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## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILIES OF MINORS IN THE REHABILITATION WORK OF EDUCATORS – AN INTERACTIVE PERSPECTIVE\*

**Introduction:** The paper focuses on the work of pedagogues (educators of youth educational centers and family probation officers), who work with families of minors.

**Research Aim:** The aim of the article is to describe the types of social rehabilitation educators and the significance that pedagogues attribute to their relations with the families of minors as part of strengthening social rehabilitation activities.

**Method:** The collected empirical material comes from interviews and observations of the everyday professional lives of educators from educational centers and family probation officers. The procedures of grounded methodology determined the method of analyzing the collected data, creating conditions for the generation of patterns which shaped the activities performed by the educators. The theoretical framework is determined by the assumptions of symbolic interactionism.

**Results:** We will present a typology of educators and strategies used by them in contacts with families of minors in an open and closed environment. We have highlighted the extreme strategies applied by educators in their work with families of juveniles, i.e. active and passive strategies, and within this framework we selected the tactics used by the respondents.

**Conclusions:** We managed to find out that despite the variety of environments in which educators of youth educational centers and family probation officers work, they reached for similar activities aimed at establishing and managing a relationship with the families of minors. Furthermore, we compared our analyses with the proposed characteristics of models of working with families. Finally, we took note of the fact that while the respondents implemented all work models, the professional-directed and family-allied models dominated.

**Keywords:** family environment, minor, educator, family probation officer, educational measures.

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## INTRODUCTION

Statistical data collected by the Ministry of Justice show that the most frequently adjudicated measures in cases related to minors (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35, item 228) are probation officer supervision and referral to youth educational centres (see Statistical Directory of the Ministry of Justice). Although these differ substantially, they are among the most invasive measures for minors (see Haak, 2010). Probation officer supervision and referral to youth educational centres also affect family members and lead to reorganisation of family life. In the literature on the subject it is noted that for the educational and social rehabilitation interactions to be effective, it is necessary to engage and work with the minors' families (see Górnicka, 2016). Scientific research suggests that the source of behaviour labelled as demoralisation among minors, can be found in the life situation of the family of the child or adolescent who commits an offence (see Wirkus, 2020). Thus, it is justified to state that the measures adjudicated against minors also impact their families. Moreover, the very preamble to the Act on Juvenile Delinquency (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35 item 228), and the Support and Rehabilitation of Minors (Journal of Laws of 2022 item 1700), highlights the importance of the parent or caregiver in the educational-upbringing process of minors.

Social rehabilitation educators in the role of family probational officers or educators face a "two-tier" task. On the one hand, they support the minors and conduct preventive, educational, diagnostic and rehabilitation activities. On the other hand, their activities should be oriented towards supporting the family in the educational process and in developing the relationship between minors and parents or caregivers.

Source literature clearly shows that family significantly impacts the behaviour of children and adolescents (see Bałandynowicz, 1996, 2001; Ostrihanska and Greczuszkin, 1999; Dąbrowska, 2014; Zinkiewicz, 2015; Szczepkowski, 2016; Barczykowska, 2021). The source of deviant behaviour among children and adolescents can be found, among others, in the problems of the family of origin.

When analyzing selected source literature, we noticed three distinctive directions of research on the families of minors, which can be placed on a timeline. The first one is focused on searching for the causes of social maladjustment in the family environment (see Comanor and Phillips, 2002; Price and Kunz, 2003; Mack et al., 2007; Apel and Kaukinen, 2008; Burt et al., 2008; Leiber et al., 2009; Mazur, 2008; Hovee et al., 2009; van de Weijer et al., 2015; Wirkus, 2020). The second one is focused on the educational work of educators with the families of minors during the implementation of the educational measure (see Konopka, 2012; Kiliszek, 2011; Górnicka, 2016; Kamiński, 2019; Kozłowski, 2019; Kwadrans, 2019a, 2019b). The last direction of research focuses on the role of the family in the process of re-adaptation of young adults leaving social rehabilitation institutions. Despite

