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Gendered Upbringing: Parenting Styles in the Perception of School-Aged Youth

Wychowanie pod znakiem płci. Style rodzicielskie w percepcji młodzieży szkolnej

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Abstract

Aim. The aim of the study was to identify differences in the perception of parenting styles according to the gender of adolescents. The analysis was based on survey data from 3612 primary and secondary school students from Białystok. The research is carried out cyclically within the framework of the “Lifestyles of Białystok’s Youth” project. A typology of parenting styles based on two dimensions was used: a) demands, b) emotional support. Four styles were considered: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful.

Methods and materials. Data from a questionnaire survey of 3612 primary and secondary school students from Białystok, carried out periodically as part of the “Lifestyle of the Youth

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of Białystok” project, were analysed. A review of the literature on the subject was carried out.

Results and conclusion. The results showed significant differences in the frequency of parenting styles experienced according to the gender of the adolescent. Boys were more likely than girls to declare experiencing an authoritative style (49.5% vs. 42.8%) and a neglectful style (11.2% vs. 9.9%), while girls were significantly more likely to indicate an authoritarian style (20.4% vs. 14.5%) and a permissive style (26.9% vs. 24.8%). Adolescents who did not identify with the gender binary were less likely to report experiencing an authoritative style (38.3%), while they were more likely to indicate a neglectful style (16.0%). These differences were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 85.4$; $p < 0.001$; V-Craméra = 0.18). The results are discussed in the context of gender role theory, the transactional model of parenting relationships and previous empirical findings.

Keywords: parenting style, adolescent gender, family relationships, emotional support, authoritativeness, parental neglect, gender stereotypes, family upbringing

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem badania stało się określenie różnic w postrzeganiu stylów wychowawczych w zależności od płci adolescentów. Analiza została oparta na danych pochodzących z badań ankietowych przeprowadzonych wśród 3612 uczniów szkół podstawowych i ponadpodstawowych z Białegostoku. Badania realizowane są cyklicznie w ramach projektu „Style życia białostockiej młodzieży”. W tekście zastosowano typologię stylów rodzicielskich opartą na dwóch wymiarach: a) wymagania, b) wsparcie emocjonalne. Uwzględniono cztery style: autorytatywny, autorytarny, permissywny i zaniedbujący.

Metody i materiały. W niniejszym artykule analizie poddano dane pochodzące z badania kwestionariuszowego przeprowadzonego wśród 3612 uczniów szkół podstawowych i ponadpodstawowych z Białegostoku, realizowanego cyklicznie w ramach projektu *Styl życia młodzieży Białegostoku*. Dla potrzeb analizy materiału dokonano przeglądu literatury przedmiotu.

Wyniki i wnioski. Wyniki wykazały istotne różnice w częstości doświadczanych stylów wychowania w zależności od płci adolescenta. Chłopcy częściej niż dziewczęta deklarowali doświadczenie stylu autorytatywnego (49,5% vs 42,8%) oraz zaniedbującego (11,2% vs 9,9%), natomiast dziewczęta istotnie częściej wskazywały na styl autorytarny (20,4% vs 14,5%) oraz permissyjny (26,9% vs 24,8%). Młodzież nieidentyfikująca się z binarnym podziałem płci rzadziej deklarowała doświadczenie stylu autorytatywnego (38,3%), natomiast częściej wskazywała na styl zaniedbujący (16,0%). Różnice te były statystycznie istotne ($\chi^2 = 85,4$; $p < 0,001$; V-Craméra = 0,18). Wyniki omówiono w kontekście teorii ról płciowych, transakcyjnego modelu relacji wychowawczych oraz dotychczasowych ustaleń empirycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: wsparcie emocjonalne, stereotypy płci, wychowanie w rodzinie, styl wychowania, relacje w rodzinie, płć adolescenta, autorytatywność, zaniedbanie rodzicielskie

Introduction

The modern family, as the primary educational environment, is undergoing dynamic changes due to global, cultural and socioeconomic processes. Family life models are evolving, affecting both the structure of families and the nature of parent–child relationships. These changes are reflected in the ways in which the educational function is carried out and in the values passed on to the next generation (Giddens, 2006). It is pointed out more and more frequently that relationships in the family are based not only on hierarchy and obedience, but also on dialogue, partnership and emotional support (Tyszkowa, 1985). At the same time, difficulties arise due to an overload of responsibilities, pressure to be successful, lack of time and the multiplicity of social roles played by parents (Dołęga, 2022). In the context of these challenges, parenting style is becoming increasingly important as a factor that either promotes or hinders a child's psychosocial development.

