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## LONELY MOTHERHOOD AND ITS SUPPORT BY INSTITUTIONS OF WELFARE AID

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*У статті розглянуто проблеми матерів-одиночок і їхньої підтримки службами соціального захисту. Серед причин виникнення цих проблем представлено кризу батьківства, трудоголізм, розлучення, відсутність добрих стосунків між членами сім'ї. Розглянуто типи одинокого материнства, занадто опікунче або агресивне ставлення матерів до дітей, зроблено висновок про його вплив на майбутнє. Піддано аналізу ступінь соціалізованості і самооцінки дитини.*

*Ключові слова: одиноке материнство, над опіка, криза батьківства, служби соціального захисту, соціальна політика, соціалізація.*

### **Problems of a family and lonely motherhood**

The subject of a family has been discussed in various areas of scientific fields, everyday life and it still arouses great interest. Various, even controversial solutions are often met connected with this subject. New models of families or parents are proposed and advertised in media, though still a traditional way of bringing up children prevails – created by father and mother bound with marital bonds. The role of father or mother in a child's life, different meaning of duties fulfilled by them and effects of their existence, or not, in the offspring's life is invariably taken up, particularly in recent time, as there takes place mass crisis of the family caused by among others divorces or departures to work abroad. Parents sometimes throw their duties on educational establishments, other institutions, or outsiders. At the beginning the widely understood term *a family* should be made precise. It is the first and basic educational group and the oldest and most durable form of coexistence between people. Literature in various way defines a notion of the family. It is considered to be a *group, social division or primary group* with which a child meets. Persons making it up are connected with one another with mutual bonds of kinship, propinquity and most often marriage [1, c. 50].

The family for every man is a basic and indispensable group, members of which mutually co-operate with one another *współdziałają* and are joint by close contact. It is composed of children and parents connected with one another by blood bonds [11, c. 734].

The parents bearing children, undertake a trouble of the educational process of their progeny, point out a basic goal or goals to which they want to and should aim in the scope of this process. It is also significant to care for *foundations*, i.e. transferring a desired hierarchy of values in the society, adequate at an every stage of a child's growth. When the child feels wanted and loved, accepted, he/she is educated in the complete family, it results in his/her correct development, high level of socialisation and self-evaluation. A possibility of observing correct interactions



between parents and children and presented models is significant for the child's future, who will build on this basis his/her adult world.

In the course of upbringing the child in the complete family, one can see differentiation of attitudes of fathers and mothers in relation to their sons and daughters, used different methodology of education or ways of showing feelings. The atmosphere of a family home has an influence on what parent in the future a child educated in a given family will be, what patterns of behaviour, life, social and moral values will take over. Transferred patterns of father and mother, a man and woman and an emotional climate dominating in the family are a source of later attitudes of children as future parents [11, c. 244–245].

Sex of a child and parent is essential, who brings up him/her because it conditions attitudes shown in upbringing, which are important for growth and the future of a young and shaping personality.

Regularities of importance of the father's presence in upbringing a son are revealed in that the child faster and in more exact way acquires positive and negative patterns presented by individuals of the same sex. In the absence of a typical male standard a boy creates a completely distorted picture of features of *a real man*, shows a surplus of aggressive behaviours.

Boys brought up only by mothers are more inclined to become a human wreck and display aggression than those, in education of whom a father also participated [8, c. 805–806].

Basic values brought by the father to the educational process are prompting curiosity and interests, ensuring a feeling of safety. He teaches the child in what way he should obtain education and various skills, which is connected with forming an independence and social respect. He is a personification of all best features, shows the world of values, defines rights and duties, he performs justice. Girls in contacts with the father reveal themselves as women, whereas boys see in him a prototype of manhood. He also supports and supplements emotionally the mother, who is peaceful, having reliance in him [7, c. 39].

Contemporarily the fatherhood's crisis is visible more distinctly and a phenomenon of lonely motherhood increasing alarmingly. Among reasons one can most often indicate workaholicism, divorces, lack of good relations among the family members. A problem of lonely motherhood can be also observed in countries of the Western Europe already since the 60s of the previous century. In Poland, basing on the national record, there are already one million eight hundred thousand lonely mothers, i.e. the father is absent in every sixth family. Recently it is as well connected with a phenomenon of a lonely motherhood from choice, most often occurring among women with high and good grounded social status, independent and consciously decided to bring up their child herself [4, c. 115].