the diversity in research, we noted the prevalence of the quantitative paradigm (Comanor and Phillips 2002; Price and Kunz, 2003; Mack et al., 2007; Apel and Kaukinen, 2008; Burt et al., 2008; Leiber et al., 2009; Mazur, 2008; Hoeve et al., 2009; Kiliszek, 2011; Konopka, 2012; van de Weijer et al., 2015; Górnicka, 2016; Kozłowski, 2019; Kwadrans, 2019a, 2019b; Wirkus, 2020). There are still few analyses of juvenile families carried out in the interpretive paradigm. The family also plays an important role in the rehabilitation measures for minors (see Wirkus, 2020; Siemionow, 2012; Dąbrowska, 2014; Szczepkowski, 2016; Dobińska, 2019; Barczykowska, 2021). In spite of this, the relationship between rehabilitation educators and families of minors receives little attention in discourse. This raises the issue of the ways in which rehabilitation educators involve families of minors in supportive and developmental measures, in order to build a new identity. This was the starting point for our considerations of the ways in which rehabilitation educators manage relations with families of minors, and on the strategies they apply in order to establish and maintain these relations.

## RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The authors decided to make the relations with the families of minors under the supervision of social rehabilitation educators the subject of this study. The aim of the paper is an attempt to describe certain types of rehabilitation educators and the significance that educators attribute to relations between them and the parents or guardians of minors, in the context of reinforcing rehabilitation measures. We will present a typology of social rehabilitation educators and the strategies applied by educators. Empirical data analysis allowed us to frame the activities undertaken by rehabilitation educators (in the role probation officers or educators), oriented towards strengthening or weakening parents in the social rehabilitation process of minors, with respect to whom the above measures were adjudicated.

According to Art. 10 § 4 of the Penal Code (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 88, item 553) and Art. 1 § 1 of the Act on juvenile delinquency (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35 item 228), a minor is a person under the age of 18, with respect to whom measures to prevent and combat demoralisation are adjudicated. It is also a person, who committed an offence between the ages of 13 and 17. Moreover, the term refers to a person under the age of 21, with respect to whom one of the educational or correctional measures specified in the legislation was applied. On June 9, 2022, the Act on supporting and rehabilitating minors (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 1700) was issued, which replaced the Act of October 26, 1982 on proceedings in juvenile cases (Journal of Laws of 1982, No. 35 item 228). It changed the definition of the term “minor” and indicated the initial age limit of a minor. However, in the article we refer to the old act of 1982, because this act was in force at the time of the research.

A court can adjudicate educational or corrective measures with respect to minors. We need to stress that the primary objective of a court decision is to guarantee optimal and favourable developmental conditions for minors. The fundamental aim of the act is the well-being of the minor, and the undertaken rehabilitation measures should be complex and thoughtful. In the Act on juvenile delinquency of October 26, 1982 legislators frequently stress the importance of the family in the minor's social rehabilitation process. It should be highlighted that the draft of the Act on support and rehabilitation of minors of July 20, 2021 maintains the entry on the integral character of the family and the necessity to include it in the rehabilitation process of the minor (see Wiącek, 2021).

Source literature and numerous scientific studies show that the family environment is the source of behaviours standing in opposition to legal regulations regarding children and adolescents (Wirkus, 2020). Price and Kunz (2003) analysed 72 studies which showed that children from divorced families commit crimes more frequently than children from complete families (see Burt et al., 2008; van de Weijer et al., 2015). Burt et al. (2008) demonstrated that problems in the family are at the source of criminal behaviour among children and adolescents, not common genes. However, divorce is not the only cause for the increased indicator of deviant behaviours among children and adolescents. Hoeve et al. (2009) conclude that there is a significant relationship between parental control, rejection, hostility and neglect, and the demoralization of children and adolescents. Apel and Kaukinen (2008) compared their empirical studies on the relationship between family structure and antisocial behaviours among adolescents with available literature. They demonstrate that adolescents who live with both biological parents display less antisocial behaviours – a finding confirmed in source literature. On the other hand, more antisocial behaviours can be observed in adolescents who live in “mixed” families. Moreover, this is related with the material conditions of the family and the age of the parents, especially in situations of adolescent parenthood (Apel and Kaukinen, 2008). Leiber et al. (2009) conclude that the bond between parents and children is more important than the family structure or the material and living conditions of the family (see Mack et al., 2007). The researchers highlight the significance of the relationships between children and adolescents and their mothers (Leiber et al., 2009). Furthermore, Comanor and Phillips (2002) indicated the presence of the father in the life of the family as an important factor preventing behaviours in future adults.

