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Caregiving and familiarity of young people in the midst of change? Selected aspects

Opiekuńczość i rodzinność młodych ludzi w trakcie zmian? Wybrane aspekty

Abstract

Introduction. In today’s world, spaces are being created where children are not allowed. Since the COVID–19 pandemic, changes have been observed, especially in young people’s caregiving and familism. They are increasingly declaring and demonstrating, for example, people’s aversion, hatred of children and childcare, of parenting and starting families, lack of love towards biological children, positive attitude towards caregivers of non–biological children. The direction of these changes and a preliminary analysis of their causes requires diagnosis and taking pedagogical, social interventions.

Aim. The purpose of the article is to identify the extent, characteristics, and causes of phenomena such as: resentment, hatred of children, aversion to child care, parenting, and family, lack of love towards one’s biological children, and attitudes towards those caring for non–biological children observed increasingly in young people (potential or current legal guardians), to understand the essence of, the state, and the relationship between caregiving, parenting, and life in the modern post–pandemic world – pointing out selected risks and hopes, and arousing reflection on the indicated topics in future professionals, care

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educators, special educators, and teachers, obtained through the expression of opinions and dialogue with people with different views.

Methods and materials. The article uses an analysis of the literature on the subject, journalistic and social media sources, as well as a diagnostic survey method.

Results. Most of the respondents (75%) know a young person who does not like children and about 12% of them know one who hates them. They claim that young people do not want to have children because there are times when it would be irresponsible, preferring to use their young body for their own development, that it is a restriction on their freedom and incurs too much cost. A considerable number of respondents disagreed with the thesis that young people today do not love their biological children. Among the reasons cited were difficult childbirth and lack of strength to care for them (lack of help with care), aspirations not previously fulfilled, and becoming pregnant “by accident.” Some interviewees disagree with the thesis that young people nowadays do not want to take care of their children, and stressed the existing diversity in this group. They pointed to the lack of readiness and maturity to be a parent, the desire for young people to do everything quickly while caregiving requires patience, being comfortable, prioritizing a career over starting a family, among others, as reasons for not wanting to do so. Respondents positively perceive and justify caring for and loving children taken into their care who are not their biological children. From the reasons given, it can be concluded that not everyone is familiar with the specifics and diversity of this care.

Conclusion. The preliminary results gathered are disturbing. The research is worth continuing and detailing. Pedagogical actions with young people and changes in social and health policies are indicated. The identified phenomena should be discussed with candidates for pedagogy.

Keywords: interpersonal caring, people’s unwillingness to care for children, unwillingness to parent, lack of love for a biological child, love for a non-biological child, Opinions of those studying caregiving pedagogy on selected aspects of caregiving and familiarity of young people.

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. We współczesnym świecie tworzone są przestrzenie, w których nie mogą pojawić się dzieci. Od czasu pandemii COVID-19 zaobserwować można zmiany – szczególnie u młodych ludzi – w opiekuńczości i rodzinności. Coraz częściej deklarują oni i przejawiają np. niechęć, nienawiść do dzieci i opieki nad nimi, do rodzicielstwa i zakładania rodzin, brak miłości wobec biologicznych dzieci, pozytywny stosunek do opiekunów niebiologicznych dzieci. Kierunek tych zmian oraz wstępna analiza ich przyczyn wymaga diagnozy i podejmowania działań pedagogicznych i społecznych.

Cel. Celem artykułu jest rozpoznanie zakresu, cech i przyczyn zjawisk takich jak: niechęć, nienawiść do dzieci, niechęć do opieki nad nimi, do rodzicielstwa i rodziny, brak miłości wobec posiadanych dzieci biologicznych oraz stosunek do osób opiekujących się niebiologicznymi dziećmi, obserwowanych w coraz większym stopniu u młodych ludzi (potencjalnych lub aktualnych opiekunów prawnych), zrozumienie istoty, stanu i zależności między opiekuńczością, rodzicielstwem a życiem we współczesnym świecie po pandemii, i w dalszej kolejności wskazanie wybranych zagrożeń i nadziei, a także opinii na dane tematy osób studiujących pedagogikę opiekuńczą.