Parenting style, understood as a set of relatively constant parental behaviours and the emotional climate of the relationship with the child, plays an important role in the formation of adolescents' identity, self-esteem and interpersonal competence (Baumrind, 1991). Classifications of parenting styles, starting with the typology of Baumrind, through the extensions of Maccoby and Martin, to Plopa's concept of parenting attitudes, emphasise the importance of two key dimensions: the level of emotional support and the level of demands placed on the child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Contemporary research suggests that parenting style is not gender-neutral for children. Even in early childhood, parents may unconsciously differentiate their behaviour according to the gender of their offspring, reinforcing stereotypical *feminine* and *masculine* traits (Eccles & Harold, 1993). This translates into a different way of exercising control, showing warmth and engagement with the child. Domestic and foreign research indicates that girls are more likely to experience an emotionally supportive parenting style, while boys are more likely to experience more authoritarian or neglectful styles (Sendyk, 2011).

Changing societal expectations regarding the roles of mothers and fathers, as well as greater openness to the individual needs of children, are prompting researchers to take a fresh look at the evolving conditions for forming parenting relationships. Parenting style should be tailored to the child's age, temperament and situation, and not determined by the child's biological sex, yet parenting practice still does not always meet this requirement (Grusec & Danyliuk, 2014).

The purpose of this text is to show how an adolescent's gender affects his or her perception of parenting style. The theoretical section presents standard and contemporary approaches to classifying parenting styles, including typologies by Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin and Plopa. Next, the results of the author's own survey of 3,612 elementary and secondary school students are presented, taking into account their assessments of relationships with their parents. The final section of the article discusses

the relevance of the results obtained in the context of previous findings and draws practical conclusions.

Parenting Style as a Dimension of the Parent–Child Relationship – a Review of Theoretical Approaches

Parenting style is understood as a relatively fixed way in which parents relate to their child, including a characteristic emotional climate and methods of parenting interactions (Plopa, 2011). Diana Baumrind's classic 1960s research identified three basic parenting styles: authoritative, also referred to as democratic, authoritarian and permissive, referred to as indulgent (Baumrind, 1971). The authoritative style combines high expectations of the child with high levels of emotional support. Parents set consistent yet reasonable expectations, maintaining a warm relationship built on open communication and responsiveness. It is considered the most conducive to child development in Western cultures; children brought up in this way generally score high in social competence, self-esteem and maturity. In contrast, the authoritarian style is characterised by high levels of control and demands with low emotional support; parents demand absolute obedience, imposing discipline at the expense of warmth and acceptance (Baumrind, 1991). The permissive style (also referred to as indulgent) means a lot of warmth with little control – parents are friendly and accepting yet make few demands and rarely enforce rules (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). A dozen years following Baumrind's work, Maccoby and Martin extended this typology to include a fourth style: the neglectful (uninvolved) style, which combines a low level of demands with low emotional involvement on the part of the parent (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In its extreme form, this style manifests itself in a lack of interest in the child and his or her needs.

Polish literature adopted similar terminology. Maria Ziemśka (1973) described four desirable parental attitudes: acceptance of the child, cooperation with the child, reasonable freedom and recognition of the child's rights, contrasting them with undesirable attitudes such as spurning or excessive demands. The mainstream of pedagogical research analogously distinguishes between democratic, autocratic, liberal *loving* and liberal *unloving* styles; such categories were used, among others, in the Questionnaire by Ryś (2009), based on Field's concept. Here, the democratic style corresponds to the authoritative one (high demands combined with warmth and respect for the child), the autocratic style to the authoritarian one (strict discipline, emotional coldness), while the liberal styles are divided into loving (a lot of freedom with a warm relationship corresponds to the permissive style) and unloving (indifference, lack of boundaries corresponds to the neglectful style).