Bałandynowicz (2001) draws attention to studies on the relations of multi-problem families and deviant behaviours among children and adolescents. Moreover, the author points out that regardless of who is under the care of a probation officer, a diagnosis of the family environment should be made. On its basis, the actions which neutralize the elements of the family environment functioning considered as dysfunctional (Bałandynowicz, 1996) should be taken. Family sup-

port should be oriented towards strengthening its resources for internal integration (Zinkiewicz, 2015).

Marynowicz-Hetka (as cited in Bourdieu, 2009) highlights the role of socio-cultural reproduction mechanisms. Incorrect patterns of behaviour and attitudes transferred from parents become internalised and reproduced in adult life. Unfortunately, the minors' families of origin are often multi-problem ones, and their members frequently receive social support (Dobińska, 2019). Barczykowska (2015, p. 294) points to the fact that

institutions assume a perspective of control with respect to parents, forgetting the necessity to educate and support. Families are required to take action, regardless of their lack of knowledge, skills and motivation necessary to meet these expectations. It is soon revealed that family members do not perform their tasks, which is usually interpreted as a result of opportunism, maliciousness or laziness. Consequently, parents are not informed sufficiently or at all about suggestions for rehabilitation measures. That is, if such suggestions are made, for parents are seldom expected to be active, and the parents themselves, not understanding the objective, are unable to effectively enter the rehabilitation process of their own children.

Regardless of the form of the measures (institutionalised or non-institutionalised) the rehabilitation educator should include the minor's family in his or her measures.

Over the years, the area of work with families of minors has changed, resulting in the crystallization of four work models: professional-directed, family-allied, family-focused and family-centred (Krasiejko and Bewz, 2018; Pennell et al., 2011; Rhoades and Duncan, 2016). The first model is oriented towards interventionism, institutionalism, clientelism and facade, which effectively discourages families from cooperating with educators. In this model, the cause of educational problems lies in the family environment, therefore, specialists isolate the child from the family (as a risk factor). The second model, known as family-allied, looks at the family through the prism of resources that can help a minor, and of temporary crises. Thus, the described model considers the participation of families in educational interactions. The family becomes an instrument of change (families are agents of educators) (Rhoades and Duncan, 2016). "The relationship therefore remained strongly paternalistic, as the institution, being the owner of the funds, could discipline the family, which often resulted in taking an apparent behavior. The effectiveness of this type of activities remains debatable" (Barczykowska, 2021, p. 52). Significant changes in the perception of the family in social rehabilitation work were brought about by the model focused on the family, in which the family is a "consumer" of pedagogical services. Although the decision-making and participation of the family is greater, there is no full partnership or empowerment of families, which still have to adapt to the imposed solutions, not always suited to

their needs. Last but not least, the family-centric model enables families to cope with the experienced crisis, using effective strategies. According to this model, the individual and the family (perceived as a system) are able to work out change, relying on resources and potentials, moreover, even in a disturbed environment, factors which favour development can be found (Kulesza, 2015; Barczykowska, 2021). Therefore, the role of educators is to support and assist families. In this model, specialists are a tool in the hands of families, and the relationship between the pedagogue and the child changes from hierarchical to heterarchical (Szczepkowski, 2016).