Metody i materiały. W artykule zastosowano analizę literatury przedmiotu, źródeł dziennikarskich i mediów społecznościowych oraz metodę sondażu diagnostycznego.

Wyniki. Większość badanych (75%) zna przynajmniej jednego młodego człowieka, który nie lubi dzieci, a około 12% z nich zna takiego, który ich nienawidzi. Twierdzą oni, że młodzi ludzie nie chcą mieć dzieci, gdyż są takie czasy, w których byłoby to nieodpowiedzialne, wolą młody organizm wykorzystywać do rozwoju siebie, twierdząc, że dzieci to ograniczenie ich wolności i ponoszenie zbyt dużych kosztów. Spora część badanych nie zgadzała się z tezą, że obecnie młodzi ludzie nie kochają swoich dzieci biologicznych. Wśród przyczyn podawane były m. in.: trudny poród i brak sił do opieki (brak pomocy przy opiece), nie spełnione wcześniej aspiracje, bycie w ciąży „przez przypadek”. Niektórzy ankietowani nie zgadzają się z tezą, że obecnie młodzi ludzie nie chcą opiekować się dziećmi i podkreślają istniejące zróżnicowanie w tej grupie. Jako przyczyny braku chęci do tego wskazali m. in. brak gotowości i dojrzałości do bycia rodzicem, chęć do wykonywania przez młodych ludzi wszystkiego szybko a opieka wymaga cierpliwości, bycie wygodnym, przedkładanie kariery nad założenie rodziny. Badani pozytywnie postrzegają i uzasadniają opiekę i kochanie dzieci przyjętych pod swoją opiekę, które nie są ich dziećmi biologicznymi. Z podawanych przyczyn wnioskować można, że nie wszyscy znają specyfikę i różnorodność tej opieki.

Wnioski. Badania warto kontynuować i uszczegóławiać. Wskazane są działania pedagogiczne z młodzieżą i zmiany w polityce społecznej i zdrowotnej. O wskazanych zjawiskach należy rozmawiać z kandydatami na pedagogów.

Słowa kluczowe: opiekuńczość międzyludzka, niechęć ludzi do opieki nad dziećmi, niechęć do rodzicielstwa, brak miłości do biologicznego dziecka, miłość do nie biologicznego dziecka, opinie osób studiujących pedagogikę opiekuńczą na temat wybranych aspektów opiekuńczości i rodzinności młodych ludzi.

Young people's caring and familiarity during change. Selected aspects.

Introduction – the rationale for reflection

The family, and in its alternative forms the legal guardians who love children, are a “treasure.” However, they can also be a “burden”, impossible for both minors and other adults to bear.

The modern world is increasingly enabling people to make choices, becoming more tolerant of them. Many of its important elements are changing. This includes human caring, parenting, foster care. A world without children is expanding, spaces where they are not allowed to enter and live in, such as hotels, and housing estates (Bachowski, 2021). A fashion against children has also emerged (Rokicka, 2012).

Caregiving is a potential property of the human species and its actualisation is influenced by both external and internal factors, especially self-activity. The genetic basis of caring for offspring and the social conditions for its actualisation and development are therefore important. Contemporary developments in genetic or brain research make it possible to seek detailed answers to some key questions, among which are:

- Is there a caring gene?
- What happens to it during an individual's life?
- How does the brain of an unloved child react?
- How do the baby and mother's organisms heal each other during the foetal period?

Caring can be manifested towards someone or something. It is an activity of people, consisting of their continuous involvement in satisfying the needs of their charges, which they are unable to satisfy on their own, resulting from an asymmetrical dependence on humans, their assumption of responsibility for others and the caring relationship that exists between them. It determines the survival of offspring, future generations, the quality of this life, health and its quality, development, upbringing, independence and socialisation (*cf.* Dąbrowski, 2006b, pp. 70–86, Gajewska, 2009, 2020).

