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Problems related to care and education in rural multi-generational families

Problemy z zakresu opieki i wychowania w wiejskich rodzinach wielopokoleniowych

Abstract

Introduction. The article is theoretical and empirical. It raises issues relating to the execution of the care-providing and educational tasks in rural multi-generational families. The theoretical part provides characteristics of care, education, the family, the multi-generational and rural family, as well as pointing out the generations which may occur in the family type under analysis. The results of the research are also demonstrated as conducted in 2023 among parents of rural multi-generational families.

Aim. The purpose of the research was to establish opinions of the parents of rural multi-generational families on methods of the execution of the care-providing and educational tasks (about individual members of the family) and problems that arise in this respect.

Material and methods. The diagnostic poll method and the semi-structured interview technique were used in the research.

Results. The analysis, as performed, demonstrates that rural multi-generational families struggle with the following problems: financial, health-related, school-related, educational, and communicational.

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Conclusion. The following should be organized: a) adult day care for senior citizens provided both in their places of residence and e.g., in community cultural centres; b) access to medical and psychological support; c) additional extracurricular classes and activities for children and teenagers, and senior citizens; d) local occasional events and joint forms of active recreation for different generations; e) fixed public transport connections with powiat (county) towns.

Keywords: family, multi-generational family, rural family, care, education.

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. Artykuł ma charakter teoretyczno-empiryczny. Poruszono w nim kwestie związane z realizacją zadań opiekuńczych i wychowawczych w wiejskich rodzinach wielopokoleniowych. W części teoretycznej scharakteryzowano opiekę, wychowanie, rodzinę, rodzinę wielopokoleniową i wiejską oraz zwrócono uwagę na generacje, które mogą występować w analizowanym typie rodziny. Zaprezentowano również wyniki badań przeprowadzonych w 2023 roku wśród rodziców z wiejskich rodzin wielopokoleniowych.

Cel. Celem badań było ustalenie opinii rodziców z wiejskich rodzin wielopokoleniowych na temat sposobów realizacji zadań z zakresu opieki i wychowania (w stosunku do poszczególnych członków rodziny) oraz pojawiających się problemów w tym zakresie.

Materiały i metody. W badaniach wykorzystano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego, technikę wywiadu według dyspozycji do rozmowy.

Wyniki. Z przeprowadzonej analizy wynika, że wiejskie rodziny wielopokoleniowe borykają się z problemami: finansowymi, zdrowotnymi, szkolnymi, wychowawczymi i komunikacyjnymi.

Wnioski. Należy zorganizować: a) dzienną opiekę dla seniorów usytuowaną zarówno w ich miejscach zamieszkania, jak też np. w gminnych ośrodkach kultury; b) dostęp do pomocy medycznej oraz psychologicznej; c) dodatkowe zajęcia pozalekcyjne oraz zajęcia pozaszkolne dla dzieci i młodzieży oraz zajęcia edukacyjne dla seniorów; d) lokalne imprezy okolicznościowe oraz formy aktywnego wypoczynku wspólne dla przedstawicieli różnych pokoleń; e) stałe połączenia komunikacyjne z miastem powiatowym.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, rodzina wielopokoleniowa, rodzina wiejska, opieka, wychowanie.

Introduction

The family is the main space for human life and functioning, starting from childhood, through youth, life maturity into old age. Its “uniqueness” is evidenced by the fact that it is basic, primary, and natural, as well as the most important and irreplaceable group in human life (Czykier, 2013, p. 160). The family has been and continues to be, a subject of interest for both theoreticians and practitioners involved in various areas of social life. Due to the essential functions it fulfils and the impossibility of replacing it in the realisation of many crucial tasks (in both individual and social aspects), it arouses many emotions, sometimes also controversies.

Over the centuries, the family has undergone many transformations and its model has been in constant change, e.g., from a large, multi-generational, patriarchal family to a small, nuclear family in which partner relationships predominate. Undoubtedly, many factors have influenced this situation, including social, political or economic conditions. Although nuclear families currently predominate, multi-generationalism is still noticeable. There are many reasons for several generations living together. Considering the current trends related to the pursuit of complete independence and self-reliance, it can be assumed that for many young people with children, living together with parents/parents-in-law is rather regarded as a constraint resulting from their unfavourable financial situation, which prevents them from acquiring their own apartment/house. Of course, this cannot be generalised, as there are people who consciously decide to live with older family members in adulthood (see CBOS, 2019, pp. 3–4). What then are the real care and upbringing problems faced by rural multi-generational families? The answer to this question will be presented in the following section.

Theoretical background

There are many ways of defining family, both in the literature and in Polish legislation. By some, it is equated with marriage, while others are far from such views. Due to the relations occurring within multi-generational families, which are important from the perspective of this paper, the definition proposed by Ryszard Podgórski has been adopted, which takes into account the bonds between individual members of the family type in question. According to the author.

The family is the basic primary group (social group) consisting of marriage and children (including adopted children) and the general relatives of each spouse. The essence of the family is two types of social bonds: marital and parental, and in some types of families, also the bond of affinity (Podgórski, 2008, p. 124).

