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Predictors of foster father's engagement in foster family homes

Predyktory zaangażowania ojca zastępczego w rodzinnym domu dziecka

Abstrakt:

Research background: Foster fatherhood is undoubtedly a specific kind of fatherhood, since the man, often being a husband and father to his biological offspring, makes the decision to play the role of a foster father, the performance of which requires a high level of engagement in the realization of caring-rearing as well as compensatory activities, which – in turn – call for constant raising of the competences of working with an orphaned child.

Research aim: To learn about the factors which condition the level of involvement of foster fathers in the realization of parenting activity in family-run children's homes in both the global and partial dimensions.

Research method: In the study, the method of diagnostic survey and that of assessment were applied.

Obtained results: The analyses proved that the level of engagement of foster fathers in the realization of parenting activity in family-run children's homes is to a large extent conditioned by foster fathers' personality factors; to a smaller degree it is influenced by sociodemographic factors or those which are based in the system of social welfare.

Conclusions: The specific nature of tasks set for a family-run children's home demands that foster fathers should engage in the realization of parenting activity to the highest possible degree. It is thus not only important for men to be prepared to play the role of a foster father, but it is also vital to constantly support them in this role.

Keywords: foster father, foster fathers, foster fatherhood, family-run children's homes, level of engagement in realization of parenting activity.

Abstrakt:

Tło badań: Ojcostwo zastępcze jest niewątpliwie szczególnym rodzajem ojcostwa, ponieważ mężczyzna, często będąc już mężem i ojcem swych biologicznych dzieci, podejmuje decyzję o odgrywaniu roli ojca zastępczego. Pełnienie roli ojca zastępczego wymaga wysokiego poziomu zaangażowania w realizację działań opiekuńczo-wychowawczych oraz kompensacyjnych, które z kolei wymagają ciągłego podnoszenia kompetencji w zakresie pracy z dzieckiem osieroconym.

Cel badań: Poznanie czynników warunkujących poziom zaangażowania ojców zastępczych w realizację rodzicielskiej działalności w rodzinnych domach dziecka w wymiarze zarówno globalnym, jak i parcjalnym.

Metoda badawcza: W badaniach zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego oraz metodę szacowania.

Osiągnięte wyniki: Analizy ustaliły, że poziom zaangażowania ojców zastępczych w realizację rodzicielskiej działalności w rodzinnych domach dziecka jest w znacznym stopniu warunkowany czynnikami osobowymi ojców zastępczych; w mniejszym czynnikami socjodemograficznymi i tkwiącymi w systemie wsparcia społecznego.

Wnioski: Specyfika zadań rodzinnego domu dziecka wymaga, aby ojcowie zastępczy angażowali się w jak najwyższym stopniu w realizację rodzicielskiej działalności. Ważne jest zatem nie tylko przygotowanie mężczyzn do pełnienia roli ojca zastępczego, lecz również stałe wspieranie ich w tej roli.

Słowa kluczowe: ojciec zastępczy, ojcowie zastępczy, ojcostwo zastępcze, rodzinne domy dziecka, poziom zaangażowania w realizację rodzicielskiej działalności.

Introduction

Family is the oldest and the commonest form of social life and has naturally and inseparably been subject to processes of social transformations. Such changes are connected with new and often difficult social problems which affect the family, including specifically the development of children reared in it. Negative changes to the family environment stem from, among others, unemployment, migration, rising number of divorces or unsuitable quality of the family care provided (Brągiel, 2005, p. 300; Kawula, 2006, pp. 346–350; Nycz, 2016, pp. 35–39). The above-mentioned phenomena cause parents to experience difficulty in performing their parental role, whereas the needs of the child are simultaneously satisfied in an improper way. In the situation where its welfare is threatened, there follows an intervention of the guardianship court in the parental authority. Parents have then their authority restricted, are deprived of it or it is sus-

pended while their child/children is/are placed in foster care. This condition is defined as orphanhood and one of the forms of its compensation is a foster family home (Romaniuk, 2008, pp. 118–119).

A foster family home is formed by spouses or a single person not in matrimony, who are not ascendants or siblings to the ward. The person running this form of care must have a special course completed, which is prepared by the organizer of foster family care or an adoption centre. This opens the possibility of signing the relevant contract with the Starost (a district administrator) on providing services for which the foster parents are entitled to receive a monthly remuneration. There can be 8 children, at the most, staying in one foster family home (Dz.U. 2011, nr 149, poz. 887 z późn. zm.). Thus, a multi-children family consists of foster parents and children at different ages, including also teenage ones and ones on their way to independence. In this way older siblings can set a good example to the younger wards by, for instance, teaching the latter to keep the room tidy and to dress themselves. Without a doubt, a foster family home is an alternative to institutional forms of foster care (Bartnikowska, Ćwirynkało, 2013, pp. 207–208). The aim of its functioning is to meet the child's necessary needs of being reared in an atmosphere that is full of security, mutual understanding and love. As regards this process, foster parents – both foster mother and foster father – play an important role (Kaszubska-Dziergas, 2019, p. 132).