It is difficult not to agree with Zdzisław Dąbrowski (2000a), who emphasised that “care and the fulfilment of caring roles have no positive alternative in human life. Their disappearance would amount to the annihilation of the life of the species homo sapiens” (p. 194). As Sylwia Badora argues, humans are caring beings (Badora, 2013). The familiarity of care

[...] signifies, in a fairly common perception, a specific, derived from the family, desirable and irreplaceable attribute of any form of care. Realistically, it is a function of the various elements, manifestations of family life (sexual activity, parenting, relations between spouses, personal bonds, especially parent-child, hermeticity, economic activity and further). This whole conglomeration of factors imprints the stigma of familiarity on the care that is actualised there (Dąbrowski, 2000b, pp. 194–95).

The quality of this care in the developmental process of the mentee(s) requires care, and therefore continuity, responsibility, selflessness, bonding, and communication in this asymmetrical arrangement of capacities and roles. The question can now be formulated as to what happens to it in modern people. What is the balance between selfishness and altruism in caring (both in the carer and the client), i.e., the relative balance between individualism and sociocentrism, between a world without children and with children, between the digital world, artificial intelligence and the real world, growing up in a world of privilege and obligation (McCredy, 2017). In situations of increasing divorce rates, including in sacramental marriages, does the proposed alternate custody optimally serve the well-being of the child and

the adults involved (parent, new partner, grandparents)? Custody is becoming very institutionalised and finely regulated by law. However, it is known that there is no legal possibility to force a parent to love their child. Custody can be directive and non-directive (combining with parenting). It is a long-standing, long-term task for parents and legal guardians. Often entrusted to siblings or grandparents, it causes a conscious objection, as they do not want to take over the tasks of the parents, preferring to live for themselves, with their own lives. The mentality of these needs is also being transformed.

What becomes important for the new constituting reality is the extent of the phenomenon of resentment or hatred towards children in these relationships (both in the child and adult subsystems). What its scale and extent are today is still a subject of research. However, for some years now I have been interested in observed examples from social reality, conversations with students, which I would like to present in this article.

The topic analysed is multifaceted, hence only issues relating to young people's caring and familiarity, the changes that are taking place in them and selected factors will be indicated. The presented results from our own empirical research, conducted in 2023, have not been published before. They reflect the social perspective of students, future educators, specialising in care, upbringing and prevention on the changes taking place. I hope that their study, the reflections and conclusions formulated will inspire further research and reflection.

Caregiving and contemporary parenting in the course of change – identification of selected elements of the phenomenon

Parenting – biological and social – is inextricably linked to interpersonal care. It can be full of love and fulfilment. So why is it now becoming too much of a chore, postponed or consciously unwanted? A task removed from life? Parenting can be: a gift, a blessing, an opportunity, a conscious choice, an accidental or unrewarding life task, or too much a source of anxiety, pursued regardless of one's lack of maturity for the role. So does the genetic basis of parental care cease to secure the human world's survival?

The content of the term *parenthood* is changing. In the *Grand Dictionary of the Polish Language* it is defined as “being a mother or father and the experiences, feelings, duties and privileges associated with this” (WSJP, 2018). It needs to be established whether this refers to being mum and dad in a biological sense or also in a social sense, especially when a child considers their legal guardian as a parent. The change concerns the fact that in order to be considered a parent, a child does not always have

to be born. Indeed, in the modern world there is an increasing need to recognise as parents people who are the children's guardians, but who are not biologically related. Therefore, a state pro-family policy that understands these changes is becoming increasingly important.

Human care and measures to increase fertility – with a view to the continuity of the species – are undertaken in various ways. This also applies to Poland. Małgorzata Sikorska, in response to the question “Is it possible to increase fertility in Poland?” concluded that it is unlikely (Sikorska, 2022). So why, for example, is family-friendly policy at a different level in the Czech Republic? As Nikolaj Fidzinski (2022) explains, “The state supports regardless of the life model” and he points out that

In 2002, the Czech Republic even had a lower fertility rate than Poland. Eighteen years on, they are leaving not only us but almost all EU countries behind. What is the Czech demographic success story? [...] One can try to build such conditions so that these women – if they want to, of course (and they usually do) – can and are not afraid to give birth to more children (Fidzinski, 2022).