As the title of this paper indicates, the main subject of interest is the rural family, which has currently undergone many modifications – from the traditional family, making its living mainly from work on the land, to the modern family, whose members are employed outside the area of their residence, e.g., in large corporations or public administration bodies located in cities. When observing the development of the Polish countryside, both in terms of infrastructure, housing, and ways of satisfying needs (basic and higher order), it is often difficult for an ordinary observer to determine where the city ends and the countryside begins. It should be noted here,

however, that there is a great diversity in the development of the Polish countryside, which is often related to the distance from poviat or voivodship towns (some suburban villages are described as “dormitories” for people working in the city – they have undergone the greatest metamorphosis). At this point, it is worth emphasising that the subject of the research will be villages located a minimum of 20 km from county towns – a purposeful measure, as this distance generates certain difficulties in the way care and education tasks are performed.

Another issue, relevant to the topic discussed, concerns multigenerationality in the family. The crucial term here is *generation*. In the colloquial sense, the term is sometimes defined as the average period that elapses between the birth of parents and the birth of their children. At the same time, it should be emphasised here that defining a generation solely in terms of biological consequences, i.e., the transition from youth through adulthood to old age, is not sufficient, as it does not take into account the intellectual plane and the socio-cultural context (Czykier, 2013, pp. 161–162). For this paper, it is assumed that multigenerational families are those “in which, as a rule, there should be three generations: grandparents, parents, and children” (Szlendak, 2012, p. 128). It is worth noting that by analysing the age of the oldest and the youngest family members, it can be assumed that due to the rapid progress of civilisation and economic changes, the representatives of the aforementioned generations differ significantly in many respects (these differences also concern issues related to care and upbringing), therefore, according to the currently applied divisions, in contemporary families, representatives of as many as six generations may reside together: Mature, Baby Boomers, X, Y, Z, and Alpha (see Klementowska, Flaszynska, 2018).

The family has always carried out, continues to fulfil and will continue to carry out several functions. In the case of some of them, e.g., procreative, no one can replace it, while in the case of others, e.g., care or upbringing, a range of support institutions have been established, whose task is to supplement, replace and in some cases correct the socially negative influences of adult family members, particularly on children (sometimes also on dependent adults, e.g., ill or senior citizens). For the study, it was assumed that care values are primarily derived from the biopsychic nature of human beings, whereas nurturing values have a socio-cultural pedigree (Albański, Gola, 2013, p. 26). It may happen that care or upbringing activities are not only directed towards children but also towards other cohabiting adults (e.g., the elderly). Analysing the functions of the family presented in the literature on the subject, two approaches can be observed, namely separating child-rearing tasks from care (in which case child-rearing tasks are often included in the socialisation function) (Szlendak, 2012) or combining care and upbringing (then the care and upbringing function is discussed) (Kawula, Bragieli, & Janke,

2005), as it is relatively difficult to separate these issues from each other, especially when implementing parental tasks. Considering the diagnosis and analysis of care and upbringing tasks carried out towards people of different ages (both children, adolescents and the oldest family members) in this study, the name will depend on the type of actions taken towards them.

Methodological assumptions and analysis of research results

The choice of a rural educational environment was supported by the place of residence, as well as the interests of the author of this study. The survey research was conducted in February and March 2023. Their major objective was to ascertain the opinions of persons of working age, responsible for maintaining and running the household and carrying out most of the functions (i.e., parents who are also children of senior citizens), from rural multi-generational families about care and upbringing problems (the idea was to show a picture of family functioning without indicating dependencies). The object of the research search therefore focused on what care and upbringing problems occurred in rural multigenerational families. Given the subject matter and the need to delve into the individual experiences of the respondents, the research used the diagnostic survey method, an individual interview technique according to the disposition to interview (see Pilch, Bauman, 2010; Łobocki, 2009). A prerequisite for the selection of the research sample was the common residence in the village of related or affinal representatives from at least three generations.

The research was conducted in the households of 11 respondents. According to the respondents' decision, only women aged 36-58 who are at the same time mothers of children aged 3-34 and daughters/daughters-in-law of senior citizens, i.e., aged 60-84 (all senior citizens are no longer economically active and receive a pension), with whom they run a joint household, participated. The multigenerational families participating in the study lived in rural areas of the Lower Silesian and Lubuskie Voivodeships. The structure of the studied families is presented in Table 1; to facilitate the identification of individual members of a multigenerational family, a division was applied (similar to Szlendak, 2012, p. 128) into grandparents, parents, and children.

Table 1
Family structure

Specification	Grandparents (age)	Parents (age, education, and occupation)	Children (age, type of school/education, occupation, and place of residence of adult children)
Family 1	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 60 years Grandfather – 66 years Great-grandmother – 83 years	Mother – 36 years old, secondary education, office worker Father – 38 years old, basic vocational education, driver	Son – 14 years old, primary school Daughter – 3 years old, nursery school
Family 2	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 67 years Grandfather – 72 years	Mother – 45 years old, secondary education, salesman Father – 48 years old, basic vocational education, car mechanic	Son – 25 years old, secondary education, studying part-time, works as a car mechanic, lives separately Daughter – 22 years old, secondary education, studies full-time, works as a casual salesperson in a clothing shop, lives in a multigenerational family Son – 13 years old, primary school
Family 3	Father's parents: Grandmother – 80 years old Grandfather – 84 years	Mother – 58 years old, university education, teacher Father – 60 years old, secondary education, own business (construction industry)	Son – 34 years old, university education, works as an IT specialist, lives separately Son – 28 years old, secondary education, studying part-time, works as a salesman in a car showroom, lives with a multigenerational family Son – 23 years old, secondary education, studying full-time, living in a multigenerational family
Family 4	Father's parents: Grandmother – 75 years Grandfather – 76 years	Mother – 50 years old, basic vocational education, hairdresser Father – 55 years old, basic vocational training, welder	Daughter – 30 years old, secondary education, works as an accountant, lives separately Daughter – 24 years old, secondary education, studies full-time, lives in a multigenerational family