## RESEARCH METHOD AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

We assumed a theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, which allowed us to reconstruct exchanges of symbolic meanings (Blumer, 2007; Bernasiewicz, 2011; Hałas, 2012; Szczepanik, 2015) attributed by rehabilitation educators who fulfil the role of family probation officers and educators at youth educational centres. We made use of participant observation (Goode and Hatt, 1965; Adler, 1994; Konecki, 2000; Lutyński, 2000; Angrosino, 2010), unstructured interviews (Lutyński, 1968; Konecki, 2000; Babbie, 2013), as well as ethnographic and informal (conversational) interviews (Hammerslay and Atkinson, 2000; Konecki, 2000; Angrosino, 2010). Grounded methodology procedures determined the mode of data analysis, creating the conditions to generate patterns which shape the activities of educators and minors' family members. The theoretical framework established by the assumptions of symbolic interactionism made it possible to analyse and interpret the undertaken tasks and interactions between educators ("first response" initiators) and the minors' family members. As a result, we will present strategies used by the educators and suggest a typology of rehabilitation educators. Owing to triangulation of data and researchers, we were able to study various perspectives. Triangulation gives researchers space to learn and interpret reality using various perspectives simultaneously (Chomczyński, 2014).

The participants of the research were representatives of the institutional division of social rehabilitation measures focused on minors (educators at youth educational centres) and representatives of the non-institutional division of educational interactions (probation officers). The collected empirical material, which we used to formulate conclusions, comes from unstructured, ethnographic or informal (conversational) interviews (Lutyński, 1968; Konecki, 2000; Babbie, 2013; Hammerslay and Atkinson, 2000; Konecki, 2000; Angrosino, 2010) and observations of the daily work of educators from educational centres and family probation officers. Twenty-three respondents took part in the research. Observations were conducted after obtaining consent from the authorities in charge of a given insti-



tution. Owing to physical “access” to the environment of the participants, the researchers were allowed to enter two different social worlds, shaped within a closed and open environment. Establishing contact with institutions made the participants more willing to engage in conversation and recommend us to other specialists. This recommendation fostered the gathering of empirical material. Snowball sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method (Babbie, 2013), was successfully applied. It allowed us to obtain information about other persons willing to participate in the study. The research entailed ethnographic analysis (Angrosino, 2010; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000) using grounded theory methodology procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Ethnography served to collect empirical material, while grounded methodology procedures, particularly focused coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) helped us to arrange and analyse empirical material from interviews and observations.

## RESULTS

Interestingly, despite the fact that educators and probation officers represent distinct environments of influences, and that the specifics of their work are completely different, they are connected by a mutual addressee of their measures, i.e. the minor. In the course of analysis we noticed that while designing institutional and non-institutional measures, oriented towards supporting families, the narrators faced similar dilemmas. Although, formally, families should be included in cooperation and specialist support, results indicate that relationships between educators and minors’ families are very difficult and dynamic.

Educators in youth educational centres signalled that the main problem in managing relationships with the families of minors is distance, which makes it impossible to maintain direct and regular contact, and to conduct a thorough diagnosis, as well as introduce effective educational measures. Probation officers stressed that it is difficult to cooperate with parents who are absent, demoralised or only superficially involved in their children’s upbringing.

In the course of analyses we established two approaches taken by educators with respect to cooperation with families of minors, which determined the undertaken measures and the significance attributed to the relationship. These are educators who established and maintained active relationships, oriented towards supporting and including families in educational measures, and those oriented towards passive relationships, ignoring/excluding the family from the system of measures and reinforcing their invisibility in the measure system. Whether the educator worked passively or actively was determined, among other factors, by his or her professional experience, which constituted the building blocks of his or her approach to the minor’s family. Moreover, before inviting parents to cooperate,

the respondents took steps which enabled them to define the families and predict future activities. The narrators highlighted that their activities were planned based on documents, diagnoses and numerous interviews, as well as professional intuition and knowledge.

