce?’, <https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1403200,ile-kosztuje-utrzymanie-jednego-wieznia-w-polsce.html>, (accessed 11.01.2020).

<sup>12</sup> Biuro Informacji Gospodarczej InfoMonitor, ‘Co drugiej osobie zastrzone prawo alimentacyjne nie pomaga’, *Związek Przedsiębiorstw Finansowych w Polsce*, 4 February 2019, <https://zpf.pl/co-drugiej-osobie-zastrzone-prawo-alimentacyjne-nie-pomaga>, (accessed 6 January 2021).

<sup>13</sup> *Act of 6 December 2018 on Amending Certain Laws to Improve the Effectiveness of Enforcement of Alimony, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1360 as amended.*

For proper development and functioning of all children, and even more for those from broken or single-parent families, financial resources are needed. There is no doubt that meeting their basic needs is a necessity. The Ministry of Family and Social Policy oversees the functioning of the Alimony Fund, which is a system of support for persons eligible to receive financial resources from the state budget. Such benefits are available to a person who is entitled to alimony from a parent on the basis of a court decision, if the enforcement has been ineffective. The money is granted to an eligible person in three cases: until he/she turns 18, until he/she turns 25 in case of a school or university education, or in case of a severe disability – indefinitely. However, the alimony fund does not pay all the benefits due to the child, which should be transferred to the child by the parent. The maximum amount paid per charge is PLN 500 per month, but not more than the due alimony. The family must also meet strict criteria, in particular concerning the amount of income per person.<sup>14</sup>

An interesting option for a quick and convenient collection of alimonies is offered by the Economic Information Bureau. The alimony debtor may be entered in a special “InfoMonitor Economic Information Bureau Register.” It is enough to have a court decision stating the amount of alimonies and an enforcement clause. The entry is available to everyone, its cost is only symbolic PLN 1. It may also be used by persons who receive alimonies paid from the Alimony Fund. This causes that people who do not meet their obligations, have difficult access to many services. When signing various contracts, banks and companies verify the reliability of the customer through the resources provided by InfoMonitor Economic Information Bureau. Evading the alimony obligation causes several problems, including difficulties in obtaining loans, inability to buy goods on credit terms or even to sign a contract with a cell phone network. The data on a debtor is entered in the register for 6 years. The basis for removing a name from the database is the complete repayment of debts.<sup>15</sup>

Why do parents not pay alimony on their children? Such an obligation seems natural. It should even stem from a strong child-parent bond. Deliberate evasion of their payment is an expression of lack of concern, care and blatant neglect of the protection of those closest to them. However, some

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<sup>14</sup> A. Janowski, ‘Fundusz alimentacyjny – kto, kiedy i ile z niego dostanie?’, *Poradnik Pracownika*, 7 April 2021, <https://poradnikpracownika.pl/-fundusz-alimentacyjny-kto-kiedy-i-ile-z-niego-dostanie>, (accessed 11 January 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Biuro Informacji Gospodarczej InfoMonitor, ‘Raport’.

Polish people cannot afford alimony. At present, the already high maintenance costs after a separation are usually increasing. If alimonies are added, a person simply becomes insolvent. Such a relationship is the direct cause of the occurrence of a large percentage of people who are charged alimony and at the same time work illegally. On the other hand, there are many cases in which a person can afford to pay but does not do so. This is usually due to the strong emotions that accompany the breakup of a relationship. Anger or grief is typical, and the child becomes a bargaining chip. People approach a divorce case on a win-lose basis. Out of spite, and to make life more difficult for their ex-partner, they do not settle their alimony arrears.<sup>16</sup>

#### DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Divorce is a legally defined form of ending a marriage. The divorce model binding in Poland is based on the fault principle and the concept of matrimonial cohabitation breakdown.<sup>17</sup> In the regulations set forth in the Family and Guardianship Code, the legislator provides the possibility to dismiss a petition in case it would harm the good of the common minor children of the spouses, or if it would be contrary to the principles of social life to pronounce a divorce on other grounds.<sup>18</sup> Direct reference to this ground for refusal in court judgments is not appropriate. Unfortunately, despite these grounds, divorces are a more and more common phenomenon.