Specification	Grandparents (age)	Parents (age, education, and occupation)	Children (age, type of school/education, occupation, and place of residence of adult children)
Family 5	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 70 years Grandfather – 73 years	Mother – 47 years old, university education, office worker Father – 50 years old, secondary education, salesman	Son – 18 years old, general secondary school, lives in a multigenerational family Daughter – 17 years old, high school economics
Family 6	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 65 years Grandfather – 68 years	Mother – 45 years old, secondary education, office worker Father – 50 years old, secondary education, electrician	Son – 20 years old, basic vocational education, works in construction, lives in a multi-generational family Daughter – 16 years old, secondary general education
Family 7	Father's parents: Grandmother – 61 years Grandfather – 67 years	Mother – 41 years old, basic vocational training, seamstress Father – 42 years old, basic vocational training, warehouse worker	Son – 22 years old, secondary education, works as a salesman, lives in a multigenerational family Son – 20 years old, secondary education, works as a driver, lives in a multigenerational family Son – 17 years old, vocational school
Family 8	Father's parents: Grandmother – 62 years Grandfather – 66 years	Mother – 35 years old, basic vocational training, hairdresser Father – 35 years old, basic vocational training, construction worker	Daughter – 13 years old, primary school Daughter – 10 years old, primary school Son – 8 years old, primary school Daughter – 4 years old, nursery school
Family 9	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 60 years Grandfather – 67 years	Mother – 34 years old, basic vocational training, cook Father – 35 years old, basic vocational education, construction worker	Daughter – 14 years old, primary school Daughter – 12 years old, primary school

Specification	Grandparents (age)	Parents (age, education, and occupation)	Children (age, type of school/education, occupation, and place of residence of adult children)
Family 10	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 66 years Grandfather – 68 years	Mother – 42 years old, secondary education, office worker Father – 45 years old, secondary education, technical advisor	Daughter – 22 years old, studying part-time, working as a secretary, living in a multigenerational family Daughter – 17 years old, high school economics
Family 11	Mother's parents: Grandmother – 75 years old Grandfather – died in 2020	Mother – 52 years old, university education, cashier in a bank Father – 55 years old, university education, surveyor	Daughter – 28 years old, university degree, works as an administrative employee, lives separately Son – 24 years old, studying part-time, works as a sales representative, lives in a multigenerational family

Source: Author's own study.

The information presented in Table 1 indicates that seven families cohabit with the mother's parents, while four families cohabit with the father's parents. Of the families surveyed, as many as seven have been cohabiting since the parents' marriage, while four families have been cohabiting for 2 to 10 years (previously, two families had rented a flat in the city or houses in the countryside, while two had owned flats in the city). Among the reasons for this decision, the respondents indicated: a lack of financial resources to buy their own flat/house or too small an owner-occupied flat, grandparents' help with childcare, mutual financial support, and the need to support older family members (mainly due to health reasons). Parents held both physical and white-collar jobs in varied occupations. The participating mothers had educational levels ranging from essentially vocational (four people), to secondary (four people), to higher education (three people). The fathers, aged 35–60, also had varying levels of education – basic vocational was held by six people, secondary education by four people and higher education by one person. The ages of the children in the families surveyed varied greatly (from 3 to 34 years old) – they were therefore at different educational stages (from kindergarten to university). When analysing the situation of children in a multigenerational family, special attention should be paid to children who have already grown up and have a proper education and a job, yet still live with their parents and grandparents. Respondents cited the too low earnings of adult children as the main reason for this, which prevents them not only from buying a flat but even from renting it.

Other reasons cited were the children's desire to save money or convenience, quoting: "Where would they be better off? They have everything on a platter, cooked, cleaned, they don't contribute to anything, they have all the money they earn for themselves."

To identify the main problems of rural multigenerational families, the following issues were concentrated on: 1) in terms of care: on the material situation, living conditions, health situation, and school and/or work situation of children; 2) in terms of upbringing: on the atmosphere of family life, leisure activities, social life, and cultural life. As mentioned, it should be noted that in multigenerational families, care problems can affect both children and seniors. The situation is similar in the case of upbringing – nowadays we are dealing with a situation in which not only older people are bringing up children and young people, but also the younger generation is bringing up representatives of older generations (e.g., influencing the change of certain views, attitudes). Difficulties may also arise in this area. In discussing the issues analysed, therefore, the focus is on care and/or upbringing problems affecting both children and seniors.