In the psychological and pedagogical literature, the term parenting attitudes is also encountered, often used interchangeably with the term parenting styles. Mieczysław Płopa (2008) proposed one of the best-known classifications of attitudes. He has distinguished five attitudes: (a) acceptance-rejection, (b) demanding, (c) autonomy, (d) inconsistent, (e) overly protective. The first two are classified as positive attitudes, while the last three are negative attitudes that can affect a child's development. Ewa Wysocka stresses that parenting style reflects not only specific parenting actions, but primarily the parent's emotional and communicative attitude toward the child. In this context, the author distinguishes additional styles, such as accepting, repulsive, avoidant or overprotective, pointing out their impact on the child's sense of security and social relations. For example, an accepting style, based on respect and openness, promotes the development of interpersonal competence and self-esteem, while a repulsive style leads to a child's withdrawal or aggressive behaviour (Wysocka & Ostafińska-Molik, 2015).

Contemporary concepts emphasise that parenting style is not unilaterally determined by the parent. It is captured in a transactional model that assumes the mutual influence of the child's characteristics and the parent's behaviour, the so-called child effects model (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Calm and conciliatory children may provoke more warmth and support, while impulsive or rebellious children may provoke more control or distance.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the influence of gender stereotypes on the way sons and daughters are raised is also noted. Parents often, albeit unconsciously, treat children differently based on their gender, reinforcing traits traditionally considered masculine or feminine (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Research indicates that girls are more likely to experience warmth, acceptance and care, while a stricter and more demanding style prevails towards boys (Leaper, 2002). Sendyk (2011) noted a higher frequency of loving attitudes toward daughters than sons. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to declare cool and demanding attitudes on the part of their parents, which is also confirmed by data from Ratajczak (1989).

Parenting Style and Psychosocial Well-Being of Adolescents— Selected Research Perspectives

Well-being is a concept that refers to an individual's state of functioning, including both mental health and the quality of social relationships and a sense of meaning in life (Seligman, 2011). Psychology distinguishes between two main perspectives on well-being: hedonistic, which focuses on experiencing pleasure and avoiding suffering (*i.e.*, emotional well-being), and eudaimonistic, which emphasises personal growth, autonomy, purposeful action and fulfilling one's potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Parenting style is an important factor shaping adolescent development, influencing, among other things, their self-esteem, social competence, mental health and propensity for problem behaviour (Steinberg, 2008). Numerous studies have confirmed the link between the aforementioned four styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful) and various aspects of youth functioning (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Adolescents raised in an authoritative style generally perform best in the area of psychosocial competence, rank high in self-esteem and emotional maturity, and have the lowest levels of emotional and behavioural problems (Baumrind, 1991). In contrast, adolescents from neglectful families (low monitoring and lack of support) are characterised by the worst adjustment. They show the most problems (*e.g.*, aggressive behaviour, conflicts with the law) and the lowest self-esteem. The authoritarian style (high control, low emotionality) is sometimes associated with fairly good behavioural control from an adult perspective. Adolescents from authoritarian families are generally obedient and willing to conform to norms, but this comes at the expense of their self-esteem and self-reliance (Grusec & Danyliuk, 2014). Research indicates that adolescents raised in an authoritarian manner have a poorer self-image and lower self-esteem than their peers, and may experience higher anxiety and emotional difficulties due to a lack of open support from a parent (Akinmosin, 2024).

The permissive (submissive) style gives the child a lot of freedom and emotional support, which often translates into high self-confidence and low stress levels in the adolescent, but the lack of consistent demands can result in self-control problems. Adolescents from permissive families are often very self-confident, but show an increased propensity for risky behaviour (*e.g.*, more frequent use of psychoactive substances, violation of school rules) and poorer academic performance (Joussemet *et al.*, 2008).

In long-term research, Laurence Steinberg and associates indicated that the authoritative style promotes comprehensive beneficial development of adolescents regardless of ethnic or socioeconomic context, while deviations from this style carry specific developmental risks (Steinberg *et al.*, 1994). However, it is worth noting that cultural conditions can moderate these relationships. For example, in some collectivist cultures, a permissive, warm style can be just as effective as an authoritative one, as long as it provides the child with support and a sense of security (Garcia & Garcia, 2009). In recent years, the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent mental health has received particular attention. Research conducted in the United States and Canada shows that adolescents raised in an authoritative style have not only higher levels of self-esteem and interpersonal competence, but also a lower risk of depressive and anxiety disorders (Pinquart, 2017). The authoritative style also promotes the development of psychological resilience and emotional regulation abilities (Zhou *et al.*, 2002). The authoritarian style, on the other hand, while associated with a lower incidence of risky behaviours (such as substance abuse and conflicts with the law),

is associated with increased levels of anxiety and difficulties in establishing peer relationships (Ilyas & Khan, 2023). Adolescents raised in a permissive way, although they often report high levels of satisfaction with their family relationships, manifest greater difficulties in terms of responsibility, planning and perseverance in action (Padilla-Walker *et al.*, 2015).