In the scientific studies to date devoted to the problem area of foster parenting, the considerations on the role that foster parents play in foster family homes have been dealt with relatively seldom, with the exception of such authors as: Kelm, Rżysko, Kolankiewicz, Nowak, Drozdowski, Weigl. At the same time there is a shortage of studies that would undertake to analyse the factors which condition the engagement on the part of foster fathers in realization of their parental activity. Foster fatherhood is undoubtedly a specific kind of function, since a man – who has already been a husband and father of his biological children – takes upon himself to perform the role of a foster father. The specific nature of the tasks related to a foster family home requires the father to get involved in this activity to the highest degree. Recognizing the factors which condition this engagement will allow specialists to not only prepare candidates to perform the function of a foster father more effectively, but also to more effectively support them on the mission they have undertaken to carry out. Besides, it is expected to raise the level of their involvement to the highest possible degree and should prevent them from resigning from performing the role in view of occurring care-rearing difficulties.

1. Methodological assumptions behind the studies

The present study makes an extended fragment of a research project dealing with involvement of foster fathers in the process of caring and rearing of children in foster family homes. The results will thus refer to a concrete group being examined, that is foster fathers from foster family homes. The article focuses on the factors which condition foster fathers' engagement in realization of the parental activity in family-run children's homes. The research problem was formulated in the following question: Which of the factors: sociodemographic, personality, or those relating to the system of social support, condition the level of foster fathers' involvement in realization of the parental activity in foster family homes, in both the global and partial dimensions?

In the study, the method of diagnostic survey was used as well as that of assessment. Within the former, the technique of survey was applied, in which the relevant questionnaire enabled collecting information on the sociodemographic and personal factors (beside the level of the sense of one's own effectiveness) and also those stemming from the social welfare system, which condition the level of foster fathers' engagement in carrying out the parental activity in foster family homes. On the other hand, as part of the evaluation method, the measurement scale – the Scale of Sense of Own Effectiveness in the Role of a Foster Father¹ was applied, which supplied the relevant information. In the empirical analysis, such statistical methods as: Spearman rho ranks order correlation and chi-squared test were used.

2. Research sample and the course of the examination

The research was conducted in the years 2015–2017. There were 55 foster fathers² from 55 foster family homes based in different parts of Poland,³ who were requested to take part in it. It is worth underlining that the number of foster

¹ *Skala Poczucia Własnej Skuteczności w Roli Ojca Zastępczego* [Scale of Sense of Own Effectiveness in the Role of a Foster Father] is a research tool designed by the author of the present article. The tool comprises 20 items expressed in the form of affirmative sentences which characterize the degree of effectiveness of the action undertaken while performing the role of a foster father.

² The most numerous group among the foster fathers were men ranging 45–53 years of age, holding secondary education, who had performed the role of a foster father for 6 to 10 years.

³ The research was carried out among 1/3 of the total number of foster family homes functioning in Poland (the data on the number of foster family homes released officially by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare – Department of Family Policy – the data as of 30.06.2012).

family homes is continually rising.⁴ The act on assisting families and the system of foster care of 9 June 2011 introduced vital changes regarding establishment and functioning this form of care. In compliance with the act in force, family-run children's homes can function as a form of family-based or institutional foster care.

Due to the specific nature of the general community, a non-random selection of typical individuals was applied. In turn, the method used in the selection of the subjects for the research group was that of snowball sampling.⁵ The examination was carried out personally by the author – in the place of abode of the foster fathers (in the family-run children's homes), without external disturbance, in a suitable atmosphere, void of psychic tensions. The examined fathers were assured of complete anonymity of the data collected and informed about the purposefulness of the examining person's action.

3. Research results

As a result of the examination conducted among foster fathers from family-run children's homes it should be concluded that none of the sociodemographic factors such as: age, level of education, occupation, place of abode of the foster father, evaluation of the material-living conditions of the family, number of children at the foster family home or the length of the period of functioning in the role of a foster father, conditions a rise in the father's engagement in a global way. There was found only a significant dependence between the level of education of foster fathers and the area of *compensation for orphanhood* and between the length of time of being a foster father and the area of *care*. The obtained results of the examination are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

⁴ At the end of 2020, the number of foster family homes reached 685, according to the Chief Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Pieczna zastępcza w 2020r.* [<https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/dzieci-i-rodzina/dzieci/pieczna-zastepcza-w-2020-roku,1,5.html>]).