The first issue analysed was the family's financial situation. Two respondents rated their family's financial situation as bad, eight as average and only one as good. In the case of the families surveyed, the household budget consisted of funds from the parents' salary (11 families), allowances in the form of 500 plus (8 families with minor children), care allowance (2 families with seniors over 75), and the pension of the oldest family members (10 families). A small amount was also contributed irregularly to the budget by working children (2 cases). However, as the respondents emphasised:

My in-laws don't give a consistent amount every month, so it's difficult to plan something. Sometimes they do the shopping for everyone themselves, and sometimes they give me some money. They also contribute to the fuel for the winter and the bills, but of course, they pay less than us.

As our parents have given the house to us, we do all the payments and renovations ourselves. The grandparents contribute to the daily shopping, but not much either, as they have small pensions and lose a lot of money on medicines. They do, however, support the grandchildren as much as they can, e.g., they pay for school trips and my son's boarding school and they also give the grandchildren a small pocket money every month.

My in-laws are over 80 years old, they get sick a lot and medical costs are high, so they don't contribute to the family budget. In addition, my husband and I still

work and our children also work and study, so when no one is home, we pay a sitter twice a week because we can't leave them alone, and this is also a cost. So the pension is no longer enough for anything else.

All respondents pointed out that, due to the numerous price increases, their families' financial situation had recently become worse:

Utility bills keep going up, when you go to the shops you dread going to the checkout, so I don't know how things will continue. The prices are rising and the payments are stagnating; it's a good thing that the children are old enough to earn their own money for basic needs like clothes, books, and fuel because I don't know how we would manage.

Before the pandemic, my husband and I were planning to renovate our home, we had money set aside, but unfortunately, the whole situation with COVID, the war, and inflation has meant that we can no longer afford the renovation. The worst thing is that I've been saving for so many years and I still can't do the basic things in the house, because the money I've saved now has to be spent on current expenses – sometimes there's not enough from my paycheck.

We have four children and live together with my in-laws. I used to really want to live separately, but in retrospect, I'm concluding that maybe we should live together, because we wouldn't support the family and the house on our own at the moment, especially when it comes to buying fuel for the winter, for example. The increases just scare me.

Unfortunately, the constant pay rises and job insecurity in these hard times are making it harder and harder for us. We used to go on holiday and go out with friends, and today we don't have the money or time to do this because, for example, my husband keeps taking extra routes to earn more.

Another important issue was the living conditions of the diagnosed multigenerational families. Due to the type of development in rural areas, all families lived in pre-war single-family houses, already requiring a lot of money for renovation and modernisation, with four to six rooms, equipped with one (8 families) or two (3 families) bathrooms and one shared kitchen. The properties were owned by senior citizens (4 cases) or the ownership rights had already been notarised to the children of senior

citizens (7 cases). The houses had all available utilities: electricity, water, communal sewage system or septic tank, solid fuel heating (as natural gas was lacking in the respective villages), and internet (of varying quality). Due to the number of people living together:

We are a little short of space, we could use more rooms for the children, especially the grown-ups, and, of course, renovation because we inherited a house in a not very good condition that needs a lot of work.

The house needs renovating and it's a bit cramped, especially when our older son visits us with his family, but somehow we manage.

The grandparents have as many as two rooms, so we had to add rooms in the attic for the older children because it was very cramped. Now we're still a bit short of space too, but we've got nowhere else to put it and we've done enough renovations because we've been doing something for many years – if not the windows, then the roof, the insulation, the facade, the bathroom and so on. How much can you do? Eventually, we could use some rest.

Only 2 of the 11 families diagnosed were satisfied with the size of the house and the number of rooms:

Our house is big, it's almost 220m², so there's enough space. We have 6 rooms, of which the in-laws only occupy one big one, each of the children has their room, we have a bedroom, and there's also a living room with a cooking area.

We have five rooms and two children, so we have enough space. The grandparents have one room, the children have separate small rooms, and we also have a bedroom and a guest room, so everyone has their own space.

When discussing the condition and furnishing of the homes, two very positive responses were received, indicating that the homes had already undergone the necessary internal and external renovations, all rooms were equipped with the necessary equipment (in the case of one family also with a specialised bed for a sick elderly person). Unfortunately, the homes of nine families still require varying degrees of renovation work (inside and/or outside the buildings), e.g., replacing the roof, insulating the building, replacing windows, renovating bathrooms and kitchens, painting rooms, and laying floorboards. There is also a need for necessary equipment, e.g.,

fridge-freezer, washing machine, computers for the children, TV, beds, kitchen, and leisure furniture.

The health situation of family members is another extremely important issue that cannot be overlooked when analysing family care. The research material reveals that the families included in the study have a wide range of illnesses and disorders of both adult family members and children. Some of these are directly related to the age of the family members, some are congenital and some are acquired at a relatively young age. A consequence of the conditions/disorders present in some families was the need to ensure that children and/or grandparents were adequately cared for. The information obtained on conditions occurring in multigenerational families is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Diseases and disorders in multigenerational families²

Grandparents	Parents	Children (regardless of age)
Cancer	Cancer	Asperger's syndrome
Visual impairment	Spinal problems	Visual impairment
Hearing defect	Cardiovascular, urological, and endocrinological problems	Speech impediment
Atherosclerosis	Neuroses, depressions	Mobility problems
Parkinson's disease		Cardiovascular and neurological problems
Back, leg problems (mobility problems)		Diabetes mellitus
Cardiac, neurological, endocrinological, and urological problems		Allergies
Liver and stomach problems		Depression
Neuroses		

Source: Author's own study.