In the conclusions of UNICEF's globally wide-ranging multi-generational study, it was written:

There is no shortage of reasons for pessimism in today's world: climate change, pandemics, poverty and inequality, growing distrust or nationalism. But there is also reason for optimism: children and young people do not want to view the world through the gloomy lens of adults. Compared to older generations, young people are hopeful, more globally focused and determined to make the world an even better place (UNICEF Report, 2021).

The extent to which young people are living in a “digital world”, which creates many opportunities and risks for them, is of great importance for the care of young people and the changes that are taking place in it (see, e.g., Komuda, Fejfer, 2023). This is the case, for example, with access to information (the important, true, but also fearful, false information), with the use of an “electronic nanny,” with children's rights, or with role models who may be shocking (but how to judge this when they have saved a mother and her child). However, it is now difficult to accept a situation that describes the delivery of a seventeen-year-old girl at home with YouTube videos that her mother did not know about (Krasicka, 2021).

The changes concern the increase in the number of infanticides (Marzec-Holka, 2004) and crimes where children are the victims, the increase in aversion to children, even sometimes loathing of children. More and more “child-free” zones

are being created, the fashion against children is widening, which is reflected in a specific way in the magazine like “Bachor” (Rokicka, 2012). One may wonder why this is happening. Or has it always been this way? Are these phenomena indicators of changes taking place? Restricting children’s access to pubs with their parents, is this an aversion to children or a natural creation of children’s lack of access to behaviours and zones of life allowed only for adults? There is a growing number of families without children, parents who do not love, do not like their children.

It is worth noting that a lot is changing in the demographic structure in Poland. According to GUS [CSO] data, compiled on the basis of census results, the number of families has been declining since 2011 and the number of marriages (both with and without children) has decreased significantly, more than half of couples in non-formal relationships are families with children and married couples with children accounted for 42% of all families, the number of fathers has increased and the number of single women has decreased (CSO, 2023, pp. 1–2).

In 2019, there were 24.6% of families without children in Poland, 25% of children born in unmarried couples (CSO, 2022), 60% of religious marriages, around 7 million children (data: Census 2021), one in six couples without a child, which accounted for 6–10% of all, 1.7 million singletons under the age of 15. The number of divorces is increasing. Although statistics do not always show them, as Michal Pajdak argues, fewer divorces are being identified because fewer marriages are taking place (Pajdak, 2022).

After 2011, significant changes were made to foster care. Among other things, the creation of specialised professional foster families was proposed, which from 2011 were supposed to be an alternative to institutions. They were to be a good solution in the social welfare system in the context of the phenomenon of motherhood of minors. According to Maria Kolankiewicz, this has not been successful (Kolankiewicz, 2022, p. 161). There are also changes in the integrity of the family (Ładyżyński, 2023) and in the pedagogical awareness of parents (Wesołowska, 2019).

It is also worth – in my opinion – paying attention to the acceptance of emerging phenomena regarding the state of parents, caregivers, future educators. On whether it is possible to be a nanny, an educator and feel aversion or loathing towards children. It is a fact that there are increasing states of parental helplessness, the phenomenon of parental burnout (Godawa, 2022) and different levels of preparation and professional burnout among educators (Gajewska, 2020, 2023a). Young people perceive the world and themselves in it differently from their parents. Living conditions, privileges, scope and specificity of responsibilities, boundaries, life values are changing. It is worth considering why nowadays – when talking about caring – the ethical dimension of caring needs to be recalled and safeguarded. Is it cared

for in families? According to Z. Dąbrowski, “The caring manifested in the entirety of inter-individual coexistence is proclaimed by Tadeusz Kotarbiński as the basic moral virtue, which he expresses in his original assumptions and its essence – the concept of a caring dependent” (Dąbrowski, 2006). The quoted thought, applied to Z. Dąbrowski’s theory of care, and formulated more than half a century ago by T. Kotarbiński has its justification in the words:

[...] the voice of ethical judgement demands that we take a position of care by no means only towards those whom we have contractually committed ourselves to or in some similar way. The heart has its rights irrespective of contracts. It demands participation in the fate of all beings who are actually dependent on us, and this social entanglement is given to us by the totality of the situation (Kotarbiński, 1970, pp. 146–147).