Factors that exacerbate adolescents' educational problems also include the dangers of inadequate adult response to the realities of school life and the impact of the digital environment. Tomasz Prymak (2012) points out that a lack of adult support, both in the context of school relationships and parental supervision, can lead to an increase in violent behaviour and adjustment disorders among adolescents. In another text, the author notes that a parenting style devoid of emotional involvement and control fosters alienation of young people in a technology-saturated environment, which can lead to poorer mental health and identity problems (Prymak, 2014).

It is also worth mentioning comparative studies that point to cultural variations in the function of parenting styles. For example, a study in China found that an authoritarian style does not always have a negative effect; with the appropriate emotional support, it can serve a protective function against school pressures and social expectations (Chao, 2012). This shows that the effects of upbringing are partly dependent on the cultural context, which should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

In light of the above findings, parenting style not only influences an adolescent's current behaviour, but also determines their ability to function in adulthood, both emotionally and socially. The authoritative style remains the most favourable pattern of the parenting relationship, promoting harmonious development regardless of individual differences.

Method

The results presented in this article come from a broader, multi-phase research project entitled *Styl życia młodzieży Białegostoku* [The lifestyle of youth in Białystok], carried out periodically since 2009 by the Laboratory for Research, Analysis and Strategy of Education Development of the Continuing Professional Development Centre in Białystok in cooperation with the municipal authorities of Białystok. The project includes diagnostic research on the psychosocial condition of young people, their lifestyles, values, attitudes, mental condition, and family and school relationships. The last edition of the research took place in the autumn of 2022 and included a representative sample of elementary and secondary school students in Białystok. The total sample size was 3,612, including elementary school students (grades VII and VIII) and secondary

school students (high schools, technical schools and trade schools). Sampling was stratified random sampling, taking into account school type, grade level and gender ratio. The study involved 52.4% of girls, 40.5% of boys, and 7.1% of students declaring a different gender identification. The predominant portion of the respondents were aged 15–17, and the majority came from a large city (more than 100,000 residents). The students came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, with as many as 80.6% declaring their family's financial situation to be good or very good (Mantur, 2023).

The purpose of the analysis presented in the article was to identify differences in the perception of parenting styles of parents/guardians depending on the adolescent's gender. The analysis was directed at recognising whether students as girls, boys and those with different gender identities, experience different educational climates in their families. It was assumed that the parenting style can serve as an important moderating factor in the psychosocial well-being of adolescents, and at the same time be strongly influenced culturally and socially, including through gender stereotypes operating in parent–child relationships. The research was conducted using a quantitative method in the form of an online survey (CAWI), completed anonymously by students in schools under the supervision of trained coordinators. Among a number of thematic modules used in the research, the author's block of questions on family relationships and parenting styles, embedded in a two-dimensional classification including demands (control) and emotional support (acceptance), was central to this analysis. The chi-square test of independence was used to assess the statistical significance of the relationship between gender and declared parenting style, and the strength of the relationship was assessed using the *V*-Cramér coefficient. Calculations were carried out using the IBM SPSS Statistics package, version 23.

Results – Declared Parenting Styles vs. Gender of Adolescents

The following Table 1 summarises the percentage of respondents declaring each of the four distinguished parenting styles, broken down by adolescent gender. Analysis of the data presented in Table 1 shows that there are clear differences in the declared parenting style between groups of adolescents of different genders. Boys most often indicated an authoritative style (that is, one in which parents/guardians simultaneously make demands and offer emotional support) (49.5%) of them declared this type of parenting relationship. Among girls, the percentage was 42.8%, and among students describing their gender as “other” (38.3%). The authoritative style was therefore most often indicated by boys, reversing a trend suggested in some earlier studies, in which girls reported higher levels of parental support and involvement.

In the case of the permissive style (characterised by high emotional support with low demands), the highest percentage was among girls (26.9%), compared to 24.8% of boys and 21.1% of those in the “other” group. The differences are relatively small, but indicate a slightly higher frequency of girls experiencing permissive parenting.