Unfortunately, addictions to cigarettes (one mother and six fathers) and alcohol (two fathers) also appeared in the diagnosed families. In addition, four respondents stated that their husbands consume alcohol occasionally, i.e., "when the occasion arises."

The illnesses or disorders of members of multigenerational families presented in Table 2 result in the need for additional care for some people:

² The names of diseases and disorders are consistent with those of the respondents.

My father-in-law is a recumbent, so he requires 24-hour care. When I'm at home, I do everything, and when we're at work, we have a caregiver hired. It's a good thing that my mother-in-law is there, so she can do some simple tasks with him regularly. I also go to the doctor a lot with my mother-in-law because she has a lot of illnesses, plus one of the children has heart problems and I also have had cancer, so there are a lot of care activities and my health is not the best.

I have a sick child who has mobility problems, so requires extra care, which my husband and I take turns doing, but my parents also help us. We also take care of them, drive them to the doctors, buy medicines, do the necessary shopping, cook, and do the laundry because my mother-in-law can't always manage. Additionally, when they have worse days, we have to help them with daily activities, such as bathing.

Living together with parents means that there are more caring responsibilities. There was a time when our parents helped us, for example with the children, and now it's the other way around. My now grown-up children are also involved in helping their grandparents, as they have a very good relationship with their grandparents, who used to spend a lot of time with them. Now, my children often drive their grandparents to the doctor, to rehabilitation, and visit them in a hospital when necessary, but they also help them with simple activities daily. I can honestly say that in this respect I have a lot of help from my children and I am proud of them.

The statements of the female respondents indicate that health problems affected representatives of different generations in the family. Parents and, if necessary, grandparents were involved in caring for children. Care activities for the elderly (often resulting not only from their age but also from their health status) are in turn carried out by both parents and their now adult children. Problems directly related to the health situation were also mentioned by the participants of the study: highly expensive medicines, difficulties in accessing specialists and physiotherapists, the need to pay for diagnostic tests, and insufficient assistance from state institutions in the area of daycare for seniors.

When diagnosing the level of care provided to children and young people (but also their upbringing), education cannot be overlooked either. The school situation of the children in each family varied greatly. Three families had children with learning difficulties due to speech disorders, concentration problems, emotional problems, and dysorthography – the children benefited from additional school activities (two cases), paid extracurricular activities (two cases) and paid visits to a psychologist (one case).

Moreover, some of them were developing their abilities and/or interests in interest clubs (mathematics, English, or computer science) and were participating in extracurricular activities organised in a city more than 20 km away from their place of residence (ballroom dancing, football, karate, or English) – the parents were transporting the children themselves (as there are no suitable transport links), which generates additional costs due to the distance. Unfortunately, it is important to emphasise that, despite their children's many talents and interests, not all parents (due to financial and time constraints) can guarantee their children's participation in extracurricular activities: "I have talented children, however, I do not have the time or the car to drive them so many kilometres to learn a foreign language or dance. In addition, our financial situation is not the best and the activities cost a lot, so my children have to make do with what is at school."

Families do not currently have problems with school books at the primary school stage, as these are free of charge. In the case of two large families, school books (despite state subsidies, the so-called "Good Start") were sometimes very difficult to obtain, especially when some children started secondary school, as textbooks had to be purchased there on their own, not to mention other equipment. At this stage of education, there are also additional financial burdens associated with children travelling to school or having to live in a boarding school (in the case of higher education, in a dormitory or hostel). Respondents considered the purchase of computer equipment to be the greatest challenge, without which modern education at various levels is almost impossible. The participating mothers stated that:

Funding for a school layette is a drop in the ocean of needs. Hardly anything can be bought with that money today, just like with 500 plus. It's so expensive that when I think about August, I'm already stressed. It's good that the grandparents give the kids PLN 500 each for school supplies every year, so it's easier for us, but there's still the problem with the computer because we have four children and one computer, so there's an eternal war.

I have two children in secondary school, so I have to buy everything. The prices of textbooks are terribly high, and yet that's not all. The extra paraphernalia isn't that expensive, except for the computer we have to buy for my son this year. We'll take it on hire purchase because we can't manage with cash. Plus, after all, we also have to buy clothes, shoes, etc., and these are all very expensive now.

We manage somehow on a day-to-day basis, but at the start of the school or academic year, that's a challenge. Most of the time I buy second-hand textbooks, so I've been searching the internet since July. My daughter is going to go abroad

for the summer holidays to work to earn money for a laptop and a printer, as she needs this equipment for her studies. It is known that she will need to contribute, even my eldest working son has said he will lend her money if she needs it. The extra costs relate to the year-round hostel fee, and prices have become so expensive in the last year that my daughter also has to work during the academic year, even though she is a day student, so that we can manage together.

Since the families diagnosed also included adult children who had already completed post-primary school, the respondents were asked about their educational and professional situation. It turned out that three children no longer lived in the family home, one of whom already had a family of her own. Among the adult children living together with their parents and grandparents, five are studying (day or extramural) and working professionally. As already mentioned when discussing the economic situation of families, adult children live together with their parents mainly for financial reasons, as they cannot afford to buy or rent a flat despite their employment. As mentioned by the respondents:

To be honest, I would like my 28-year-old son to finally become independent. He lives with us and is supposedly an adult, but I have additional responsibilities. It is known that, like all household members, I wash his clothes, and clean his room; when shopping, I have to think about what he will take for breakfast for work, dinner also has to be at a certain time to coincide with his work, since he is home around 7 p.m. He already has a girlfriend, and I hope that when she graduates and finds a job, they will be able to rent something. At times I get the feeling that my younger son wants to move out of the house more than the older one.