In Poland divorce petitions are more often submitted by women than men. About 74% of cases proceed as a result of their initiative. In 2018, 62,800 divorces were ruled, including 45,200 in urban areas and 16,600 in rural areas. The phenomenon of marriage breakdown is significantly associated with the effects of the urbanization process. It is particularly characteristic among residents of large cities. In rural areas spouses are less likely to divorce because they are under considerable pressure from the local community. In rural areas there is no anonymity of inhabitants typical for

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<sup>16</sup> mb, aleBank.pl, 'Kim jest polski dłużnik alimentacyjny – w maju 2020 r. kwota zaległości wynosiła ok. 11,4 mld zł', *aleBank.pl*, 12 July 2020, <https://alebank.pl/kim-jest-polski-dluznik-alimentacyjny-%E2%80%92-w-maju-2020-r-kwota-zaleglosci-wynosila-ok-114-mld-zl>, (accessed 28 December 2020).

<sup>17</sup> B. Hołyst, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczeństwa*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2015, p. 249; cf. M. Błażek, A. Lewandowska-Walter, *Rozwód jako proces. Perspektywa dorosłych i dzieci*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Difin, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> *Act of 25 February 1964 – Family and Guardianship Code, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 1964 no. 9, item 59 as amended.*

cities.<sup>19</sup> The problem of marriage breakdown concerns all social groups. People from different backgrounds and cultures, believers and non-believers, childless and those having large families tend to divorce.<sup>20</sup> The reasons for submitting divorce petitions from both sides are varied. According to research conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research: sufficient reasons for the marriage breakdown are primarily: “brutal treatment of family members by one of the spouses (in this case the consent to divorce reaches as much as 96%), abandonment of the family (81% of indications) and alcoholism of either of the persons in a formalized relationship (71%). Less than 2/3 of respondents considered infidelity (62%) as a sufficient reason for marriage breakdown, and almost half indicated in this regard the incompatibility of spouses (49%) and their sexual inadequacy (47%).”<sup>21</sup> These are also the reasons why marital breakdown is most common.

In the Scale developed by Thomas Holmes et al., which determines the level of stress experienced in the context of life changes units, the most important are life events such as death of a spouse, divorce and separation. Marital breakdown is a highly traumatizing experience in a person's life.<sup>22</sup> Equally burdensome to a formal divorce is the very moment people separate. The breakdown of family life is preceded by misunderstandings and conflicts. Stressful situations are an increasingly integral part of everyday life, and just being with another person brings with it problems that are a standard part of any private relationship.

The consequences of a broken marriage have a decisive impact on the future lives of divorced people. The consequences affect both, men and women. After a divorce the usual rhythm of family, emotional and social life is disturbed. The social status of a divorcee is perceived differently and usually only seemingly accepted.<sup>23</sup> Divorced people often feel lost, confused or even, in extreme cases, ashamed. Sometimes they blame themselves even though it is not always appropriate. They may experience a sense of

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<sup>19</sup> A. Malicki, J. Nocolak, ‘Rozwód – refleksje prawno-społeczne’, *Palestra*, no. 9, 2003, p. 85.

<sup>20</sup> Hołyst, ‘Bezpieczeństwo społeczeństwa’, pp. 252–253.

<sup>21</sup> R. Boguszewski (ed.), ‘Stosunek Polaków do rozwodów’, *Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej*, January 2019, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K\\_007\\_19.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_007_19.PDF), (accessed 28 December 2020).