The authoritarian style, that is, one characterised by high demands with low emotional support, was most often indicated by girls (20.4%), a surprising reversal from earlier theoretical assumptions, in which this style was more often attributed to boys’ upbringing (Ratajczak’s study indicated more strictness toward sons). Boys declared this style less frequently (14.5%), while in the group of people defining their gender other than male and female, as many as 24.6%.

The most alarming data relates to the neglectful style (low demands, low emotional support), which was most often declared by those who did not clearly identify themselves as female or male (16.0%). Among girls, the percentage was 9.9%, and among boys it was 11.2%. The data suggest that students outside the gender binary are much more likely to experience parenting relationships devoid of both demands and emotional support.

Comparing the total results of styles based on high levels of emotional support (authoritative and permissive ones), it can be seen that 69.7% of boys, 69.7% of girls and only 59.4% of those in the “other” group experienced a parenting relationship with an element of emotional closeness. At the same time, low-supportive styles (authoritarian and neglectful) were combined by 30.3% of boys, 30.3% of girls and as many as 40.6% of those in the “other” group. The data shows the greatest deficit in parenting support in the latter category.

Table 1
Parenting style vs. gender of respondents

Gender	Parents/ guardians do not offer emo- tional support to me and do not make de- mands on me		Parents/ guardians of- fer emotional support to me, but do not make de- mands on me		Parents/ guardians make de- mands on me, but do not of- fer emotional support to me		Parents/ guardians make de- mands on me and offer emo- tional support to me		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
feminine	187	9.9%	509	26.9%	387	20.4%	810	42.8%	1.893	100%
masculine	164	11.2%	363	24.8%	212	14.5%	724	49.5%	1.463	100%
other	41	16.0%	54	21.1%	63	24.6%	98	38.3%	256	100%

Total	392	10.9%	926	25.6%	662	18.3%	1.632	45.2%	3.612	100%
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Note. Research conducted as part of the project entitled *Styl życia młodzieży Białegostoku*.

Differences between gender and parenting style were found to be statistically significant (chi-square test: $\chi^2 = 85.4$; $p < 0.001$). The V -Cramér coefficient was 0.18, indicating a weak but statistically significant relationship between the adolescent's gender and the type of parenting relationship declared in the family.

Particularly noteworthy are the data for the group of adolescents who identify with a gender other than female or male ($n = 256$, which is about 7% of the total sample). These individuals were the least likely of all groups to declare an authoritative style, that is, one in which parents make demands and offer emotional support, with only 38.3% of indications. At the same time, this group had the highest percentage of neglectful style (lack of support and lack of demands) (16.0%), an increase relative to the group of girls (9.9%) and the group of boys (11.2%). The authoritarian style (high demands with no support) was also noticeably more common, with 24.6% of indications, more than among girls (20.4%) and boys (14.5%). In contrast, a permissive style (high emotional support with no demands) was declared by 21.1% of the students in this group, the lowest percentage among all genders. In sum, therefore, as many as 40.6% of respondents who did not identify as either female or male indicated emotionally low supportive styles (authoritarian and neglectful ones), while 59.4% indicated supportive styles (authoritative and permissive ones). In comparison, among girls and boys, the proportions are more favourable – a supportive style was indicated by 69.7% of girls and 74.3% of boys, and a low-supportive style by 30.3% and 25.7%, respectively. These results resonate with concerns raised by qualitative reports that parents may have difficulty accepting a gender-nonconforming child, sometimes developing into an attitude of rejection or withdrawal of support (What We Know, 2016).

In interpreting the above results, it is worth noting some parallels with earlier studies. The high percentage of authoritative style in girls is reflected in analyses that indicate that parents (especially mothers) are more affectionate and emotionally involved with their daughters (Vyas & Bano, 2016). In contrast, boys' relatively frequent experience of an authoritarian style may be because parents make higher demands of their sons and tend to be less permissive. Sons in a study conducted by Ratajczak rated their mothers as more likely to enforce norms on them than on their daughters (Ratajczak, 1989). At the same time, some boys also experience emotional neglect. This style could be declared especially by adolescents who feel a lack of interest from busy or absent parents. In the group of girls, such a lack of support was less frequent (10% neglectful style), which is consistent with the argument that daughters require more care; according to the social stereotype, parents are less likely to leave them alone