The son works and studies part-time. He pays for his studies himself and does not contribute to anything at home; admittedly, he helps with housework, but he is not really completely independent. I already did everything at his age, and he often waits “at the ready.” If I don’t do something for him, such as dinner, his grandmother will do it, and this annoys me. He used to talk about renting an apartment together with his girlfriend, but now he doesn’t bring up the subject. I think he is most comfortable at home.

Concluding on the care issues, it should be noted that an analysis of the material, living, health, school or work situation of working children has shown that certain needs of family members could be met at a higher level than before – this is most often related to the financial situation of rural multigenerational families, which in turn is a consequence of the political or economic situation of the country, but also, for exam-

ple, the situation in the health care or education sectors. Unsatisfied needs are related to housing conditions, equipment with household appliances, consumer electronics (including computer equipment necessary for educational purposes), and, above all, medical care (including rehabilitation), day care for seniors, and greater support to help children with educational difficulties and gifted children, possibly also differentiated assistance for “residential” independence for children already working.

Upbringing in a multigenerational family is somewhat different from an upbringing in a nuclear family because characteristic of this type of family is the exchange of views and experiences between people who even come from “different worlds.”

It happened that my in-laws sometimes argued with my children about trifles, such as how to do something or who should help whom in various activities. They expected that due to their age, everyone (including us) should listen to them because they have more experience. I didn't tell them this (because it's not appropriate), but my children did, e.g., that times have changed, that things are done differently today, and that they too have to adapt to modern times. At times there were sharp conflicts, but over time the situation changed, especially when grandparents had to learn how to use, for example, a TV remote control or a cell phone, and then they called on their grandchildren for help. And over time their views on “modernity” also changed. They saw that some change was needed, that some equipment was useful (e.g., a dishwasher, which they didn't want), that you could do something and not make too much.

I think that our family upbringing went both ways. As the grandparents helped us take care of the children, they also raised them, for example, telling them about holiday traditions, the history of the country, and our family, teaching them to prepare regional dishes, and even cultivating religious rituals (teaching them to pray, going to church with the children). Over time, however, the roles changed. My husband and I would not listen to my in-laws, but my oldest children, for example, did. It was my daughter who taught them how to use a mobile phone, she is the one who often explains to them the changes that are taking place in everyday life. When we want to buy something new for the house, she is the one who explains to them the advantages of it (because I don't have the strength to do it anymore and I know they won't listen to me). I have noticed that it is because of her that the grandparents are more “up to date” on many things and have already changed some of their views.

Personally, I see that sometimes it is the children who raise me or groom me, not them. My parents love their grandchildren, and I see that often “for the sake of holy peace” they agree to many things because they have no choice. Let me give you an example: when my son stayed overnight at his girlfriend’s house, at first they wanted to fight it, but after a few conversations they just let it go because they knew there was nothing they could do. Now the youngsters are living unmarried, and after a few grandmotherly comments, the issue has quieted down. Grandma knows that she has to accept it because it won’t do anything. Recently I even heard from her that maybe the young in this regard are right, because what does a wedding change? I was quite shocked, well, but everyone has the right to change their views, and I’m happy about it.

The atmosphere of family life has a very important role in the educational aspect. In a multigenerational family, this is particularly challenging due to the number of adults, often decision-makers, and the generational differences that can arise in this regard. It should be noted that here we may have to deal with significant differences in views due to age and the differing socio-economic or political conditions in which these people were raised, grew up, worked, etc. Hence, there are different views on everyday issues, as evidenced, for example, by the above quotes from female respondents.

Because representatives of diverse generations (Mature, BB, X, Y, Z, and Alpha), living in a small space, have to carry out particular tasks daily, conflicts of varying intensity can arise. As the respondents noted:

Disputes are a normal thing with us. There’s no fooling ourselves, we all have different characters and it’s hard to get along, especially since grandparents usually think they know everything best because of their age and experience. Quarrels are most often when my husband and I want to make some changes, such as a renovation. If someone hasn’t lived with his parents, he doesn’t know what I’m talking about. It’s a constant combination, of arguments, and underpricing products just so they don’t have arguments to criticize everything. It also happens that there are conflicts between children and grandparents, most often about the grandchildren’s clothing, noise, such as loud music or new gadgets, such as a smartphone, that they use too often and do not want to talk to their grandparents for too long.

In our house there are small children and arguments are mostly about their upbringing, noise, and order. I have my vision and my mother-in-law has her own. She interferes in everything, constantly criticizing something in the presen-

ce of the children. It even got to the point that my eldest daughter began to hold a united front with her grandmother because her grandmother allowed her more and gave her money for clothes, which I did not agree with – as a consequence of this, I argued with my husband and, in addition, there are ongoing arguments between the children.