<sup>22</sup> P.G. Zimbardo, F.L. Ruch, *Psychologia i życie*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo PWN, 1988, p. 368.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. H. Cudak, *Funkcjonowanie dzieci z małżeństw rozwiedzionych*, Toruń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003.



general emotional hurt, the symptoms of which often appear only after the end of legal proceedings and effectively disorganize the process of returning to full strength. Feelings of loneliness, rejection, or depressive states are also common in the lives of divorcees. After all, divorce not only ends the relationship between two people, but also often leads to breaking long-lasting ties among friends and acquaintances.<sup>24</sup> In addition, it can be the cause of ridicule and mockery. For example, the divorced man's friends may contribute to his low self-esteem. For example, jokes that his wife has replaced him with a better model, that he is no longer attractive, or that he is a poor sexual partner may cause a loss of self-confidence.

There are very clear links between a divorce and a risk of suicidal behaviour. The occurrence of suicide requires two components, which are: Suicidogenic Situational System (SSS) and Personal Suicidal Propensity (PSP).<sup>25</sup> The first group includes situations that generate difficulties in life, undoubtedly one of the most significant is the breakdown of marital relations. Resilience to difficult situations and emotional sensitivity also determine the decision a suicidal attempt. The optimal functioning of a person during a divorce is disturbed, which may lead to a number of previously undemonstrated self-destructive behaviours.<sup>26</sup> Poland is in the forefront of countries when it comes to suicide. According to the report of the World Health Organization (WHO), 15 people a day take their own lives, out of which as many as 12 are men.<sup>27</sup> Police statistics only confirm these data, showing that the number of suicides oscillates between 85% and 90%.<sup>28</sup> Among the reasons for this phenomenon, pressure stands out as the main cause. Widespread macho stereotype makes men unwilling or unable to express their emotions, suppressing them inside. Although depression and other mental illnesses more often affect women, they are better able to cope with them, for example by asking for help from a psychiatrist. Men

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<sup>24</sup> Ratuj Rodzinę, 'Społeczne konsekwencje rozwodów', *Ratuj Rodzinę*, <http://ratuj-rodzine.pl/konsekwencje-rozpadu-rodziny/spoleczne-konsekwencje-rozwodow/>, (accessed 28 December 2020).

<sup>25</sup> B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Wolters Kluwer, 2016, pp. 559–602.

<sup>26</sup> Hołyst, 'Bezpieczeństwo społeczeństwa', p. 257.

<sup>27</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 'Poland', *World Health Organization*, [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/suicide-prevention/country-profiles/POL.pdf?ua/](https://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/country-profiles/POL.pdf?ua/), (accessed 28 December 2020).

<sup>28</sup> *Vide* 'Zamachy samobójcze od 2017 roku', *Statystyka*, <https://statystyka.policja.pl/st/wybrane-statystyki/zamachy-samobojcze/> (accessed 28 December 2020).

are much less likely to share their problems with someone competent. The social role ascribed to them also plays an important role in this case. One of the most frequent reasons for suicide among men is job loss. Often in their opinion job loss is a failure. This is especially true when the man is the family breadwinner.<sup>29</sup>

When experiencing a strong crisis, a man is looking for an opportunity to break away from the unfavourable reality. Therefore divorces also occupy an important position in the genesis of various addictions. The fastest and easiest solution seems to be consciousness-altering drugs. Starting to take them allows to relieve stress, escape from anxiety.<sup>30</sup> The breakup of a marriage for many people is a time to start using drugs more often. It is estimated that worldwide, as many as 237,000,000 men and 46,000,000 women suffer from alcohol abuse disorders.<sup>31</sup>

#### DIFFICULTY IN NORMALIZATION OF PRIVATE AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

There is a very large number of women who openly state that they would not get involved with a child support provider. The vast majority of them, despite their clear interest, do not continue their relationship with a man who pays for the maintenance of their children or does not fulfil this obligation. Several factors explain the reason for such an attitude. The attractiveness of a man with children decreases even if the marriage or relationship broke up through no obvious fault of his.<sup>32</sup>

Economic reasons come to the fore. Women mention living in poverty, supporting a man and fear of foreclosure as arguments for giving up such relationships. Even when a potential partner is able to provide for his children and new family, he is generally not perceived positively. Single mothers indicate that they are primarily concerned about providing for themselves and their children, and not for the children of others. They have the conviction that a common offspring is more important than one from

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<sup>29</sup> Hołyst, 'Kryminologia', p. 390.