S. Kawula classifies lonely mothers in the following way:

- lonely motherhood from choice – among middle-aged women (most often divorced), with high education, of a stabilised and good economic situation. They as a rule have two children and do not need welfare aid. Her incomes are increased by received alimony;
  - lonely motherhood by chance – meets young women, uneducated without professional experience and often unemployed, who entered accidental
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- relationships without a perspective of continuation. It happens that it is just copying a situation from her family home, often stigmatised with various types of pathologies. They willingly use welfare aid;
- not searched lonely motherhood – among middle-aged women with bad vocational qualifications and small income, often struggling with a problem of lack of work. They sometimes bring up more than one child. They must use aid of welfare institutions and similar others, which offer e. g. paying or co-financing rent for a flat, paying contributions at school or buying an equipment for invalid children. They can also count on support of their family, friends and environment in which they are staying.
  - not quite lonely motherhood – lonely mothers keep household with third persons, they earn their living mutually [4, c. 123].

Absence of the father is particularly felt by a son, as it is connected with disturbances in identification with own sex. Then they seek usually incorrect patterns. Whereas daughters can reveal low self-evaluation and a feeling of insufficient value. The same indicates research performed by K. Pospiszyl [4, c. 115]. Mother cannot replace father in any way because she is not able to show her children typically manly principles of behaviours and stimuli [2, c. 95–98]. Her task is to teach a child how to love and understand other people, ensure an adequate psychical climate joining with a feeling of belonging to the family, and also feeling a warm atmosphere by her child [10, c. 29–30].

Psychics of women and men is different. Mothers unlike men are attributed with variability of moods, which can influence a child, they observe a consequential conduct worse, which is a significant factor in the educational process [10, c. 31]. Children who in the first life stages are brought up only by mothers, in comparison with those, in whose life exist also the father, are less active, they began to be interested in the external world later, their feeling of control is more internalized [16, c. 18].

Lonely motherhood is one of prerequisites causing an overprotective attitudes at the mother and this attitude towards her child harms him/in a unintended way [6, c. 6–8]. When a husband and father leaves, a son may be posed by his mother in a role of *milksop-subject*. She can transfer on her son all her pain and bitterness with the relation, treat him badly and he himself take responsibility for his father's guilt, feel reliable for his mother's happiness. It happens that a woman makes her son dependable on herself, showing that he has emotional support only from her, it happens that she treats him badly and humiliates or uses him. Then the boy becomes scared when he notices signs of manhood taking place in him. His in the future will be marked with fear, an aggressive attitude and a need of love, he will be easier fall to panic and fears, see the world as complete of dangers and traps. Women more often are a parent showing incorrect educational attitudes, particularly when they are lonely mothers. However, in case when she is a a sedate person and comes from a complete family, in which she could observe a correct image of fulfilling roles, she will be a loving, warm, good and just mother [11, c. 31–32].

What attitude will a parent, particularly a lonely mother have to upbringing of her child is very important. Her paternal attitudes create her offspring, relations towards other people and also future fulfilling by them parents; roles. It is also



connected with a degree of socialisation and self-evaluation of a child [9, c. 248–250]. Unfortunately she must herself overcome problems of the everyday life, care for a material well-being, choice of form of her offspring's education or a vocational way. Mother should try to recompense her child a lack of father's presence, quote what opinion he would have in a given matter.

In juridical matters concerning guardianship over a child usually mothers win, as it is most accepted by the society, because of opinions that the mother will better take care of her child [3, c. 115]. This belief can be considered mistaken and stereotype as fathers, particularly with higher education, though they bring up children themselves, most often present appropriate attitudes in the educational process, which contributes to a correct child's development.

### **Support of lonely motherhood by welfare aid institutions**

The basic source which tells us about support for families and a phenomenon of welfare aid is Constitution of the Republic of Poland which in art. 71 indicates the family's right to aid, particularly those who are in a difficult material or social situation. It takes into consideration also if a family is numerous or incomplete. Mothers, who bear a child have the right to particular aid from the side of the state [5]. The incomplete family consisting of a parent and minor children or children and their guardian, was treated the same, as complete. A condition of obtaining aid from the state is that they must be in a difficult material and social situation [15, c. 95].