All of this gives me the ability to determine whether that family looks promising and can be cooperated with, it's years of experience, you just sense it. (Educator)

Regardless of the measures taken, educators noticed and signalled a need to include families of minors into complex rehabilitation measures, while highlighting that it is an immensely difficult area of their work. The closest environment can at once be a factor which supports the minor in the educational process, and a risk factor which weakens the measures taken by the educator.

Educators who made the decision to exclude the family from cooperation, rendering it invisible, used various strategies to maintain this character of the relationship. This passive approach resulted from a lack of involvement on the part of the minor's parents, who were considered demoralised and a jeopardy to the child's development, and from a superficial interest on the part of the parents in the measures taken.

The worst thing about this job is working with families of minors. The child is nothing compared to the family... (Educator)

The first type of educator who passively manages relationships with the family of the minor is the **formalist – strategist**. It is a type of educator who adapts his or her energy to the designed work plan. Before taking any steps they consider their strategy. The plan is preceded by a diagnosis of the minor's family environment. If, after exploring the area, the educator defines the family environment as dangerous for the minor, he or she undertakes a strategy based on ensuring the safety of his or her ward outside of the family. In the case of family probation officers it is a situation in which the child is placed in foster care or a procedure is initiated to establish a new guardian for the child, because of the absence of a parent in the child's life.

Under the conditions of an institution relationships with the family constitute a challenge for educators. The main barriers are distance and a lack of tools which would enable the inclusion of the family environment in the applied measures. Analysis of empirical material allowed us to discover a certain mechanism expressed in a controlling approach of educators towards parents and setting impossible expectations, without taking into consideration the reasons for the family's reluctance, which may result from a lack of confidence, knowledge, social skills or motivation. Without understanding the aim of these measures or the suggested solutions, the family is unable to effectively and realistically take part in complex activities. As a result it is excluded from cooperation (Barczykowska, 2015).



I know that it's necessary and that there should be cooperation, but we have no tools to work with the minors' parents. Besides, they're adults, we just can't do anything about this [...] sometimes there isn't any phone or the distance is too great. (Educator)

Another type of educator who uses passive management in relationships with families is the **neutraliser**. These are educators who, following diagnosis, label the minor's family as demoralised. This way educators neutralise the failure to take action oriented towards establishing relationships with members of the minors' families. This reinforces the asymmetry of roles through exposing "cold" knowledge and displaying rigid professionalism. Thus, the educators are the ones who apply the label of demoralised family, which constantly struggles with social reaction and stigma. In the case of probation officers, neutralisers revealed themselves while placing the children in foster care. This way they neutralised moral burdens, when their professional decisions significantly impacted the everyday lives of the families of their wards (see Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Lesiak, 2019). Educators referred to their own experiences and examples which confirmed (proved) the demoralisation of families, impacting their approach to all families of minors.

The children are here, for some reason they are here, these families are demoralised, the kids are taken from these environments, sometimes they run away, and parents refuse to cooperate and force them to stay, and they lie to us and to the police, that they haven't seen their child and that it's our fault that he or she ran away. (Educator)

Another type of educator who uses passive management is the **rehabilitator**. These educators are oriented solely towards working with their wards. Placing a minor in an institution and isolating him or her from their family is foundational for the measures taken with regard to the children, which exclude their families. The reluctance or powerlessness of educators resulted from numerous failed attempts at cooperation with families of minors, being overworked, or a lack of time and idea to design quality and reliable measures directed at families of minors. Even in cases where educators establish cooperation, it is limited to formal relations oriented towards fulfilling professional obligations. Parents do not receive a symbolic invitation to cooperate.

I'll be honest, I have no idea how to work with them. I'd rather devote the time to children under my care, who are here with me. I educate them, not their parents. (Educator)

I used to want to cooperate with parents but I see situations where in one weekend we lose everything we established with our wards for many months. One trip is enough for us to have to return to the starting point [...] sometimes one leave costs us a lot of our work. Of course, I cooperate with parents, but I only do what I have to, for the good of the rehabilitation process. (Educator)

On the other hand, the probation officer is formally under obligation to maintain regular contacts with the minor's parents (see Jedynak, 2010). A rehabilitator supervising a minor is an educator who is obliged to make the parents interested in the life of their child, even if they are uninvolved (e.g. when the officer cannot meet with the parents at home, he organises a compulsory meeting in court). Thus, the officer establishes a relationship as part of supervision, but its character is professional, lacking emotional involvement.