Knowingly, there are a lot of us, and it's hard to always be great. In general, we get along pretty well, we rather all get along, but it wasn't always like this. We needed time to "get along." At first, the in-laws interfered with everything, but when it got unpleasant, we had a serious conversation and set the rules. It was mainly about raising the children, or rather spoiling them, and meddling in our financial affairs and shopping. Now it's pretty much fine, but living together with parents or in-laws is not easy, especially when you move into their house, where their rules are in place and you can't change anything. I, for one, hope that my children will manage to become independent and we won't live together, because it doesn't serve anyone. There are conflicts with the kids, too, especially about studying and time spent away from home, and of course time in front of the computer or smartphone. Well, the kids among themselves are also constantly arguing about something.

Multigenerationality in a family also affects the forms of leisure and social or cultural life of its members. Research shows that younger people (especially parents) often have to "fit in" with the oldest people in this regard:

As we live with the in-laws, we cannot invite ourselves guests without arranging with them, for example, a date, and a time, because it may happen that at the same time the grandparents have invited someone, yet we share a kitchen and a guest room. It is the same with some trips; we always inform them in advance about our plans, because it may happen that at the same time we need to take them, for example, to some doctor or rehabilitation. This also has its advantages, because when we have some "outings" planned, we have someone to leave the children with.

We live with my in-laws, so our house is "open" to the whole family. I never know when, for example, other children of the in-laws or grandchildren will arrive. I can't hide the fact that sometimes it is tiring because you can't plan anything, but on the other hand I like my husband's family and have good contact with them, so we often spend time together, go on vacation, throw various

parties. Our children are of a similar age and also get along, so we take them to the cinema, the circus, or the playroom, for example. There is always an outsider in our house.

Unfortunately, my parents go to bed quickly, so neither we nor our children can do some kind of longer party because it disturbs them, so we often go out, and leave the house, such as to visit friends and my siblings or meet in some pub.

The information obtained shows that representatives of all generations spend time together on the occasion of holidays, family events, e.g., name days, birthdays, anniversaries, local events, e.g., festivities, and on Sunday afternoons “over coffee and cake” or “lunch together.” Other leisure activities, such as meetings with friends or any “away days,” are reserved exclusively for parents and/or children, e.g., the lake, swimming pool, cinema, theatre, or dance parties. On the occasion of leisure activities, some respondents pointed out transport problems.

All the families surveyed have a car (one or two), however, the father and some grandparents have a driving licence; unfortunately, four mothers do not have a driving licence, so they indicated a dependence on their husband in this respect, which also applied to leisure activities:

I can't go into town on my own to meet up with friends or do some shopping because I don't have a driving licence and the buses hardly run. There are buses from us to the nearest town during the school year (and not very often), but during holidays or holidays, for example, there are only two connections.

Similar statements were made on several occasions, including from women who have a driving licence but do not own a car:

We have one car which my husband uses to commute to work, so by 5 p.m. I don't have the opportunity to go anywhere, even for major shopping. This is particularly inconvenient during the holidays. I could go somewhere with the children because nothing is going on in our village and they are just bored, but I don't have anything to do. Mostly we get along with a friend from the same village and go in her car, for example to the lake or the cinema.

Regarding longer forms of spending time with family members, eight female respondents declared holiday trips with their children. They varied, e.g., in terms of

the distance from the place of residence and the time of the holiday, ranging from trips to second grandparents or extended family, through organised trips within Poland (most often to the sea, lake, or mountains), to trips abroad. Three families, for financial reasons and the need to care for the oldest family members, do not go on holiday in full:

More often than not, my husband drives us, for example to the seaside, and leaves us for a week and then picks us up because someone has to be at home with the in-laws.

I used to go on holiday with the children and my husband would stay at home, but since the children are now grown up and don't want to go with us, my husband and I take a trip abroad or to our mountains for a few days once a year, as they then take care of the grandparents and the house.

Unfortunately, we can't afford to go on trips because we can't afford it, plus we usually do some renovations during the holidays and time is scarce.

Concluding on upbringing issues, it is important to note the interaction of the different generations, most often grandparents on grandchildren (during their childhood) and grandchildren on grandparents (during their adolescence and early adulthood) – it appears that these generations have the greatest influence on each other in terms of exchanging experiences and forming opinions. Furthermore, daily conflicts between all generations (mostly of low intensity), difficulties in organising leisure time due to living together with senior citizens and the need to adapt to their daily rhythm, as well as guaranteeing their care, became apparent. The cultural development of family members (especially children) depends on their communication options, which are sometimes very limited, due to the lack of an additional car and too few connections to the county town where cultural institutions are usually located. An additional problem, which also became apparent in the way care tasks were carried out, was the limited financial possibilities of the family, which affected the level of satisfaction of the diverse upbringing needs of individual members of the rural multi-generational family.

Conclusion

The family performs a great many important functions, both from an individual and social point of view. Considering the number of members, the relationships between them and the significant differences among the representatives of the different generations, the number of tasks to be carried out in a multigenerational family increases significantly. Considering the care and upbringing issues of relevance to this study, it can be seen that how these are carried out depends on the persons involved, e.g., the children or the oldest family members and therefore the problems that arise in this area can be very diverse.