In act on welfare aid of 12 March 2004 we find its legal definition – it is an institution of a social policy of the state, organised by organs of the local and central government administration co-operating with other institutions, various Churches and also natural and legal persons. Its goal is overcoming difficult life situations, which single persons or families are not able to overcome on their own account [5].

A lonely person in understanding of the act is «a person lonely keeping his/her house, not being in a marital relationship and not having ascendants nor descendants» [5].

Prerequisites of granting welfare aid under the act are among other poverty, orphanhood, unemployment, needs to protect motherhood or numerous families, helplessness in guardianship and educational matters and keeping house, particularly in incomplete or numerous families [5].

Whereas, an organisational entity of welfare aid is considered by the act: a regional centre of social policy, county centre of aid for family, welfare aid centre, almshouse, specialist advising institution, in this a family one, support centre and crisis intervention centre [5].

Forms of aid also for incomplete families are manifested by subject extra payments for meals in milk bars, and they can use financial help when income per person in the family does not exceed 316 PLN. A condition of obtaining such help is fulfilling certain defined terms and not wasting an allowance [5].

Welfare tasks mentioned by the act are the following: granting and paying allowances provided by the act; social work, running and development of indispensable social infrastructure; analysis and evaluation of phenomena causing the need for allowances from welfare aid; realisation of tasks resulting from found social needs, development of new forms of welfare aid and self-aid in the scope of

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identified needs. Entities of territorial government and government administrative organs watch over their realisation and welfare aid centres take care of performing these tasks [5].

Among own tasks of a commune connected with families of lonely mothers, one can mention granting and payment of aid for becoming economically independent in a form of benefits, loans and aid in nature, development of a specialist support for families. However, in a county there are organised homes for mothers with minor children and pregnant and helping them to integrate with the environment, social aid homes are created, protective flats are run for mothers with minor children, they are given a possibility to take part in training [5].

Benefits received from the welfare aid can be divided into monetary (permanent and temporary benefits, or help to become independent) and non-monetary ones (contributions for health and social insurance, material aids, advising, meals and clothes).

A family can receive help in a monetary or material form in order to gain economic independence. Lonely mother, who are touched with a phenomenon of violence or are in another crisis situation, can in the scope of crisis intervention find a shelter and support in homes for mothers with minor children. They will be covered with help to become independent in life and integrate with the society. Data of persons using such benefits should not be given to public information. Persons in a difficult life situation can be helped by a social worker who co-operates with them, helps to become independent and avoid social isolation [5].

### **Lonely motherhood and support by the welfare aid institutions in the light of research**

Research was carried out in a city on the rights of a county, with population of 47 471 citizens in 2011, situated in the podkrapackie province. It was performed by use of the sounding method in a form of the poll technique.

A researched group consisted of 30 lonely mothers, using services of the hereby Commune Welfare Aid Centre. This entity realises own tasks, ordered to the commune and belonging to the commune aid centre for the family on grounds of act on welfare aid and other acts. It operates mainly to protect a life level of families and overcoming difficult situations, creates conditions for satisfying basic needs of complete and incomplete families.

Among a group of respondents 20 out of 30 is in the age interval 25–40 years, whereas the others are less than 25. Half of them has 3–4 children, 10 out of 30 inquired one or two, and only 5 more than four.

Civil state of the researched was presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

#### **Civil state of the researched**

Researched in general	Per civil status		
	Single state	Divorced	Widow
30	22	5	3

*Source:* research in the scope of Master's thesis carried out by Ms J. Antas



From the data contained in the table it results that as far as 22 out of 30 researched are single, 5 divorced and 3 are widows. It proves that nowadays it is more and more often presented model of a family.

The lonely motherhood is also connected with difficult housing situation, often such persons live with their children at parents', have a problem with finding their own flat or paying for it. Results concerning this subject are presented in table 2.

**Table 2**

**Housing-material situation of the respondents**

Researched in general	Per housing situation		
	Own flat	Own house	A rented flat
30	5	10	15
Researched in general	Per housing situation		
	good	average	bad
20	5	15	10

Source: research in the scope of Master's thesis carried out by Ms J. Antas

The results placed in this table show that as far as 15 out of 30 inquired rents a flat, 10 lives in their own house and only 5 out of 30 has their own flat.