In the second group we discovered educators who undertook activities oriented towards establishing relationships with families of minors, regardless of the difficulties they experience. Active efforts on the part of educators were determined by the involvement of parents and their willingness to be part of the education process. These were families which usually showed initiative and proved that they deserve to be part of the measures or families which educators deemed promising. Narrators stressed that the family is an indispensable element of the educational measure system and a factor which strengthens and stimulates care over minors.

People are not the same, everyone is different, experience sometimes blinds us, everyone deserves a chance [...]. There are caregivers, who do their best and fight for the child, who want to cooperate, when we work together chances increase [...] that is why I always want to cooperate, because the boys will return to these families. (Educator)

Even if initially the relationship with the family is difficult, educators work on it offering support, educating and informing about all professional measures, often going beyond their scope of duties and voluntarily establishing contact with other representatives of support organisations which could support the family. As part of a group oriented towards cooperation, we identified the following three types of educators.

An **ally** is an educator who “joins forces” with the family of the minor. Their actions are oriented towards finding common solutions with families and legal guardians. However, they are not involved emotionally in relationships with families. Allies are educators who talk to parents and guardians of a minor in his or her absence. They want to come to an agreement with families without the minors' knowledge. They cooperate with parents of minors in order to achieve the goals of the supervision or educational-therapeutic programme. In the case of supervisions, the aim is often to “watch over” the minors, so that they obey the court's decision, which probation officers are unable to do without the parents or guardians. Educators at youth educational centres establish and maintain relationships with parents, with the goal to strengthen the measures used with respect to the minor, through common narrative and similar solutions.

The next discovered type participating in active management in relationships with families of minors is the **intervener**, who contacts the family environment of the minor when the situation requires it and when he or she is under formal obli-

gation to do so. Educators signalled that their interventions are problematic. Placing the minor in an institution does not entail depriving parents of their parental rights, thus, parents can make decisions regarding the life of the wards. If a child becomes ill and his or her health requires consultation, treatment or pharmacological therapy, the parent or guardian must give consent. Wards isolated from their family environment are under the care of educators, who must provide information to parents. Educators experience difficulties in situations when parents do not respond or take action on behalf of the child, despite numerous attempts at contacting them.

I cooperate with the parents of my wards, but contact takes place in crisis situations, when something is wrong. They are not deprived of their rights, so they have to know about the state of their children's health and give consent in various matters, that's why I keep in touch with them, but it's mostly on the phone. (Educator)

In the case of probation officers, interveners emerge when parents enter into a "coalition" with the minors and hide them from institutions of formal control (probation officers, police, school). In such situations probation officers educate parents, signalling the consequences of providing false information to court representatives. During supervision interveners also react when parents set up barriers with respect to relationships with probation officers. The activities of probation officers are oriented towards motivating parents or guardians to become involved in the situation of the minor. An intervener is strict and succinct in his or her relationship with the family of a minor.

The next discovered type of educator is the **patron**. These are educators who are on the side of the minor/ward, and who treat parents as one of many factors determining the way in which the rehabilitation process is conducted. For patrons families are the background to their cooperation with minors. An educator in the role of patron defines the actions of the minor's family as harmful to the educational and rehabilitation process. In such situations educators discipline or educate parents, sometimes in the presence of minors. This way they demonstrate that the minors are the most important and that all activities are oriented towards their well-being and the success of the rehabilitation process. In the course of probation the patron also emerges when the minor approaches the age at which the supervision formally ends. Probation officers devote less time to families, focusing on cooperation with minors and on preparing them for the future, post-supervision. Educators assume a specifically "educational" role with respect to the parents of minors, as the latter prepare to leave institutions, and plan to involve parents in a supervisory role in this process of becoming independent. Educators try to expose the significance of the programme for the future of the wards and the parent-supervisors to whom the wards entrust their future.

