

FATHER AND HIS ROLE IN THE CURRENT FAMILY

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Abstract: The article presents the results of the research aimed on the role of the father in the current family from the point of view of three generations. The research was carried out in the period from January to April 2017 with a selected sample of respondents formed by the representatives of three generations - students, parents, grandparents. The results of the research were processed by means of chosen statistic methods. It was proved with the research that the opinions of respondents about the role of the father in the current family are, statistically, significantly dependent on the belonging of respondents to the particular generational group - students, parents, grandparents.

Keywords: family, father, role of the father, χ^2 - test

Introduction

Already for several decades the attention of the specialised public has been aimed on the phenomenon of maternity and the question of its instinctive basis, the problem of the maternal love, etc. Paradoxically, the phenomenon of paternity has not been very interesting until now. Less attention has been paid to the importance of the paternity in the education of children by the experts and the laic public. However, the role of the father has been reevaluated currently and it seems that its influence is much more important and multifaceted than it was supposed by the scientists concerned predominantly with the maternity.

1 Role of the father in the family

The sociological researches showed that the function of the father has changed more significantly than the function of the mother in the last decades (Možný, 1990; Miller, 2011; Bosoni, 2014). The paternity is getting into the centre of investigation and more attention is paid to the father, his role in and outside the family (Parke – Stearns, 1993; Marsiglio, 2000; Huffman et al., 2014). The main topics of the researches include the paternity after the divorce, the organising of the parental responsibility after the breaking of the marriage or partnership, the transformation of the paternal role, the traditional vs. modern perception of the paternal role, the transformations of the father's position as a main breadwinner of the family, the changing division of work between the father and the mother in the family, etc. From the point of view of forming the child's personality it is important to investigate the presence or absence of the parental person represented by the father, his influence on the psychic and social development of the child (Warshak, 1996), the intimacy of the current fathers (Dermott, 2008), the influence of their work on the performance of their role of the father (Huffman et al, 2014) or the influence of their income on their educational methods (Burbach et al., 2004).

It is possible to see the changes happening in the role behaviour inside the family also in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This changing attitude is proved by many researches, e.g. Bútorová (2008), Bausová (2002), Holubová (2006), Filadelfiová et al. (2006), Maříková (2004), Chaloupková (2005). These studies analysed the position of the father in the family and the transformation of the parental roles.

We have to understand the paternity in the close connection with the social conditions and relationships which strongly influence the life of the father and his family. As Biddulph (2004) says there is always a typical perception of the ideal paternity in each historical period. These imaginations have been kept during the course of the history and they still form a part of our understanding of the reality in the form of archetypes or stereotypes. According to Hobson and Morgan (2002), it is necessary to perceive the definition of the concept of the father also in the relationships oriented towards the mother and

children where the first relationship (with the mother) influences the other relationship (with the child). Similarly, Badinter (1998) and Dermott (2008) state that it is not possible to talk about one member of the family micro-community without mentioning the other two members (the child and the father or, respectively, the child and the mother). The relevant roles of the father, mother and also of the child are determined by the dominant values and needs of the given society.

The definition of the contents of the father's role is a part of a particular discourse which is included in the discussion about the "old" and "new" father. The set of rights, obligations and responsibilities of men performing the parental role is closely connected with the discourse on the topic of the tension between the "cash" and the "care" (Hochschild, 2003). According to Dudová (2008), we can perceive the role of the father in the family by looking at two basic sources which the father can offer to his child: money ("cash") and time ("care") but, at the same time, she states that these two sources are mutually competing. The more financial resources the father earns, the less time he has to spend with his child, for playing with him/her, for his/her education and other activities. Many authors (Možný, 1990; Smit, 2002; Bosoni, 2014) think that the economic activity of the man and its importance for the family have significantly changed during the last one hundred years. The position of the father as the breadwinner has weakened with an important exclusiveness. Also today the primary task of the father is to ensure his children financially, though this part of the social fatherhood is currently not such a dominant task as it used to be in the past. According to Bocchicchio (2007), the current fathers are actively participating in the lives of their children. Their roles have spread in such a way that they include expressing of their love to their children as well as reacting to their needs.

Whereas the role of the fathers in the education of the children was considered to be marginal till the 70's of the 20th century (Daniels-Weingartner, 1983), the researches carried out in Great Britain in the 80's confirm the increasing participation of fathers in the care for their children (Lewis et al., 1981). Fathers started to spend more time with their children than the previous generations of fathers and the emotional level of the relationship between the father and the child increased as well. Also the recent researches show that fathers fulfil more caring tasks which were traditionally reserved exclusively for mothers (Askari et al., 2010; Bretherton et al., 2005).