The current situation is constantly changing and therefore needs to be borne in mind when it comes to planning an increase in fertility rates. Małgorzata Sikorska argues that

The reasons for low fertility rates are related to 1) demographics – the number of women of childbearing age is declining in successive generations; 2) ineffective and unstable family policies; 3) social factors, e.g. the sense of insecurity experienced by many young couples and the various “costs” of motherhood, which may affect women’s further procreative decisions (these include the situation of mothers on the labour market, their “triple burden” and the existence of the pattern of the “self-sacrificing” mother and the social pressures associated with it) (Sikorska, 2022, p. 1).

Factors of selected phenomena of young people’s caring and parenting and knowledge of people who dislike or hate children in students’ perceptions – own research 2023

Methodology

The research was exploratory in nature. Earl Babbie states that:

As a rule, exploratory research has three aims: 1) to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire to better understand the subject matter, 2) to explore the possibility of undertaking wider research, and 3) to develop methods to be used in further research (Babbie, 2004, pp. 111–112).

The respondents were all students of care and prevention pedagogy, special pedagogy and postgraduate students of pedagogical qualifications at the University of Zielona Góra, who in the period covered by the study realised the subject of care pedagogy or were students of care and prevention pedagogy within diploma seminars. In spring 2023, the statements of 49 respondents were analysed, including 18 first-year undergraduate students, and 19 more in the autumn. A total of 68 people were surveyed. The surveys were anonymous, mostly conducted in a face-to-face, paper-based form; only 13 people commented online.

The subject of the research was the opinions of those studying the foundations of care pedagogy on selected issues relating to young people's caring and familiarity. The survey sought answers to six questions that addressed descriptive, diagnostic research questions. Four of these were open-ended:

- Why don't young people want to look after children these days?
- Why don't they want to have children?
- Why don't they love their biological children?
- Why do adult people care for and love the children taken into their care who are not their biological children?

Two other questions were closed:

- Do respondents know a young person who does not like children?
- Do respondents know a young person who hates children?

Despite the two questions, no resolution was formulated at this stage of the explanatory problem research. This was also due to the four open-ended questions, which – after initial categorisation – will form the basis for a broader and more in-depth study, concerning not diagnostic opinions on selected topics, but the objective state of the phenomena.

In line with E. Babbie's guidance, the results obtained in the assumed manner allow for a discernment of the research topic but have the disadvantage that they usually do not provide satisfactory answers to the research questions and are rarely definitive, which is related to their representativeness. They may, however, indicate such answers and suggest what methods can be used to obtain them (Babbie, 2004).

Presentation of selected results with reflection

Preliminary and partial results were presented at conferences in Lublin 2023 (Gajewska, 2023b) and Nowa Sól (Gajewska, 2023c). They have not yet been published.

Knowing a young person who dislikes or hates children

The vast majority of respondents (51 people, which was 75% of the total group) know at least one young person who dislikes children. Fewer than 8 people, or 12% of those diagnosed, know a young person who hates children.

If one dislikes or hates children, it is worth – given that it is not in accordance with human nature – considering the reasons for this. Perhaps some of them can be eliminated.

Reasons for young people's reluctance to care for children

I started my analysis of the responses to the question of why young people currently do not want to look after children with the responses of 18 people from the residential groups, who are one and two years after their high school graduation. No metric was included in the survey. The most important thing was the reflection and subsequent dialogue on the selected phenomena.

Students who were one and two years after matriculation listed 31 reasons. They were categorised into six groups. Due to the noted specificity and homogeneity of the statements, these will be described separately from the others.

The most commonly cited factors related to young people's current way of life and functioning. I quote the original statements below:

Our generation generally has less patience, and this applies on many levels.

I have not heard this before, but it may be due to the desire for self-development and the need to take on more than one job.

Maybe they don't like it, they have other activities that are more important and they think babysitting takes away from their free time.

These days, young people want to do everything quickly.

Young people are often too focused on their careers and thus do not have time to look after their children.

Young people often lead entertaining lives and are not interested in looking after children.

A category mentioned six times, accounting for 19% of indications, was young people's responsibility as important in caring for their child, both in terms of the excess they felt and the perceived lack or fear of it.

