
Authority as the Foundation for Managing the Formation of the Young Generation in the Age of Modern Threats

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the article is to represent the research methods applied within a framework of the research entitled “Authority as the Foundation for Managing the Formation of the Young Generation in the Age of Modern Threats” carried out by prof. dr hab. Jan Zimny and within the frame of the project for 2020 “Towards the Area of New Trends in Scientific Research”.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The introduction of this article presents the justification of the needs to undertake the research in regards to the presented problem followed by the explanation of what authority is, how it should be understood, how authority is understood and expected by young generation. The use of selected research methods made it possible to achieve the aim of the research and confirm the initial research hypotheses in the form of the question, to what extent the authority of parents is still important today for the contemporary young generation.

Findings: The research problem has been solved in the course of scientific process which concerned the role and the importance of authority in the process of managing the formation of the young generation in the era of contemporary threats. The research has verified the hypotheses and has given an unambiguous answer in respect to this topic.

Practical Implications: The analysis of the research made it possible to clearly indicate which values of parental authority play an important role in the formation of the young generation.

Originality/value: The application of the methods presented in the article contributed to the enrichment of knowledge in the field of the young generation’s expectations concerning the role of authority in the process of managing its formation, on the other hand, - in the axiological sense – there have been pointed out the challenges faced by those who form the young generation.

Keywords: Authority, axiology, management, research problem, methodology of research, the aim of the research, the scope of the research work, sources of the research work, research methods.

JEL classification: C000, O30, O31, O32.

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1. Introduction

Today there is more and more discussion related to the crisis of authority. There is seen intensification of the removal of vast layers of the population from under the influence of institutional authorities, especially those that declare norms claimed to be universally binding. Pluralization and individualization of moral values weakens any institutional authority. There is a rapid change in public authorities, both personal and institutional, both political and moral. Many traditional authorities are questioned and rejected, whereas the new ones are being sought to a much lesser extent (Zimny, 2006). Americanization of modern life, pluralism of ethical norms and cultural influences are characteristic phenomena of the current period of chaos and moral reappraisal of values (Szołtysek, 2010). Modern world is also characterized by the growing publicity of the crisis of authority, especially of the institutions that are so important in the life of every person, such as the school, the Church or the family, which is the first to feel the consequences of any change (Temper-Pychlau, 2007).

The crisis of authority, which is quite widespread in the world and in Poland, is not without involvement of adults, and among the authorities that are losing their prestige and importance is the authority of parents. This seems especially dangerous since these are parents who must be the first educators and the authority, that is someone who is the starting point for their children, who introduces them to reality, who has a rich consciousness, who better feels and understands life experiences, personal aspirations and expectations of their children. Owing to authority there appears the experience of harmonious unity, which is seen as continuity and stability of life. Without this experience, every hypothesis concerning the integrity of life is only an abstract idea (Rynio, 1997). That is why the role of parents who educate a young person, as well as the role of teachers, pastors and educators who must be a clear and strong authority in the eyes of a young person is so important. It is rightly said that "the basic condition for being authority is being truthful." Thus, we can say that the foundation for building authority is to be truthful. The truth as a value is one of the most important values in the creation of authority. The whole phenomenology of authority is expressed in the truth (Stróżewski, 1997).

2. The Concept of Authority

In the pedagogical and psychological literature, the most widely accepted is the concept of authority as a personal role model who influences others by their example. This is one of the most important functions that personal authority performs in the regulation of behavior (Marcinińczyk, 1991). This parents' trait, almost forgotten today, is very important in upbringing. Authority determines obedience, respect for parents and other adults, develops good character traits in children. Authority is the most important element of any power, including that of parents. Parents who have authority can influence a child's behavior faster and easier and are able thus correct their misbehavior. In order to exercise power, parents must

take precedence over their child. Otherwise, building of authority will not work (Szołtysek, 2009).

There are certain elements of authority without which it cannot exist. One of them is the true love of a parent for a child, which consists not only of embracing and saying "I love you". It is also the responsibility for a child and their behavior as well as ensuring child's well-being. Taking care of your children is love. As a parent, you take care of them the best you can since their very birth. If you love a child, you think a lot about their future. What will they grow up to be? They will grow up the way you raise them. Love is the reaction to what happens to a child, where he/she goes, with whom he/she meets, especially in the case of older children (Kosiarek, 1999). Speaking of authority, we can generally say that authority is an example to follow in terms of moral and ethical as well as intellectual and cognitive values, which is complemented by the discipline of thoughts, approaches, behavior and actions. It is important to bear in mind that the authority of parents is significantly connected with the authority of teachers, as the home has close ties with the school, like the law of connected vessels; if the parents are not authority for the child, it is not very likely that the teachers will be authority for the same child who acquires the status of a student at school. Given the educational requirements, including educative ones, of the younger generation, the authority of the teacher who was, is and will be present at school is indispensable (Wrocławska, 2002).