2 Research of the role of the father in the current family from the point of view of three generations

2.1 The project of the research

Based on the knowledge mentioned above, we carried out a research aimed on obtaining opinions of the respondents about the role of the father in the current family depending on the age of the respondent. The research was aimed on finding out the opinions of the public about the role of the father in the current family from the point of view of three generations. When investigating the role of the father, we paid our attention mainly to two aspects of his acting in the family: 1. division of work between the man and the woman, 2. the contents of the father's role. *The aim* of the research was: 1. to compile the opinions of the public about the role of the current father from the point of view of three generations, 2. to find out whether the age and the belonging to one generational group determine the opinions of the respondents about the role of the father in the family, i.e. to find out whether there exists a statistically significant difference in the opinions of the respondents about the role of the father in the family from the point of view of three generations. Regarding the needs of our research we set the following research *questions*: 1) Do there prevail the traditional opinions about the education of children, i.e. is the education and care for children connected primarily with the mother? 2) Is the traditional view at the division of work in the family

predominant or is the egalitarian, symmetrical division of tasks in the family preferred? 3) What is expected from the current father: the ensuring of material resources or the active participation in the family life?

The research sample consisted of students of universities, their parents and grandparents from different regions of Slovakia. The total number of respondents was 333 and they were divided into three groups. The first group was formed by 132 students of universities, in the second group were 118 parents and the third group consisted of 83 grandparents. In the set there were represented respondents of both genders and all marital statuses coming from villages and towns and having a different level of achieved education.

In order to obtain the research data we used a non-standardized questionnaire - the same for all three research sets. The questionnaire involved the Likert scale for measuring the attitudes and opinions of the respondents with the aim to specify their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements on a 5 - degree scale: 1 - I totally agree, 2 - I rather agree, 3 - I cannot express myself, 4 - I rather disagree, 5 - I totally disagree. Based on the results of the research, we found out that the opinions of respondents of the relevant generational groups differ from each other. The aim of the statistic analysis was to ascertain whether these differences are also statistically significant, i.e. whether the answers of the respondents of three groups to the particular statements are dependent on the belonging of the respondents to their age group (students, parents or grandparents). Therefore we tested the dependence of two nominal characters A, B where the character A - the status of the respondent - achieved three levels: a student, a parent or a grandparent and the character B - represented possible answers to the given statement. In the statistic analysis of the obtained data there was used the χ^2 - test for verifying the independence of two qualitative characters A, B . We tested the zero hypothesis H_0 : the characters A, B are independent versus the alternative hypothesis H_1 : the characters A, B are dependent. The testing criterion is the statistics χ^2 defined by the relation $\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{(f_{ij} - o_{ij})^2}{o_{ij}}$, where f_{ij} are empirical numbers and o_{ij} are forecast numbers. We deny the tested hypothesis H_0 at the level of significance α if the level of the tested criterion χ^2 exceeds the critical level $\chi_{\alpha}^2(r)$ (Markechová – Stehlíková - Tirpáková, 2011). We performed the test by means of the programme STATISTICA. In the output set of the computer we obtained the contingent table, the value of the testing criterion χ^2 - test and the value of p meaning the probability of a mistake we make if we deny the tested hypothesis. If the calculated value of p is relatively small ($p < 0,05$, resp. $p < 0,01$), we deny the tested hypothesis H_0 about the independence of the observed characters A, B (at the level of significance 0,05 resp. 0,01). We will evaluate the test on the basis of the calculated p -values and, subsequently, we will present the results in the tables.

2.2 The analysis of the research results

Regarding the research aims mentioned above, in the analysis of the research data we verified by means of χ^2 - test whether the opinions of three groups of respondents about the given statements are significantly different. Therefore we tested the dependence of two nominal characters A, B where the character A - the status of respondents - achieved three levels: a student, a parent or a grandparent. The character B - answers to the statement - achieved five levels (1 - I totally agree, 2 - I rather agree, 3 - I cannot express myself, 4 - I rather disagree, 5 - I totally disagree).

The first set of statements (No.1 and No.2) was centered on the gender aspects of the parenthood, i.e. on the performance of the parental role by the mother and father. Our aim was to find out whether in the answers of respondents prevail the traditional

opinions about the education of children saying that the education and care for children is primarily connected with the mother. We examined the opinions of respondents about the statement No. 1 "The child needs both parents, even though the parents do not live in the common household" and the statement No. 2 "The woman can look after the child better than the man". We tested the statistic significance of the differences in the answers of the respondents of three groups to the statements No. 1 and No. 2 by means of the χ^2 - test. The results are stated in the Table 1.