Other reasons included:

- Awareness of care tasks expressed, for example, in the sentence: "Caring for a child requires time and patience";
- The readiness of young people for caring, parenting tasks: "Because they are children themselves and are not ready to be a parent";

- families of origin: “The families of origin have also decreased (they are single)”;
- children and what they are currently like. One person felt that “they are badly brought up and it is difficult to take care of them or to hit on a game that is good for them.”

Other respondents included people both younger and very experienced in life, with biological children. Due to the large number of contributions and the limited frame of the article, I will only quote a selection:

They often feel that looking after children is not for them, often preferring to choose a career over a family.

They are comfortable, they don't want to be too responsible for someone.

They are busy with the outside world (work, media).

They are not emotionally ready, they lack parental maturity.

Some were very reflective and elaborate, some downright scary:

I believe that this is a problem that affects some young people. It is unfair to introduce a common denominator for the entire population of young people entering adulthood. In a time of omnipresent consumerism, projecting a profit and loss account, it is more profitable to take care of an animal. A child is a huge challenge that comes with the moral and legal responsibilities of a parent. If one were to define a child in the language of economics, it is an investment with a zero rate of return, and a dog, for example, will always “wag” its tail. Looking from the perspective of a father who has brought up two sons and still has a third by his side, I have the unmistakable impression that part of society prefers to pour its feelings out to animals rather than human beings.

In the statement quoted above, it is worrying to treat animal care as more important than interpersonal care that can compensate for it.

Man's care of a child or another person is one of man's species properties, it is his need. Caring, on the other hand, has specific constitutive features. After analysing the statements obtained, it is worth highlighting the high degree of appreciation, for example of responsibility or patience, of their awareness among students of this specific pedagogical specialisation. This bodes very well for their professionalism.

Reluctance of young people to have children

The question of why young people do not want to have children nowadays provoked objections from many of those interviewed. Nevertheless, it evoked a number of phenomena that may guide them in their decision to declare and consciously become childless at a very young age. Respondents wrote, among other things, that “it

is a big obligation,” “it is a big cost and to some extent a limitation,” “they prefer to use the young body to develop themselves, additionally the financial situation of young people in Poland is not conducive to having a child,” “young people currently think that having children these days given the economic environment is irresponsible,” “it is a big obligation, which scares some people, often for some it is the end of “freedom.”

The statements were to some extent similar to those discussed in the previous paragraph. However, they also highlighted other issues. The conditions for having children in Poland appeared to be important:

Conditions in Poland today are not favourable.

Lack of financial security, current anti-abortion laws, lack of life stability and a sense of security in the country.

The financial situation of young people in Poland is not conducive to having a child.

Current anti-abortion laws, lack of life stability and a sense of security in the country.

Lack of municipal crèches, low level of employment protection for young mothers.

The abortion law has tied the hands of young women and does not give them a choice in the event of an unwanted pregnancy or, worse, fetal defects. Giving birth to a sick child forces us to care for the child for the rest of our life or the child’s life. In such cases, state assistance is severely limited and inadequate and parents are forced into a constant struggle for their child’s health and survival.

Because of the situation in the country, i.e., education, the situation of pregnant women and the whole birthing process, finances.

Young people – according to those interviewed – are also afraid of the current “post-pandemic world,” its hostility, the wars occurring, and climate disruption:

They fear the future, the post-pandemic world is hostile, compounded by war and climate problems.

They realise how hard times are.

In my opinion, young people nowadays think it is irresponsible to have children in these times given the economic situation.

The statements that young people “do not feel the need to have children” as “a child means giving up oneself” seem worrying. They also consider “lack of help from the family” as a barrier; “they are afraid, they have no experience, no instinct. Parents are demanding, spiteful, oversensitive”; “they don’t have good experiences with their own parents, they don’t want to have obligations, problems, expenses”; “being single is also a way of life.”

An extended critical statement is also worth quoting:

Young people today want to lead a comfortable life. People today are very selfish and self-centred. They explain their lack of children by, for example, a lack of material resources, which is nonsense because they buy many things for themselves and the thought that they would have to give it up for their children paralyses them.