Young people are lost without evaluation guidelines and without authorities. The authority of parents and teachers is not a relic or a superstition. Contrary to the ideology of postmodernism, political correctness and post-pedagogy, contrary to the persuasion of young people - in the mass media in particular - about the crisis of great authorities, especially in the family and at school, there is an urgent need among young people to rely on intellectual and moral authorities (Łoboeki, 2002).

3. The Image of Authority in the Eyes of Young People

Young people are a social group that enters a period of devotion to different ideals. At this stage of life, a very important role is played by certain patterns of behavior and ideals. Everyone would like to have a certain example to follow. Young people often identify ideals and patterns of behavior with authority. Research on authority carried out among young people in secondary schools and gymnasiums in the Diocese of Sandomierz has raised many fairly detailed questions. In the first of them, the respondents' task was to choose one of the five definitions of authority proposed in the questionnaire, the students' own definition of authority was also taken into account. The answers show that for 54.9% of the respondents authority is a form of showing respect, and 30.8% of respondents have a different opinion. 70.7% state that authority is a form of influencing the actions of others. The largest percentage of respondents, that is 77.4%, believe that authority is a tool aimed at accepting the values, patterns and norms of behavior recognized by this authority. In the following, less important positions, there are definitions according to which

authority is a form of respect (21.1% of students considered this definition the most important).

Proponents of personalism relate authority to the presence of certain traits that arise directly or indirectly from a personality. Henryk Rowid understood authority as “a peculiar feature, inherent in a person or institution, owing to which other people, institutions and social groups are subordinated to it” (Jazukiewicz, 1999).

The interviewed young people state that the following are the decisive factors in gaining public authority: strong personality (92.5%), broad knowledge (91.7%), professionalism and diligence (91.0%), being an expert in the given field (90, 2%). For approximately 80.0% of the respondents the following may also be decisive in gaining public authority: respect for others, tolerance (86.5%); education (83.5%); ethical behavior (82.0%); charisma (82.0%) and experience that comes with age (80.5%). Gaining authority, on the other hand, does not depend on a high political position, a managerial position in the workplace, a high financial position, or ruthlessness towards others.

According to about 60% - 75% of the respondents, the above-mentioned factors are not decisive in gaining public authority. 68.5% of respondents admit that a high material status is not necessary for the formation of public authority. This is admitted by 68.5% of the respondents. Higher education is also optional. 43.6% of the respondents think so. Approximately the same number, that is 52.65%, assess the issue of love for law and order, and 35.4% being religious. The majority of the respondents have recognized the vast number of traits proposed in the questionnaire as such that should characterize a person who enjoys authority, each of such traits was supported by no less than 85.0% of lyceum students, namely, responsibility (98.5%), common sense (97.0%), honesty (97.0%), fairness (97.0%), ability to coexist with people (96.2%), conscientiousness (95.5%), truthfulness (94.0%), kindness (91.7%), behavior according to the rules (90.9%), nobility (89.5%), firmness (89.4%), tolerance (88.7%), giving good advice (88.7%), sincerity (85.7%). Among these traits the following are valued most by young people: honesty, fairness, responsibility. They were most often quoted as the three most important ones.

In the part of the research that followed the young people were asked questions about the role and importance of authority. It can be inferred from the answers received that young people are in great need of guidelines in life, of people who could point out the difference between the good and the evil, the truth and the lie. The overwhelming majority, that is 89.5% of the respondents, directly speak about the need for the existence of authority in life. Only 7.5% of the respondents believe that young people do not need such guidelines in their lives.

The next question was the following: In your opinion, should people develop their own opinion about what is good and what is bad, or accept the opinion of people of

authority, that is those who are held in respect? Almost half of the respondents support an intermediate solution, which takes into account the partial recognition of authority and the partial development of their own opinion. A small percentage of the respondents, only 4.5%, are in favor of strict subordination to authority in defining what is good and what is bad. Almost half of the young people who took part in the survey deem themselves autonomous in the sphere of moral beliefs and seek to solve problems and moral dilemmas on their own. The belief in autonomy and self-sufficiency does not always mean a complete denial of the need for moral authority in life, but it does indicate the reluctance of any authoritarian and arbitrarily imposed absolute orders and prohibitions. People who question the need for moral authority do not want to passively adjust to the existing moral order, but seek to transform the order to meet their own needs and intuitively applied valuation standards (Mariański, 1995).