(Ratajczak, 1989). To see which differences between gender groups were statistically significant, chi-square independence tests were additionally conducted for pairwise comparisons between groups. Boys were significantly more likely than girls to report experiencing an authoritative style (49.5% vs. 42.8%; $\chi^2 = 12.53$; $p < 0.001$), indicating a stronger presence of both demands and emotional support in their relationships with their parents. Also, a neglectful style, characterised by a lack of both emotional support and demands, was significantly more common among boys (11.2% vs. 9.9%; $\chi^2 = 4.57$; $p = 0.033$), although the difference was of lesser intensity. In contrast, girls were significantly more likely than boys to experience a permissive style (26.9% vs. 24.8%; $\chi^2 = 4.71$; $p = 0.030$) and an authoritarian style (20.4% vs. 14.5%; $\chi^2 = 17.77$; $p < 0.001$), which may indicate greater variation in their perceptions of parenting attitudes, including both high levels of warmth and control.

Those describing their gender as “other” than female or male differed significantly from both other groups in their experience of authoritative style – they declared it significantly less often than boys (38.3% vs. 49.5%; $\chi^2 = 7.42$; $p = 0.006$) and girls (38.3% vs. 42.8%; $\chi^2 = 1.55$; $p = 0.213$; difference not statistically significant). At the same time, these individuals were significantly more likely than the other two groups to indicate a neglectful style (16.0% vs. 9.9% in girls and 11.2% in boys). These differences were significant for both girls ($\chi^2 = 10.84$; $p = 0.001$) and boys ($\chi^2 = 4.35$; $p = 0.037$). Differences in the frequency of authoritarian and permissive styles between boys and non-binary individuals proved to be statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$), indicating that these adolescents are similar to boys in some respects (high percentage of authoritarian style, low permissive style), but at the same time are distinguished by a particularly frequent sense of neglect.

Thus, the empirical results obtained confirm the existence of variation in the experience of parenting styles depending on the gender of the adolescent. Boys were slightly more likely than girls to declare relationships based on an authoritative parenting model, while girls declared permissive and authoritarian relationships. Of particular concern are the results for those who do not explicitly identify with the gender binary – they indicate a higher incidence of experiencing parental coldness and lack of emotional support, which can lead to difficulties in mental and social functioning.

Discussion

The purpose of the analyses was to identify whether and how the gender of the adolescent is associated with different parenting behaviours. The results showed significant differences in experienced parenting styles depending on the gender of the adolescent. Boys were more likely than girls to report that their parents use an authoritative style,

combining high demands with emotional support (49.5% vs. 42.8%) and a neglectful style, characterised by low levels of both demands and support (11.2% vs. 9.9%). In contrast, girls were significantly more likely than boys to indicate an authoritarian style (20.4% vs. 14.5%), as well as a permissive style (26.9% vs. 24.8%). These observations are in line with previous research findings from both Poland and other countries, which indicate the existence of well-established parenting patterns linked to a child's gender (Ziemska, 1986). Sendyk's (2011) findings on parenting styles confirm that girls are more likely than boys to experience tenderness, care and acceptance from their mothers, which fosters a supportive and emotionally involved relationship. This tendency may be due to mothers' identification with their daughters, perceived as closer to their own gender and social roles (Brzezińska, 2006). Ratajczak's research (Ratajczak, 1989), on the other hand, suggests that parents, especially single mothers, take a more demanding and emotionally cool approach toward their sons. This style, based on the assumption that the son should "grow into a man," may reflect a fear of overly *softening* the boy through tenderness and closeness.

Consequently, there is a higher proportion of neglectful style among boys, which can lead to a sense of lack of emotional support in family relationships (Kim, 2014). The findings also showed that girls are less likely than boys to experience parental rejection, while boys are more likely to be the recipients of high demands that are not always accompanied by support (OECD, 2024).