The motivation when making life choices has also changed: “Young people are also not succumbing to the pressure to have children as they used to.”

According to nature, every human being wants to have children. However, there are many factors that alter this regularity. There are times when the condition of the body does not allow them to have children, or something happens that makes it impossible, or what is becoming increasingly declared consciously gives it up (Dźbik-Kluge, 2023).

The reasons why young people today do not love their biological children

Many respondents, especially the youngest, disagreed with this thesis, they wrote:

I don’t think so (8 people out of 18).

Young people love biological children, but they often show it badly.

I think, even hope, that for the most part this is not the case. And those exceptions who don’t love maybe they weren’t ready to have them.

I believe that they do love. If it happens it can be related to lack of emotional maturity, lack of readiness and lack of parental instinct.

Biological parents love their children. If they do not love them, it may be due to various environmental or internal disorders, a lack of attachment to the child or too much focus on their own needs rather than the child’s.

They did not fulfil their aspirations first – because often such unloved children are “an accident.”

I don’t know, I don’t know of such cases and I can’t imagine how you can’t love your child.

However, others indicated that:

They are afraid to be pregnant, and that something might happen during or after the birth, although this is very incomprehensible to me.

Due to, for example, a difficult birth and a lack of strength to care (no help with care).

Maybe they weren't loved by their parents, so they didn't "take it from home."

Lack of love for biological children can be caused by a lack of self-acceptance. Children are often physically and psychologically similar to us. Shared genes and similar primary upbringing.

They may be overwhelmed, the reality may be different from their expectations associated with having children.

They can't focus on the child, they only think about themselves, their self.

It was also pointed out that the problem does not only affect young people, a statement emerged:

Sometimes older people don't love either. There are all sorts of reasons: unplanned child, sick, not fulfilling expectations.

Although some respondents, having read this question, declared their opposition to the thesis that there are young people who do not love their biological children, such a situation is known in social practice. It is worth looking at what happens to caring in such adults (see, for example, Kita, 2015). It should also be emphasised that it does not only concern women today but also fathers. The results of the indicated reflection may be relevant when analysing relationships with distant relatives, for example, grandparents or strangers, adoptive or foster parents. The respondents' statements reflect their personal views and may reflect their knowledge of the phenomenon, their observed experiences, confronting the different views generated an interesting discussion.

The rationale that nowadays adult people care for and love children taken into their care who are not their biological children

A wide variety of explanations were obtained in response to the question of why adults now care for and love children taken into their care who are not their biological children. From these, it is possible to see whether the respondents are familiar with the specifics of foster care and to which form of foster care they refer in their thesis. It is also interesting to compare them with the care of a biological child.

The following reflections, among others, were obtained:

They only have them for a “moment” and not for a lifetime. By which they have more patience.

I think love is unconditional, children are easy to love if we decide for ourselves and make decisions consciously.

They want to make the children happy and give them a better life.

From the desire to have offspring, blood ties are not important.

Because they have not been able to have children of their own and they very much dream of it. That’s why when they get custody of children they treat them as their own and will do anything for them.

It has also been pointed out that such people are driven by a solution for life that skips pregnancy and allows them to choose the child:

Maybe they want to skip the period of the blessed state because they can choose to have a child or the infertility circumstances force them to do so or they have such an open heart to love and care for them, the need to be a parent is natural.

In addition, according to those interviewed, such people

have the feeling that they are helping them, that they are performing a task that is positively perceived without the ultimate responsibility that it is “my offspring.” I personally agree with the question.

They are only caregivers which entails that they don’t have as much responsibility.

There is such a concept as a “bump” or unwanted pregnancy. Sometimes a child may be rejected in some way, mainly because it was unplanned. Children adopted through adoption, on the other hand, are always planned, eagerly awaited and therefore easier to love.

The old saying goes that a parent is not the one who gave life to a child, but the one who brought it up. Many people who want to have children are unable to have them and the need to pour love into someone grows. In such an arrangement, children are better cared for and loved even though they are not biological children. Additionally, such children need a lot of love and closeness to be shown to them.