A **social activist** is an educator oriented towards the good of the minor and of the entire family. They are guided by intuition and experience, they suffer emotional loss, they become involved, supporting both minors and their parents. Their actions are oriented towards “building bridges” or cooperation between themselves, the minors and the families of the minors. They support parents who want to become involved in their children’s lives. Educators open a space of dialogue and search for common solutions. Social activists in probation supervision over minors focus on other children in the family apart from their wards and offer preventive measures. They teach and help parents and guardians in various aspects of everyday life. They provide complex support, undertaking the task of preparing separate programmes of measures dedicated to families, involving specialists and representatives of other institutions or non-governmental organisations.

I know that meetings are out of the question, but we talk on the phone, we know each other, I keep them informed about their child. Sometimes it is true that I insist on contacting them more than they do, but I feel sorry for my wards. For instance, I invite parents to events at the centre, holidays and other occasions. We also provide opportunities for meetings, we have a special room where they can talk undisturbed. (Educator)

A **manager** maintains an asymmetry of roles, placing parents in the role of clients (recipients) of institutional support. Before they undertake any tasks, they calculate their cost-efficiency and effectiveness. A manager represents the interests of the ward before his or her parents. The course of the cooperation between managers and families of minors marks their scope of duties as well as formal-legal determinants. Activities of managers are oriented towards fulfilling court orders and realising professional tasks.

I like this boy and I want him to finish school [...], that’s why over the years I managed to bring the boy to the last grade. (Probation officer)

Moreover, managers, apart from obliging the parents to become involved in the educational process, become intermediaries between minors and their families. In situations of conflict between wards and their families, managers mediate and represent the “interests” of the minors. More importantly, managers collect information about children which can be useful in planning holistic measures.

## DISCUSSION

Grounding our considerations in the interpretative model and in the assumptions of symbolic interactionism allowed us to conduct an analysis and interpretation of mutual interactions between educators and families of minors, as well as tasks

undertaken in the sphere of establishing and maintaining relationships with the families of wards, making it possible to fulfil educational tasks. Educators attribute various meanings to relationships with families of minors – those that foster the undertaken activities and the rehabilitation process, and those that constitute a risk factor and pose a threat. It is worth emphasising that definitions of the family which the educators used changed in the course of supervision or during the wards' stay at youth educational institutions. Analysis of research results allows us to conclude that the presence of the family in the rehabilitation process is immensely important and necessary. In spite of this, the family of the minor is often situated in the role of an invisible link of multi-level measures. Excluding the family from the support system fosters the mechanism of socio-cultural reproduction and reinforcement of social stigma. Inviting the family or guardians to cooperate increases the scope of measures and fosters the rehabilitation of minors. Unfortunately, the narrators signalled that establishing and maintaining relationships with the families of their wards is not easy and requires many competencies, knowledge and sacrifices. This results from the situation of the families of minors, which often deal with numerous problems, constituting the source of deviant behaviours among children and adolescents (see Wirkus, 2020). Even if parents and guardians display a lack of interest and involvement, educators are formally obliged to maintain contact with families of minors. Managing such a difficult relationship is a professional challenge, especially if one does not possess tools which foster the undertaking of specialist activities oriented towards supporting the family in the process of rehabilitation of the minor.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the course of analyses we discovered two dominating groups of educators – those oriented towards involving the family (even at the expense of their comfort and security), and those who are passive, and who exclude the family from the designed measures. A dangerous consequence of the latter approach is making the family even more “invisible” and helpless. An particularly important aspect of our projects was to show the specific character of the work of educators with families in a non-institutional space (probation officer supervision), in which families are the observers of the measures, and under institutionalised conditions (at youth educational institutions), in which parents are physically absent. Referring to the models of work with the family of minors presented in the theoretical part (Rhoades and Duncan, 2016; Barczykowska, 2021) and based on the analysis of empirical material, it can be concluded that the participants of the research implemented all work models. However, the professional-directed and the family-allied model remained the dominant ones. Although the last one takes into account family resources, it

places them in the role of recipients of services designed by a specialist (educator). The family does not gain the status of a participant, but is only an instrument of change, a subject of educational influences.