<sup>30</sup> B. Hołyst, *Zagrożenia ładu społecznego*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, vol. II, 2014, p. 115.

<sup>31</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 'Global status report on alcohol and health 2018', *World Health Organization*, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924156563>, (accessed 27 December 2020).

<sup>32</sup> P. Reszka, 'W sądzie rodzinnym facet jest zły', *Newsweek Polska*, 13 January 2018, <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/alimenciarze-w-sadzie-rodzinnym-facet-jest-zly/zvc1zs4>, (accessed 27 December 2020).

a previous relationship. Lack of common sense and self-respect, irresponsibility, desperation or daring are in turn popular opinions about women in relationships with men who do or do not pay alimony.

Women also point to a whole range of different partnership conflicts that such a state of affairs may cause. Time is undoubtedly an important issue. Men often want to take an active part in the upbringing of their offspring regardless of the relationship with their mother. A new partner, on the other hand, is not always able to come to terms with sharing time between two homes. The role of a stepmother, joint weekends or vacations with the children of another woman are not readily accepted either. Moreover, attempts to make friends with stepchildren do not always bring positive results. Most often children do not accept their parents' new partners. Jealousy, whether justified or not, of the previous woman may be a trigger for conflict. After all, the mother of joint children will always be present to some degree in the man's life.

There is also a group of women who are only focused on having their own families. They do not consider the possibility of starting one with a man who already has children. This applies mainly to young, unmarried women. They assume that since they do not have any obligations when planning a relationship, their partner should not have any either. In addition, there is a high risk of the relationship breakdown worrying about still childless ladies having a child or children together. When this situation occurs, even a well off partner may not be able to handle several child support obligations. Another group of women who do not accept father-men are those who do not plan to have children at all and expect the same from the other party. Such women do not want to feel that they are constantly being overlooked or pushed into the background. They do not intend to become mothers, neither biological nor foster.

It is important not to forget about situations in which the child's mother makes it difficult for her former partner to maintain a proper paternal relationship. Such a woman is also able to effectively disorganize the life of a new family just because of her dislike for the new female partner of the father of her child. It is typical for her to seek to disrupt plans, abruptly change the dates of visitation with the child, and prohibit vacations together. The courts assume that the offspring should live at the same level as their wealthier parent. In practice, this often results in mothers overestimating the cost of child support in order to raise their own standard of living. This behaviour is either a form of revenge or a tool of exploitation. Some women

have never earned money because their partner supported them, and after a divorce they are even less likely to do so. Such ladies even exchange ideas on how to get as much money as possible from the alimony burdened party. The range of ideas is really wide, it is possible to include in the child's maintenance costs the expenses for private classes in seven additional languages or add the amount of PLN 5 a day for ice cream.<sup>33</sup> The amount of alimony depends on the income received, sometimes a man has to pay a really large amount, although the actual expenses for the child do not require it.

Significant difficulties in having new relationships automatically limit the possibility of starting a happy family. A solution for divorcees may be to create a patchwork family.<sup>34</sup> This is a type of reconstructed family unit. This type of relationship is created when previous structures break down. Former spouses form new relationships, and children from broken marriages have to get used to the new situation.<sup>35</sup> Just as it is extremely difficult to sew a bedspread out of several pieces of fabric, it takes an enormous amount of work to create such a family. Unfortunately, despite all the time and effort, this is not always possible.<sup>36</sup>

Reconstructed families face several problems. In the traditional family model, the child's feelings are settled because the child naturally knows who he or she should consider as a relative and how to behave towards them. When parents get involved with other couples, there is a sense of confusion in the offspring. The presence of the parent's new partner and sometimes their children further complicate matters. Often this situation is not generally accepted by the child. The process of adaptation is long. From an early age, people want to experience important moments in the company of their loved ones, without having to choose. Also, reconciling the role of a parent of a new child with the role of a parent of a child from a previous relationship is challenging. In addition, biological parents tend to limit the educational influence of the new partner on the child from the previous relationship, which also causes many conflicts.