⁵ The method of snowball sampling is applied in the situation when it is difficult to access members of the examined population (hidden population), since they make a specific group of people (e.g. drug addicts). The researcher finds a few members of such a group and asks them to provide data which will enable reaching other members in order to recruit them in the research sample. See: E. Babbie (2013) *Badania społeczne w praktyce*, [The Practice of Social Research], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 205–206.

Table 1. Analysis of Spearman rho ranks order correlation between the level of education and the level of engagement and its individual areas ($p < 0.05$)

Independent variable	Global engagement		Engagement in examined areas							
			Care		Rearing		Interest in the child		Compensation for orphanhood	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Level of education	-0.23	0.1	-0.17	0.21	-0.05	0.74	-0.22	0.12	-0.34	0.01*

r_s – correlation coefficient, p – significance level, * – $p < 0.05$

Source: author's own elaboration.

Analysing the data contained in Table 1, it can be concluded that the level of education of the examined men does not in any significant way globally influence the level of foster fathers' involvement in realization of the parental activity in family-based children's homes. It does exert a strong influence on the level of foster fathers' engagement in the partial dimension, though. There was found the existence of a negative moderate correlation between the level of education and the sphere of *compensation for orphanhood*. This result is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) ($r_s = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$). This means that the higher the level of foster fathers' education, the lower the level of their involvement in actions connected with the area of *compensation for orphanhood*. It can be thought that they are convinced that this sphere should be reserved chiefly for specialists who work with orphaned children, including: educators, pedagogues, psychologists, therapists. On the other hand, there was not found a statistically significant relation between the level of foster fathers' education and the areas of *care*, *rearing* or *interest in the child*.

The data presented in Table 2 do not allow stating that there exists a correlation between the length of being in the role of a foster father and the level of the men's involvement in realization of the parental activity in family-run children's homes in the global dimension. They again do prove that there is a moderate or weak positive correlation between the length of time of performing the role and the level of foster fathers' engagement regarding the sphere of *care* in the partial dimension. The result is statistically significant for $p < 0.05$ ($r_s = 0.31$, $p < 0.021$), which means that the longer the men play the role of foster fathers, the more often they undertake actions in connection with the above-mentioned sphere. On the basis of this, it can be concluded that the gathered parental experience

Table 2. Analysis of Spearman rho ranks order correlation between the length of the time of performing the role of a foster father and its individual areas ($p < 0.05$)

Independent variable	Global engagement		Engagement in examined areas							
			Care		Rearing		Interest in the child		Compensation for orphanhood	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Length of time of being in the role of a foster father	0.14	0.310	0.31	0.021*	0.17	0.221	0.01	0.928	0.05	0.712

r_s – correlation coefficient, p – significance level, * – $p < 0.05$

Source: author's own elaboration.

causes foster fathers to get even more attached to the wards and to naturally be more willing to take up care-related actions, such as feeding, dressing the child or administering medicaments. The level of involvement in the other spheres of father's activity, that is *rearing*, *interest in the child* or *compensation for orphanhood* are not dependent on the length of time of performing the role of a foster father.

Interpreting the collected research material, it can be stated that out of the personality-related factors present in foster fathers, such as: evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the performed role of the foster father, the level of sense of own efficiency in this role, motives behind the men's taking up this activity, as well as successes and difficulties connected with playing the role, it is solely that of the degree of satisfaction⁶ with the role of a foster father being performed and the level of sense of one's own effectiveness⁷ in this role which

⁶ There are a number of definitions of the notion of "satisfaction". It is most often defined as: a sense of pleasure derived from doing, achieving, receiving something; complacency for some reason" B. Dunaj (1996), *Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego* [A Dictionary of the Contemporary Polish Language], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wilga, p. 1309. One can speak about a general satisfaction with life or satisfactions with various aspects of it, like family, children or work. Scientific studies to date have proved the existence of positive relations between the sense of satisfaction and cognitive functioning, internal motivation, level of social and professional activity, or even the health condition. See: J. Czapiński (1992), *Psychologia szczęścia. Przegląd badań i zarys teorii cebulowej* [Psychology of Happiness. A Review of Research and Outline of the Onion Theory]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Akademos, p. 17–18.

⁷ According to Ralf Schwarzer, the sense of own effectiveness enables predicting intentions and actions within a variety of areas of man's activity. Expectations regarding one's own

to a significant extent condition the global level of foster fathers' engagement in realization of the parental activity in family-run children's homes. Moreover, it was possible to note a statistically significant dependence between the assessment of the level of satisfaction with the performed role and the area of *interest in the child*, and similarly – between the level of sense of own effectiveness in the role of a foster father and the spheres of *care*, *interest in the child* and *compensation for the child's orphanhood*. It was also observed that difficulties related to child rearing differentiate to a considerable degree the level of foster fathers' involvement in realization of the parental activity in foster family homes. The obtained research results are shown in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3. Analysis of Spearman rho ranks order correlation between the evaluation of the level of satisfaction with the role of a foster father performed and the involvement in the parental activities and its individual areas ($p < 0.05$)

Independent variable	Global engagement		Engagement in examined areas							
			Care		Rearing		Interest in the child		Compensation for orphanhood	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the performed role of a foster father	0.28	0.038*	0.13	0.356	0.25	0.066	0.30	0.027*	0.20	0.038

r_s – correlation coefficient, p – significance level, * – $p < 0.05$

Source: author's own elaboration.