Although we are aware that we have included only a part of our analyses, which we continue to deepen, we believe that we have managed to capture the perspective of the respondents. As a result, we reveal that despite the variety of environments in which educators of social rehabilitation facilities and family probation officers work, the participants of the research reached for activities aimed at including families in the process of juvenile rehabilitation, which can be entered into one typology. We are aware that this is an inexhaustible issue, but we hope to initiate a scientific discussion on the importance of families of minors in rehabilitation work.

## STUDY LIMITATIONS

We are aware of the limitations imposed by the analysis of empirical data, and that our research covered only a fragment of a much broader social reality in which educators and family probation officers operate. We emphasize that both at the stage of conceptualization and implementation, we reached for a qualitative research strategy. It is possible that the use of other methodological assumptions would enable us to select additional types and strategies that would enrich our analysis. Deepening the analyses could be aided by getting to know the perspective of other educators representing other professional environments, both institutional, such as the correctional facility, and non-institutional, such as non-governmental organizations. The attempt to label the types of educators who manage the relationships with families of minors is our suggestion and a way of drawing attention to a very important though overlooked theme of the place and role of the family environment in the process of rehabilitation of minors.

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## ZNACZENIE RODZIN NIELETNICH W RESOCJALIZACYJNEJ PRACY PEDAGOGÓW – PERSPEKTYWA INTERAKCYJNA

**Wprowadzenie:** Tekst dotyczy pracy pedagogów resocjalizacyjnych (wychowawców młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych oraz kuratorów rodzinnych) z rodzinami nieletnich.

**Cel badań:** Celem artykułu jest próba opisu typów pedagogów resocjalizacyjnych oraz znaczenia, jakie pedagodzy nadają ich relacjom z rodzinami nieletnich w ramach wzmacniania działań o charakterze resocjalizacyjnym.

**Metoda badań:** Zgromadzony materiał empiryczny pochodzi z wywiadów oraz obserwacji codzienności zawodowej wychowawców młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych oraz kuratorów rodzinnych. Procedury metodologii ugruntowanej wyznaczały sposób analizy zgromadzonych danych, stwarzając warunki do wygenerowania wzorów kształtujących sens działania pedagogów. Ramy teoretyczne wyznaczają założenia interakcjonizmu symbolicznego, umożliwiające analizę oraz interpretację podejmowanych działań, a także interakcji zachodzących między pedagogami (inicjatorami „pierwszego kontaktu”) oraz członkami rodzin nieletnich.

**Wyniki:** W rezultacie przedstawimy typologię pedagogów resocjalizacyjnych oraz strategie, którymi posługiwali się pedagodzy w kontaktach z rodzinami nieletnich w środowisku otwartym oraz zamkniętym. Wyszczególniliśmy krańcowe strategie pracy pedagoga z rodziną nieletniego, tj. aktywną i pasywną, w ich obrębie wyodrębniłyśmy taktyki, po które sięgali badani.

**Wnioski:** Udało nam się ustalić, że mimo różnorodności środowisk, w jakich pracują wychowawcy młodzieżowych ośrodków wychowawczych i kuratorzy rodzinni, sięgali oni po podobne działania zorientowane na nawiązanie oraz zarządzanie relacją z rodzinami nieletnich. Ponadto dokonaliśmy porównania naszych analiz z zaproponowaną w literaturze charakterystyką modeli pracy z rodziną. Finalnie dostrzegłyśmy, że badani realizowali wszystkie modele pracy, ale dominowały te oparte na profesjonalnym kierownictwie oraz sojuszu prozdinnym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** środowisko rodzinne, nieletni, wychowawca, kurator rodzinny, środki wychowawcze.