Table 1 Results of the χ^2 - test

Statement	χ^2	p
No.1	10,120	0.256
No.2	50,257	0,000*

The values of probability p smaller than the stated level of significance $\alpha = 0,05$ are marked with an asterisk * in the table 1. Based on the results mentioned in the Table 1, we can sum up that the differences in the opinions of the respondents of three groups about the fact whether the child needs both parents, even though the parents do not live in the common household, were not statistically significantly different. However, the results of the test proved that the differences in the opinions of the respondents of three groups were statistically significantly different when the respondents answered to the statement whether the woman can look after the child better than the man. It was also verified with the analysis that the respondents of all three groups agree with the need of participation of both parents in the education of the child. This is also valid when the parents do not live in the common household. All three groups of respondents also agreed that personal contacts with both parents are necessary for the child (students: totally agree 71%, rather agree 23%; parents: totally agree 62%, rather agree 29%, grandparents: totally agree 69%, rather agree 19%). On the basis of the results obtained with the analysis of the answers to the statement No. 2 "The woman can look after the child better than the man", we can see the highest level of agreement with the given statement in the group of grandparents (61%), there were 43% of grandparents totally agreeing and 18% of them were rather agreeing. Therefore we can state that the generation of grandparents has the most traditional opinions about the education of children, i.e. they give the educational competence rather to the woman than to the man. The parents and students agreed to a lesser extent with the fact that the woman can look after the children better than the man, i.e. they attribute the same ability to the men as well.

The second set of statements (No. 3 - 8) was centered on the division of work in the family between the man and woman with the aim to find out whether the opinions of respondents about the employment of women have become more modern or there are still prevailing the opinions about the traditional division of tasks in the family (the woman cares about the household and the education of children, the man earns money). We tested the statistic significance of differences in the opinions of the respondents of particular groups about the following statements:

3. The man has the right for the professional self-fulfillment.
4. The woman has the right for the professional self-fulfillment.
5. The family should be economically ensured primarily by the man.
6. The family should be economically ensured primarily by the woman.
7. The family should be economically ensured by both spouses/partners.
8. The task of the man is to earn money; the task of the woman is the care for the household and children.

Once again we tested the statistic significance of the differences in the opinions of three groups of respondents about the statements No. 3 - 8 by means of the χ^2 - test (Table 2).

Table 2 Results of the χ^2 - test

Statement	χ^2	<i>p</i>
No.3	12,189	0,143
No.4	17,615	0,024*
No.5	39,466	0,000*
No.6	10,686	0,220
No.7	9,125	0,331
No.8	37,012	0,000*

On the basis of the results mentioned in the Table 2 we can state that the respondents of three groups answered to the statements No.4, 5 and 8 in statistically significantly different ways. It means that there was proved a higher level of acceptance of the employment of women in the group of students (87%) and in the group of parents (83%) when compared with the group of grandparents who accept the employment of women only in 73%. In this group, 12% of grandparents do not even agree with the right of the woman for the professional fulfillment. At the same time, in the highest extent (73%) they accept the obligation of the man to ensure the family economically. The same opinion is held by 66% of parents and 63% of respondents from the student group. Similarly, the traditional division of work is accepted almost by 63% of respondents from the group of grandparents. However, only 46% of parents and 35% of students agree with this opinion. Therefore we can sum up that the grandparents perceive the role of the man in the family in a more traditional way. They connect it with the role of the breadwinner of the family in a higher extent than the parents and students do when perceiving this role.

In the statistic analysis of the answers to the statements No. 3, 6 and 7 there was not proved a statistic significance of differences in the opinions of respondents of three groups. It means that all three groups of respondents (87% of students, 84% of parents and 82% of grandparents) accept the right of the man for the professional fulfillment and they also refuse the role of the woman as the breadwinner of the family (74% of grandparents, 71% of parents and 61% of students). All three groups also accept the egalitarian participation of partners in the financial ensuring of the family (92% of students, 89% of parents and 88% of grandparents).

The third set of statements (No. 9 - 11) was aimed on the role of the father in the family. By means of the χ^2 - test we tested the statistic importance of differences between the three groups of respondents in their opinions about the following statements:

9. The man needs a child to feel the complete satisfaction with his life.

10. The most important life aim of the man is to earn as much money as possible and to make career.

11. The most important decisions in the family should be made by the man.

The results are recorded in the Table 3.

Table 3 Results of the χ^2 - test

Statement	χ^2	<i>p</i>
No.9	32,381	0,000*
No.10	6,875	0,550
No.11	16,801	0,032*

Based on the results mentioned in the Table 3, we can confirm that the respondents of three groups answered to the statements No. 9 and 11 statistically in a significantly different way. It is clear from the answers of the respondents that it is the group of the grandparents which attributes the biggest importance in the life of the man to his child (60%) when compared to the group of parents (42%) and students (37%). We can say that, with the growing age, the respondents attribute a bigger meaning to the child in the man's life. It was confirmed with the research that the respondents hold a dismissive attitude to the position of the man as the "head" of the family. The biggest disagreement with the statement about the position of the man as the head of the

family was expressed in the group of parents (73%), followed by the group of grandparents (64%) and students (62%). The dismissive attitude towards the statement "the most important decisions in the family should be made by the man" expresses the preference of the egalitarian relationships in the family between the man and the woman. However, the dismissal or acceptance of this task of the man proved to be statistically different regarding to the belonging of the respondents to a particular generational group.