Often the fact itself of having the own local does not mean good housing conditions as far as 15 out of 30 researched indicated that conditions at home are average and as far as 10 evaluated them as bad. Whereas only 5 out of 30 women considers their housing conditions as good.

Possessing an own house or flat and adequate conditions is connected first of all with a financial situation. How it looks like among the researched lonely mothers, is presented in table 3.

**Table 3**

**Financial situation of researched persons**

Researched in general	Per employment / lack of it		Per occurrence of financial situations	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
30	20	10	15	15
Researched in general	Per income sources			
	Salary	Pension	Alimony	Family aid
30	20	3	5	2

Source: research in the scope of Master's thesis carried out by Ms J. Antas

On grounds of the results contained in this table one can state that despite as far as 20 out of 30 respondents declares that they are employed and receive permanent salary by this title, as far as half (15) women fights with financial difficulties connected with związanymi bringing up children. Ten among mothers do not work. Other sources of maintenance among the researched is alimony (5 out of 30 persons), 3 women indicate incomes by title of pension and 2 can count on



support coming from the family.

Lonely mothers were also asked to give factors which influenced the fact they decided to use aid of the Commune Welfare Aid Centre. As far as 25 out of 30 indicated that their friends persuaded them, only 5 of them were directed by a good opinion on GOPS.

The results of research indicate that as far as 20 out of 30 mothers had psychical resistance against accepting welfare aid. It was conditioned mainly by shame (15 out of 30 women), lack of knowledge of using such aid (10 persons), and 5 out of them indicted dejection as a cause.

In case of formalities connected with getting welfare aid, they constituted a difficulty for a half (15) of the respondents. Only 5 out of 30 mothers stated that they were refused help because of the lack of funds.

Among the researched mothers there exists a significant differentiation both in a period and frequency of using the welfare aid.

The results were presented in table 4.

**Table 4**

**Period and frequency of using GOPS aid**

Researched in general	Per period of using GOPS aid		
	1 year to 5 years	6-10 years	over 10 years
30	10	5	15
	Per frequency of using GOPS aid		
	Once a month	Several times a month	Several times a year
	10	15	5

*Source:* research in the scope of Master's thesis carried out by Ms J. Antas

As it results from the data contained in this table as afar as 15 out of 30 researched have used help of the Commune Welfare Aid Centre for over 10 years, 10 among them in an interval for a year to five years, while only 5 for a period of 6 to 10 years.

The obtained results indicate that frequency of using aid of this institution is high. As far as 15 out of 30 respondents uses it several times a month, 10 out of 30 once a month and only among 5 mothers frequency of turning for aid is low - several times a year.

The fact is essential whether lonely mothers are granted welfare aid adequately, in compliance with their needs. On grounds of analysis of the acquired results one can state that the most often form of expected help is the monetary aid, as far as the half of the researched (15) wants to receive it, as far as for 10 out of 30 a material aid is useful, and for only and only for 5 of them a form is not important. However, their opinions concerning satisfaction from the received help were presented in table 5.



Table 5

## Satisfaction from aid granted by GOPS

Researched in general	Per financial satisfaction		Per material satisfaction	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
30	25	5	25	5

Source: research in the scope of Master's thesis carried out by Ms J. Antas

From table 5 it results that as far as 25 out of 30 lonely mothers is satisfied both of received financial help, as well as financial and material help offered by the Commune Welfare Aid Centre. Only 5 out of 30 is not satisfied with any form.

The lonely motherhood is nowadays already a common phenomenon, it often touches more and more younger women. Conditions of this phenomenon are divorces or departures of partners for work abroad and who after some lapse of time they stop to be interested in their family which was left at homeland.

Among the researched lonely mothers most of them are in the age interval 25-40. Their situation is worse than married women, they can however, often count only for themselves.

Fulfilling parental duties and ensuring elementary basic life conditions, particularly in relation to permanently increasing phenomenon of unemployment. Often the lonely mothers have to undertake several paid tasks, despite the fact that more than half of the researched indicate that they are employed, maintenance costs are very high, particularly when they have a larger number of children. Wages are not sufficient and many problems are also caused by acquiring a new flat and maintaining it. Half of the researched women systematically uses support of GOPS, most often several times a month and the majority of women is satisfied with received financial or material help. They also have a possibility of help and support at the homes for lonely mothers. The welfare aid centres offer a wide range of aid on various administrative levels.

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