In the opinion of the respondents, these are the parents who most often exert an influence on shaping their life attitudes. The role of parents is incomparable to that of other people or institutions. Every eleventh respondent sees the influence of colleagues, and every eighteenth – that of the Church. The influence of teachers is claimed in a completely marginal manner only 3%. Few of the respondents opt for the mass media or music idols. A small percentage of the respondents (2.3%) choose the answer that someone from the closest family environment, such as grandmother, brother or sister, influences their lives. Every twelfth young person emphasizes that none of the people and institutions mentioned in the questionnaire affects their attitudes in life. These young people probably want to make decisions concerning their own lives and do not refer to any authority. As for those who are not able to determine the influence of various factors on their life attitudes, they account for over 17% of the respondents.

Among people and institutions influencing life attitudes, parents are indicated by mainly female respondents 72.3% of the respondents. Boys, on the other hand, slightly more often indicate their friends (11.8% compared to 6.2%) or the Church. Male youngsters more often question all personal and institutional factors to have an educative impact. Boys are more susceptible to the influence of their peers, TV stars or sports idols, while girls mostly chose their closest relatives with whom they have strong emotional ties, most often from the family circle. It should be noted that among the factors that shape the life philosophy of young people, the family environment comes to the fore. Other individuals and institutions play a secondary role. Thus, there has been confirmed the importance of social groups based on personal and informal ties in life, whereas the influence of “officials”, such as a teacher or a priest, has turned out to be much less important (Mariański, 1995). Few, mostly boys, are influenced by peer groups.

In the context of the opinion on the crisis of authority, the young people were asked the following question: Do you think that the role of authority has been significantly diminished nowadays? The vast majority, that is 63%, believe that the role of

authority has now weakened considerably, the opposite view is held by only 7.5% of the respondents. Based on the presented research results, we can say that modern young people are characterized by the need for authority that would be a guide for them in life, who tell the difference between the good and the evil, the lie and the truth. At the same time, they value autonomy in the sphere of moral beliefs and strive to solve moral problems and dilemmas on their own. This belief in autonomy and self-sufficiency does not always mean a complete denial of the need for moral authority in life, but it indicates a reluctance to follow any authoritarian and arbitrarily imposed absolute orders and prohibitions (Mariański, 1995). Young people need authority that will facilitate or enhance certain social and moral processes, rather than be their driving force (Mariański, 1995).

4. Authority of Parents as the Foundation for Upbringing

Leszek Kołakowski rightly remarks that upbringing, completely free from authority, tradition and dogma, ends up in nihilism. The family environment plays a crucial role in the process of upbringing. The Church's social doctrine points out that the family is a community of individuals, the smallest social cell, which is the basic institution in the life of any society. In the family, within the framework of socialization and educational processes, there are passed down values, norms and patterns of moral behavior; the family seems to be a mediator between an individual and society in the retelling / passing down, perception and acceptance of cultural content. The retold cultural content includes the one which somehow defines what is good and what is bad. In the structure and logic of the Polish family, one can look for the roots of the phenomena observed in the life of the whole society (Mariański, 1995).

In fulfilling its basic functions, the authority of parents seems to be extremely necessary is often seen as a tool of parental influence (Wejland, 1970). "The educative influence of the family," Kubica stated, "occurs when parents have gained authority (...) and are thus an example for their own children. Recognition of parental authority is evidenced by being subject to parental influence as well as modeling of their views, interests and habits" (Kubica 1968). According to Andrzej Paweł Wejland, the authority-influence relationship in the family is usually two-sided. It is expressed in an active and purposeful educative position of parents. Parents have authority and at the same time they develop it for themselves (Wejland 1970). Parents gain authority only sometime after the birth of a child. Having authority contributes to its expansion and deepening. The formation of authority in the later period of a child's life consists in strengthening what has been achieved and achieving new spheres of influence (Wejland, 1970). Parents may be authority for a child in one area, but in another one - no. Educative authority does not always rest in the hands of both parents. It may happen that father and mother are authorities for the child in various fields, or that only one of them is trusted by the child and regarded as an oracle in matters of the view of the world and the life of a human (Wejland, 1970).