The inclusion of the "other gender" category in the analysis further identified a group of adolescents who remain outside the gender binary. In this subgroup of 256 people, a clearly disturbing pattern of responses emerged, with as many as 16.0% of respondents indicating a neglectful style (no emotional support and no demands) and 24.6% indicating an authoritarian style (high demands with low support). The authoritative style, *i.e.*, the most favourable parenting style (combining high demands with high support), was declared by only 38.3% of respondents in this group, a value significantly lower than for boys (49.5%) and girls (42.8%). These data remain consistent with findings from foreign research, according to which disagreement between a child's gender identity and parental expectations can result in emotional withdrawal or even rejection (Ryan *et al.*, 2009). These attitudes significantly increase the risk of emotional difficulties in adolescents, including depressed mood, anxiety and self-destructive behaviour (Olson *et al.*, 2016). In addition, students who do not feel approval from their parents are significantly less likely to identify their parenting style as supportive – a finding that is also supported by empirical data (Prymak, 2023).

The results obtained in the study support the hypothesis of the existence of a transactional model of the parenting relationship: parental attitudes can shape the way a child behaves, while at the same time, the child's reactions influence the parent. From an early age, children are treated differently based on gender; they have different toys, different

boundaries for emotional expression, and different demands, leading to the development of different communication patterns (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Over time, these differences widen, creating a vicious cycle of mutual expectations and reactions.

The data obtained is also in line with the results of studies on the consequences of different parenting styles. In the literature, authoritarian and neglectful styles are linked to lowered self-esteem, behavioural disorders and deficits in emotional regulation (Baumrind, 1991). The authoritative style, on the other hand, promotes positive psychosocial functioning, which may be due to a lower frequency of risky behaviour and greater emotional openness.

The reference to the concept of parents' preferential treatment of children reveals additional context. According to a meta-analysis by Jensen & Jorgensen-Wells (2025), parents are slightly more likely to favour their daughters, showing them greater support and tolerance. Other factors, such as birth order, can also affect the perception of parenting style – older children are more likely to perceive relationships with their parents as more liberal (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1982). In a practical context, the study results emphasise the need to promote a parenting style tailored to a child's individuality rather than gender. An authoritative style, combining high demands with warmth and involvement, should be recommended regardless of the child's gender. Excessive strictness toward boys can result in problems in expressing emotions, while excessive leniency toward girls can result in difficulties in self-reliance and stress management. Promoting parental awareness of the impact of gender stereotypes on parenting relationships can be an important part of educational and prevention efforts.

Conclusion

Based on the analyses, it was found that the gender of the adolescent differentiates the perception of parenting styles applied to them. Boys were more likely than girls to report experiencing an authoritative style, which combines high demands and high levels of emotional support. At the same time, they were more likely than girls to indicate a neglectful style, which may indicate a greater emotional distance in their relationships with parents in this group. Girls, on the other hand, were more likely than boys to indicate a permissive style and, significantly, an authoritarian style, which implies high demands while lacking emotional support. The data reverses earlier assumptions about the predominance of authoritative style in girls and points to a more complex picture of the relationship between gender and perception of parenting styles. These differences may still be due to cultural patterns and expectations for boys and girls, which translate into parenting strategies employed by parents. The analysis also showed that adolescents who did not identify with the traditional division into boys and girls

were significantly less likely to indicate an authoritative style (38.3%) than the other gender groups. At the same time, this group was more likely to report experiencing an authoritarian style (24.6%) and a neglectful style (16.0%), which may suggest deficits in acceptance and emotional involvement on the part of parents toward children whose gender identity does not fit into current social norms. It is worth noting that the percentage of those indicating a neglectful style was significantly higher in this group than among boys (11.2%) and girls (9.9%). These findings correspond with the interpretation in the report entitled *Styl życia młodzieży Białegostoku 2022*, where in the section on the family environment, it was shown that family relationships are a factor that protects adolescents from difficulties, and their quality affects the psychosocial well-being of adolescents (Prymak, 2023).

In light of the above observations, it can be concluded that parenting style is not gender-neutral. The gender of the adolescent turns out to be an important context that affects the manner of communication, the level of closeness and the intensity of parental control. The results obtained in the study are an important contribution to the development of knowledge about the psychosocial determinants of upbringing and highlight the importance of parental reflection on the individual approach to the child.

It is recommended that educational activities aimed at parents, teachers and professionals working with young people include the topic of gender differences in parenting and promote a balanced, supportive style of relationships in the family – regardless of the child's gender. Families in which people who do not identify with traditional gender categories grow up require special support, as a lack of acceptance in the family environment can lead to long-term adaptation difficulties (Heszen & Sęk, 2007; Mantur, 2023).

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