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<sup>33</sup> A. Mazur-Puchała, 'Alimenciara – leży i pachnie', *Narodowe Centrum Ojcostwa*, <http://www.prawoajca.org.pl/alimenciara-lezy-i-pachnie/>, (accessed 27 December 2020).

<sup>34</sup> *Vide* W. Eichelberger, A. Gutek, *Patchworkowe rodziny. Jak w nich żyć*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Zwierciadło, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Hołyst, 'Bezpieczeństwo społeczeństwa', p. 244.

<sup>36</sup> M. Raczek, 'Życie budowane na nowo. Rodzina patchworkowa modelem naszych czasów?', *Trójmiasto.pl*, 2 January 2019, <https://dziecko.trojmiasto.pl/Rodziny-patchworkowe-n130136.html#tri/>, (accessed 06.01.2021).

The alimony provider is generally met with disapproval at work if he discloses this fact. This is particularly the case where a significant part of the environment are women. He is perceived as immature and irresponsible, who left his family to the mercy of fate. Stereotyping may lead to not entrusting him with important tasks for fear that he will not fulfil his responsibilities. The Association Debtors Support Program, with the help of InfoMonitor Economic Information Bureau, conducted a survey on the perception of common debtors and alimony providers. The images of these two groups were compared by collecting negative opinions. The results given in percentage were obtained by verifying critical opinions of 285 respondents. Although standard debtors do not enjoy widespread respect and sympathy, in contrast to alimony evaders they rather do not evoke disgust and condemnation.<sup>37</sup> In general, debts can be considered in terms of honour, but alimony arrears are socially perceived through the prism of selfishness and cynicism. Child maintenance supporters are judged harshly by public, who say they lack motivation, dignity and ambition.<sup>38</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The combination of causes and situations mentioned in the text significantly hinders or even prevents a man from putting his life back in order. The alimony obligation imposed on him has a fundamental impact on the normalization of existence. It is not indifferent to his mental health either. Sometimes it leads to addictions and even suicide attempts. It can contribute to the breakdown of strong social ties. Regardless of the fact whether the children come from a formal relationship or not, their appearance in the world radically changes the father's position. Especially when sharing a life with their mother does not coexist. Divorce

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<sup>37</sup> R. Pomianowski, 'Wizerunek osoby zadłużonej w postrzeganiu społecznym. Stereotyp tzw. "alimenciarza" jedną z barier w efektywnym rozwiązywaniu problemu niskiej efektywności systemu alimentacyjnego. Raport z badania cz. 2', *BIG InfoMonitor*, <http://programwsparcia.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/raport-10.07.pdf>, (accessed 11 January 2021).

<sup>38</sup> R. Pomianowski, 'Pat alimentacyjny Może czas na pragmatyczny język korzyści?', *Stowarzyszenie Program Wsparcia Zadłużonych*, <http://programwsparcia.com/zadluzenie-alimentacyjne/pat-alimentacyjny-moze-czas-na-pragmatyczny-jezyk-korzysci/>, (accessed 11 January 2021).

or the breakup of a relationship between two people is not the end of problems. It is the beginning of a series of new threats.

The difficulty becomes creating a new relationship. Although the past should not take away a person's right to seek happiness again, in this case it often does. Relationships with men who has children always raise many questions and doubts. Not all women want to accept their partner's past and the obligations that come with it. They often discourage each other from having relationships with so-called "recovery" candidates. It also happens that men withdraw from plans to stabilize their private lives for fear of repeating past mistakes.

Alimony has a critical role at the level of professional performance. By interfering with the proper course of work, it exposes the man to, among others, a reduction in income or loss of position. This in turn leads to a loss of self-esteem and sometimes to self-destructive behaviour. Mentally weaker men may fall into depression. Also, child supporters should not count on the support of those around them. In the opinion of society they do not represent any desirable values. They face rejection or exclusion. The alimony obligation on a man is a major nuisance for him in establishing proper relations with the surrounding environment.

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