The range of parents' authority in the relationships with children is extremely wide. Only a few extrafamilial authorities are marked by such versatility. One can even assume that in the early years of a child's life, mother, father or also members of the closest family are almost exclusive authority for the child. Therefore, they are also authority in all or almost all areas. Over the years, the range of authority of parents usually reduces and narrows down - the child finds new authorities, entering new areas of social activity - however, the situations in which parents cease to be authority for their own children, are usually rare (Wejland, 1970). When analyzing the functioning of parental authority among the respondents, let us begin by closeness of the relations between family members and the respondents. Thus, it seems that an inappropriate family situation is the main reason for the lack of parents' authority. It can be assumed that the worse the atmosphere in the respondents' families is, the stronger the conflict with the parents is, the more answers are that deny the existence of parental authority.

Most of the respondents, that is 81.2%, define their relations with fathers as very good or rather good. Only every tenth respondent chooses the answer rather bad or very bad. The relationships with fathers is worse for boys rather than for girls. They more often chose the answer "rather bad" 11.8%, as opposed to girls, none of whom describe their relationship with their fathers as very bad. Respondents' relationships with mothers are assessed more positively than those with fathers. 92.5% of the respondents describe their relations with their mothers as very good or rather good. 88.3% of the boys who participated in the research and 90% of the interviewed girls describe their relationship with their mothers as very good or rather good. None of the girls describe their relationship with their mothers as bad or very bad. Therefore, it can be assumed that the general assessment of the family in the opinion of young people is positive. For most young Poles, the family provides emotional support. The respondents are mostly positive about the atmosphere in their homes. A definite minority of young people have a negative experience.

There are no serious and significant differences between female and male respondents in their views on relationships in the family. The boys are a little more critical of relationships with family members. Relationships in the family are more positive between mothers and children than between fathers and children. It can be assumed that the mother enjoys greater authority than the father. It turns out that the negative nature of the relationship between a small percentage of young people and their parents may be due to the wrong choice of educative methods and tools that do not take into account the needs of a child, which change as children grow older. Parents tend to exaggerate the material and biological needs, to escape from the real contact with the child. They take care of food, clothes, ask about grades at school, buy expensive gifts, but they are worse at meeting the needs of security, acceptance or mental contact. Meanwhile, the emotional exchange between parents and children is important in each period of their life, and not only when a child is small and completely dependent on the parents. The forms of contact change with age, but it is still an important and necessary process for a child (Kwak, 2001).

Further research may indicate the existence of the described state of things. Despite the generally good assessment of relations between family members, only 51.9% of the respondents discuss their problems with their mothers, including 24.8% of those who talk about them very often, and these are primarily girls (38,5%). As many as 12.8% of students never talk about their problems with their mothers. The situation is much more pessimistic in relation to the fathers. Only 7.5% of the respondents often talk about their problems with their fathers, and the vast majority are the girls, the boys constitute only 1.5% in this group. Instead, 35.3% of the respondents rarely talk about their problems with their fathers, 35.6% - do very rarely, while 21.8% - never do. The results are not surprising, since we live in the world of money and success, most parents devote themselves to work and finding financial resources to support the family and ensure the future of their offspring, so they do not find time to talk to their children”.

In conclusion, it should be noted that mother gets a much better image. In the family, she is a person with whom the respondents not only talk about their problems more often than with their fathers, but also more often describe their relationship with her as very good or rather good, and their mothers more often support them in difficult situations (88.7% of the respondents gave affirmative answers). Slightly more respondents considered their fathers as those who did not support them in difficult situations (17.3%), similarly to the siblings (18.8%). It can therefore be assumed that mother enjoys greater authority in the family than father.

The process of family socialization is reduced to the adoption of positions / approaches and behavior from the immediate family environment by children learning a certain system of values and norms accepted in the family and a wider community (Adamski, 1982). The family environment shapes a person, and the family is an educative institution that cannot be replaced by any other educative institution. It is a meeting point of two generations, where parents pass down their experience to their child, teach values and norms and control their child. Thanks to the family, individuals learn what they should do, as well as patterns of behavior, that is the ways to put into practice what values and norms dictate (Mariański, 1995). The family is a personal and social "stage" on which real life takes place. The children's behavior and youth is formed under the influence of their parents, parents are important people for their children.