Only one person stated that they did not know what it was like. In conclusion, the collected opinions of the respondents are diverse. Some indicate that informed fostering involves unconditional love for children and greater patience. Others that not all respondents know that foster and adoptive parents often have biological children. This is, moreover, a very under-diagnosed and overlooked aspect in analyses of foster care (see: Gajewska, 2020).

Conclusion

The modern world is changing a lot in interpersonal care, parenting, and adult-child relationships. Observing these is important for many reasons. First of all, it helps to see what educators and other adults in society can do. Children (wards) cannot take care of themselves. Educators, professionals can have a significant impact on the quality of care outside the family, but also in the family. The diversity of human care, family care, and foster care (e.g. forms, social attitudes, ways of support) requires a relative balance and communication in society.

The collected preliminary results of the survey are thought-provoking and provide a basis for preparing a broader exploration and explanation of this interesting phenomenon. The majority of those surveyed (75%) know at least one young person who dislikes children and about 12% know one who hates them.

They argue that young people do not want to have children because there are times when it would be irresponsible to do so, preferring to use their young body for their own development believing it to be a restriction on their freedom and incurring too much cost.

A considerable number of respondents disagreed with the thesis that young people do not currently love their biological children. Reasons cited included difficult childbirth and lack of strength to care (lack of help with care), previously unfulfilled aspirations, being pregnant “by accident.”

Some interviewees disagree with the thesis that young people today do not want to care for children and highlighted the existing diversity in this group. They pointed out the lack of readiness and maturity to be a parent, young people’s desire to do everything quickly (and caring requires patience), being comfortable, prioritising a career over starting a family, among others, as reasons for not wanting to care.

Respondents positively perceive and justify care and love in relation to children taken into care who are not their biological children. From the reasons given, it can be concluded that not everyone is aware of the specificity and diversity of this care, using myths and social stereotypes.

Understanding foster care is an important aspect of considering care and parenting today. If the care of biological parents is not adequate, the invaluable “social treasure” becomes those adults who take over the care of children. This is done in both family and institutionalised forms. However, it turns out that many changes are also taking place in them and their relations with the social world (see, e.g., Gajewska, 2022; Kaszubska-Dziergas, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic (see, e.g., Gajewska, 2021a; Gajewska, 2021b; Kolankiewicz, 2022; Ruskowska, 2022) and globalisation have proved to be important modifiers.

Caregiving and familiarity disorders in young people may be related to caregiving abnormalities experienced primarily in early childhood, but also throughout life up to 18 years. When it comes to attachment disorders, now called reactive behavioural disorder (RAD) and formerly called childhood hospitalism, orphan disease, among others, researchers are providing more and more data (Taylor, 2020).

The collected results show the necessity of pedagogical activities with young people and changes in social, health, and legal policies – both of individual, local and systemic nature. Young people’s caring attitudes towards childcare, desire to have a child, foster care need to be discussed with pedagogical candidates. If we take into account M. Sikorska’s statement:

The experience of European countries shows that the highest fertility rates are in those countries with stable family policies based on two assumptions: 1) aiming to equalise parental responsibilities and care work performed by mothers and fathers; 2) making it easier for parents to combine work and parenthood (Sikorska, 2022, p. 1).

It seems justified to continually improve the quality of the strategy proposed and implemented to strengthen caring, its understanding and importance, the perinatal conditions, the professional conditions of young parents. From an evolutionary point of view, as Brian Gate and Venessa Woods argue, the most beneficial strategy is friendship, because the friendliest survive and this is the essence of humanity (Gate, Woods, 2022).

The research and discussion should be continued, detailed and deepened, using both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. It is worth bearing in mind that the phenomena indicated are shaped in a person from the beginning of his or her existence among people, and it becomes important to continue to ensure the quality of care and upbringing in the family and all non-family environments.

One gets the impression that a “new world order” is being created before us. This reflection is a description of a small part of it, an attempt to respond to it. Usually, the “new” arouses many emotions and extreme views. Pedagogues, in all their openness, are actively involved in creating a space first and foremost for the children, the wards, looking after their welfare, but also for their legal guardians and loved ones.

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