A statistically significant difference between the groups of respondents of three groups in the answers to the statement No.10 was not confirmed with its analysis. All the groups of respondents presented an ambivalent approach to the life objectives of the man to earn money and to make career, i.e. there was not shown a significant level of accepting or dismissing this statement. In a higher extent, the respondents expressed their disagreement with the mentioned role of the man defined in the statement No. 10 (46% of students, 53% of parents and 47% of grandparents). On the contrary, 30% of students, 22% of parents and 36% of grandparents agreed with this statement. We can see from the mentioned results that there are not explicit opinions of the respondents about the man's life objectives connected with his work. Though they hold the opinion that the man has the right for the professional self-fulfillment and he has to ensure the family economically, on the other hand, our results showed that these were not his most important tasks.

When comparing the answers of the respondents according to their generational group, it was evident that mainly the group of grandparents (65%) connected the role of the father with the traditional role of the breadwinner. Only 39% of parents held the same opinion. Students and parents have higher expectations connected with the role of the father in the emotional area. This topic was expressed in the statements "the father should provide a feeling of safety to the children" (64% of students, 63% of parents 51% of grandparents) and "the father should show his love and feelings to his children" (58% of students, 47% of parents, 47% of grandparents). Less important for the respondents were the following tasks of the man "to prepare the children for life" and "to lead the children to discipline". Almost nobody of the respondents connected the role of the father with the preparation of children for the lessons and with the everyday care for the children.

Discussion and conclusions

In the submitted study we tried to approximate and analyse the fatherhood as a significant sociological phenomenon which represents an important part of many studies about family not only abroad but also in Slovakia. The fatherhood has become a subject of many researches at a different level of interdisciplinary investigation as well as a topic of media presentation and discussion. Regarding the transforming role of the father in the family we tried to find out the opinions of respondents from the point of view of three generations. It is evident from our research findings that there is generally present the norm about the participation of both parents in the education of children, also after the breaking of their relationship, and all the respondents are aware of this need. Our results confirm their opinion that the common bond between the divorced (leaving) parent and the child is getting weaker mainly after the divorce when they stop living together (Arendell 1995; Bradshaw et al. 1999).

The weakening preference of the mother as a more competent person in the care for the children can be understood as an advantage for the current fathers. It is clear from the opinions of students and parents that they do not perceive the parental role primarily connected with the mother. In the group of grandparents prevails the traditional understanding of the parental role and they attribute education and care for children primarily to the mother. On the basis of our results we can confirm that the grandparents still hold the traditional opinion about the role of the woman as an educator and housewife what

is also related to the lower acceptance of the employment of the woman. Our findings are similar to the research carried out by Bútorová (2008). According to her, people in Slovakia are still convinced that the woman has a bigger competence to care for the household despite certain changes in this opinion. However, there are less and less people in Slovakia who openly think that most of the care for children and household should be attributed to women.

The research also confirmed that the dual-income families are common at this time and, due to this fact, the respondents of all three groups accept the participation of both partners in the economical ensuring of the family. At the same time, they have a clear idea about the obligation of the man to ensure his family economically, though they have less explicit ideas about the participation of the woman in this task. We found out that the group of grandparents holds the most traditional opinions about the role of the father in the family, they perceive the man as the breadwinner and instrumental leader of the family in a higher extent than the parents and students do. It is evident from our findings that in the society there is a dismissive attitude towards the traditional status of the man as the leader of the family but there still prevails the accepting of his breadwinning role. Our results correspond with the general perception of the man that is still strongly oriented on his economic contribution to the family. The qualities of the man can be seen in the life standard he can provide to his wife and children, i.e. he still has the status of the breadwinner of the family (Možný, 1990; Bosoni, 2014).

Our research also proved the fact that the position of the father as the breadwinner has been weakened after the women entered the labour market. At the same time, it means higher involvement and participation of men outside their breadwinning role and their traditional tasks and obligations. We can see that the society has a double system of expectations: on one side, the father is supposed to perform his traditional role of the breadwinner (to ensure the material needs) and, on the other hand, he has to participate in the positive emotional climate in the family. As Coltrane (1995) and Bocchicchio (2007) say there is spreading of the new paternal practices and beginning of the era of the so called new fathers. The father is more and more supposed to move his position from the biological fatherhood to the social fatherhood, from the breadwinning role to the caring role, from the passive consumer to the active, participating member of the family (Askari et al., 2010; Bretherton et al., 2005).

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