In the conditions of relative stabilization of society, when the personal patterns presented by parents seem important and as such that give a chance for success in life, the identification of children with their parents is quite strong, almost universal. It can be assumed that the greater is the authority of parents, the greater are the chances that the influence of parents on shaping their children's life attitudes is more considerable; on the other hand, the more children take into account the views of their parents in shaping their own life attitudes, it can be more certainly argued that these parents are their authority. During the research the young people were asked whether and to what extent they take into account the opinion of their parents in such

life issues as, the choice of educational opportunities, occupation, life partner, friends, clothes, religious and political views. Most of the respondents, namely 73.7%, count on the opinions of their parents when opting for education, slightly more than half - when choosing an occupation (55.6%) or religious views (53.3%). This group includes a higher percentage of girls than boys. On the other hand, 67% of the respondents do not take their parents' opinion into account when choosing their life partner, 70% - while choosing friends, 62.4% - in the choice of clothes. In this respect, young people are more influenced by the fashion promoted by the mass media and peer groups than by their parents. In open and rapidly changing societies young people try to independently control their beliefs and behaviors, both in politics, work, free time and while choosing a life partner, moral and religious beliefs. Individualistic tendencies lead to shaping such model of intra-family relations in which values and norms become a private matter (Marianański, 1995).

The differences in attitudes and values of both generations may indicate a crisis of the family as the main institution of upbringing and, as a consequence, the failure in the processes of passing down values and norms in the family (Marianański, 1995) as well as the decrease in the authority of parents in terms of norms and values proclaimed by them. In view of the growth of individualistic positions of the younger generation in terms of perception of values, norms and patterns of behavior from the parents, the following question arises: Will the decline of their authority also be universal? The question that the respondents were asked: Do you recognize the authority of your mother and father? was answered in quite interesting ways. Thus, for 78.2% of the respondents, mother is authority, and father is authority for 67.7% of the respondents.

Thus, as we can see, the majority of the young people who took part in the survey still describe their attitude to their parents as positive and include their parents to the number of those who enjoy authority. Excessive criticism of parents concerns only the minority of young people, so it can be stated that in relation to this number of young people, the development of individualistic tendencies occurs regardless of the level of authority of their parents. Instead, it seems that authority loses its power to define and to identify the right goals. It is widely known that existence of authority depends on certain personality traits. To find out the traits that the respondents believe to be necessary for the formation of parental authority, they were given a list of eleven traits and were asked to express their views on their importance in forming parental authority. A good example of the parents ranked first 98.5%, followed by the parents' support 94%, tips on how to deal with problems 86.5%, religious commitment 84.6%, advice on how to behave 80.5%, an example of how to help others 79.7%, maintaining family traditions 67.7%, patriotism 51.1%, higher education 30.8%, holding a high position 11.3%, material benefits 6.0%. Young people clearly prioritize parents' good example and parental support. These features are often ranked as the first and the most important. Religious commitment is important, although to a lesser extent; patriotism is also important for half of the respondents. Thus, it turns out that the material benefits that parents so often strive

for their children do not have the slightest importance in gaining authority, the most important thing is their support.

Summing up, it should be noted that young people's assessment of the family is positive. Most respondents are positive about the atmosphere in their families. The vast minority of young people have a negative experience. There are no serious significant differences between female and male respondents in their views on intra-family relationships. The boys are a little more critical of relationships with family members. As for the intra-family relationships, more positive are those between mothers and children rather than those between fathers and children

5. Conclusion

Despite many negative influences that the family environment is subject to, it seems that the Polish family continues to be the main educative environment and creates opportunities for transferring moral values and norms of social life. These opportunities lie in the relatively high authority of the parents. Authority does not mean exclusive educative influence. Even if the parents were the greatest authority for a child, they alone would not shape their view of the world and that of human life (Wejland, 1970).

Although the family undoubtedly plays a primary role in the upbringing of a child, it is not the only center of educative influence. At the same time, family authority is not the only authority for a child. Along with the extension of the range of social experience, making new acquaintances with the world of people and things - the number of centers that can be authority for them increase, authority that can have educative power over them and have a real impact on their beliefs and behavior. In these terms, two of the most important are school and teachers (Wejland, 1970).

Natural authority in upbringing is essential for parents to spare themselves rebuke and punishment. Having it, they show that they really are parents. Although problems with authority are most noticeable when children grow up, building it must be started from the first years of life. For many consider authority to be something that we are clearly entitled to just by being parents. Parental authority is still both possible and necessary today. It is possible because there are actions available to parents to build and maintain it. And at the same time, it is necessary, because in today's world it is the authority of parents, which is a constant point of support for children and shows them a safe path in life, which is needed more than ever before.

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