The research material and analysis made it possible to realise the set objective and answer the research problem posed. The opinions of the respondents indicate that among the crucial care difficulties faced by rural multi-generational families on an everyday basis are: 1) financial, which are most often a consequence of the economic situation of the country, e.g., inflation, the situation on the local labour markets, and consequently result in the inability to meet the needs of family members at an appropriate level, e.g., extension and renovation of the house, purchase of furniture, computer equipment, household appliances and white goods, and lead to the inability to financially support already working children to buy or rent a flat³; 2) health of representatives of all generations living together and, as a consequence, difficulties in accessing and travelling to specialists or diagnostic tests and the inability to organise care for senior citizens, which is quite common in rural communities; 3) school-related, concerning both the educational difficulties of children, the need to transport them to extra-curricular activities in remote urban centres, as well as the provision (especially from secondary school onwards) of expensive textbooks and required teaching aids. Additional issues include the lack of adequate computer equipment, the need to travel to remote schools and the need for children to live in a boarding school/dormitory/station.

Upbringing problems, in turn, included conflicts arising in the family in the relationships between grandparents-parents, grandparents-grandchildren, parents-children, and between siblings. Such conflicts are mentioned in their article by Ewa Czubocho and Krzysztof Rejman (2012, p. 14), citing Halina Filipczuk. According to the authors, a multi-generational family consists of people who differ not only in age, physical or intellectual fitness, knowledge, and interests but also in the number

³ Although the literature mentions the material support provided by grandparents, which can contribute greatly to better living conditions for parents and children, the problem can be that many different people live in the same household and housing can be cramped – the lack of adequate space is not conducive to living together and can result in many misunderstandings (Czubocho, Rejman, 2012, p. 17).

and quality of their experiences – people whose ways of thinking, habits and attitudes to life are quite different. And it is precisely these differences that are often the cause of the so-called generation conflict. Due to the place of residence, the lack of ongoing access to cultural amenities and the necessity to constantly commute, e.g., to spend leisure time together, also pose problems of an educational nature. Furthermore, communication difficulties emerged regarding the lack of or limited access to public transport, as well as insufficient financial means to purchase a second car to carry out care and educational tasks for totally or partially dependent persons (children, senior citizens).

The information obtained suggests that the range of care and upbringing tasks in a multigenerational family expands to include not only the children but also the elderly (grandparents). Some of the presented problems would undoubtedly also become apparent in other types of families, e.g., from urban environments, however, focusing on large rural families revealed certain difficulties precisely due to multigenerationality and rural residence; these are issues related to the difficulty of organising care for the elderly, the need to travel to various specialists (both health and education), limited access to cultural goods or communication difficulties.

According to the information presented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, a family experiencing difficulties in fulfilling its caring and child-rearing functions should be supported by the mayor. It consists of:

- 1) analysing the situation of the family and the family environment and the causes of the crisis in the family;
- 2) strengthening the role and function of the family;
- 3) developing the family's caring and child-rearing skills;
- 4) raising awareness of family planning and functioning;
- 5) assisting in family integration;
- 6) counteracting marginalisation and social degradation of the family;
- 7) striving for family reintegration.

Family support can be carried out in the form of work with the family and assistance in the care and upbringing of the child – it is then provided with the family's consent and with its active participation (taking into account its resources and sources of external support). The family can receive assistance from institutions and entities working for the benefit of the child and family, day-care centres and support families. The work with the family is organised by the municipality or an entity commissioned by the municipality to carry out this task, and if the designated entity is a social welfare centre, a family support team may be set up in the centre.

Work with the family can be provided in particular in the form of consultations and specialist advice, therapy and mediation, services for families with children, including care and specialist services, legal assistance, especially in the field of family law, the organisation of meetings for families to exchange their experiences and prevent isolation, called “support groups” or “self-help groups.” In addition, material assistance is guaranteed by law, e.g., Family 500 plus, “Good Start,” Large Family Card or other family benefits (*Wsparcie rodziny przeżywającej...* [Support for families experiencing...], 2019).

Taking into account the ways in which family support is offered and the research results analysed, it is important to stress the need to organise in rural areas: 1) day care for seniors, e.g., in communal cultural centres (similar to day care centres operating in cities), at least in communal villages (with the possibility of transporting people from the smallest surrounding villages); 2) a larger number of carers acting on behalf of social welfare centres for the elderly in the places where they live; 3) better access to free medical assistance (including psychological) and diagnostic tests for people of different ages; 4) a higher level of extracurricular activities in rural schools and extracurricular activities, e.g., in communal cultural centres, both for children, young people, and the elderly, e.g., in the area of healthy living; and 5) a higher number of educational activities for seniors, e.g., in the area of health and education, e.g., in the area of social services, e.g., in the area of social services, for children, young people, and the elderly. 4) more extracurricular activities in rural schools and out-of-school activities, e.g., in community cultural centres, both for children and young people, as well as educational activities for seniors, e.g., in the field of healthy nutrition or new technologies (attention should be paid to activities aimed at “bridging generations”); 5) local special events aimed at spending time together by representatives of different generations living in rural areas; 6) diversified forms of active recreation for people of different ages; 7) additional, permanent, year-round transport links to district towns; 8) support for adult children already in work to become independent in terms of “housing” or to find better-paid work, which can be helpful for this purpose (this refers both to the introduction of some effective solutions at a national level, e.g., in the form of generally binding legal regulations on renting/buying a first flat/house or credit policy, and the organisation of meetings in the municipality, e.g., with financial advisors or job counsellors).

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