Based on the data inserted in Table 3, reflecting the values of correlation and the levels of significance for the isolated factor, it can be noticed that there exists a low positive correlation between the evaluation of the degree of satisfac-

effectiveness refer to the belief that human behaviour can undergo changes, yet only and exclusively owing to one's own ability to cope with different situations of life. The stronger the man's conviction of his effectiveness, the higher the targets he sets for himself and the stronger his involvement in the actions he has intended. See: R. Schwarzer (1997), *Poczucie własnej skuteczności w podejmowaniu i kontynuacji zachowań zdrowych. Dotychczasowe podejście teoretyczne i nowy model* [The sense of own effectiveness in taking up and continuing healthy behaviours. The theoretical approach to date and a new model], [in:] I. Heszen-Niejodek, H. Sęk (eds.) *Psychologia zdrowia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 181-184, cited from: A. Dudak (2013) *Radzenie sobie ojców ubiegających się o prawo do dziecka a ich zasoby osobiste* [The coping potential of fathers applying for the custody of a child and their personal resources], Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, p. 89.

tion with the performed role of a foster father and the global level of engagement. The result is statistically significant for $p < 0.05$ ($r_s = 0.28$, $p < 0.038$). This means that the higher the evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the role, the higher the level of the global involvement of foster fathers or the higher the level of the global involvement of foster fathers, the higher the evaluation of the level of satisfaction with the role performed. There was also found a significant moderate positive correlation between the evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the role of a foster father and the level of engagement in the partial dimension with regard to the sphere of *interest in the child*. The result is statistically significant for $p < 0.05$ ($r_s = 0.30$, $p < 0.027$). This indicates that the higher the evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the role of a foster father, the higher the level of involvement of the man in the area of *interest in the child* or the higher level of engagement in this sphere, the higher the degree of satisfaction with the role. It can be concluded from the obtained data that the level of the global engagement and the level of engagement in the sphere of *interest in the child* depend to a large extent on the evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the role of a foster father performed by men. This evaluation results from the foster fathers' approach towards past and present events connected with care-rearing activities: the more actions which brought/bring expected results there were/are, the higher the evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the role of a foster father.

Table 4. Analysis of Spearman rho ranks order correlation between the level of the sense of own effectiveness in the role of a foster father and the level of engagement and its individual areas ($p < 0.05$)

Independent variable	Global engagement		Engagement in examined areas							
			Care		Rearing		Interest in the child		Compensation for orphanhood	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Level of the sense of own efficiency	0.53	0.000*	0.34	0.009*	0.40	0.002*	0.50	0.000*	0.53	0.000*

r_s – correlation coefficient, p – significance level, * – $p < 0.05$

Source: author's own elaboration.

Upon the analysis of the data contained in Table 4, it can be stated that there exists a moderate positive correlation between the level of the sense of own effectiveness and the global level of involvement. The result is statistically significant ($r_s = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). This means that the higher the level of the sense of own effectiveness in the role of a foster father, the higher the global level of engagement, or the higher the global level of involvement, the higher the level of the sense of own effectiveness in performing the function. There was also found a moderate positive correlation between the level of the sense of own effectiveness in the role of a foster father and the level of engagement in the partial dimension regarding the following areas: *care* ($p < 0.05$) ($r_s = 0.34$, $p < 0.009$), *rearing* ($p < 0.05$) ($r_s = 0.40$, $p < 0.002$), *interest in the child* ($p < 0.05$) ($r_s = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$) as well as *compensation for orphanhood* ($p < 0.05$) ($r_s = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). The obtained results are statistically significant. This means that the higher the level of the sense of own effectiveness in the role of a foster father, the higher the level of involvement in the individual spheres of the father's activity, or the higher the level of engagement in a particular area of father's activity, the higher the level of the sense of own efficiency in the performed role of a foster father. The obtained results allow concluding that the stronger the foster father's conviction of his own effectiveness, the higher the aims he sets for himself and the stronger his involvement in intended actions, despite the encountered difficulties and moments of doubt.

Table 5. Problems related to rearing a child and the level of engagement in the care and rearing of children in family-run children's homes ($p < 0.05$)

Situations which pose problems to foster fathers	Test	
	chi ²	p
Difficulties connected with rearing a child (e.g. aggression, running away from home, truancy, smoking cigarettes)	4.79	0.029*

chi²- chi-square test, p – level of significance, * – $p < 0.05$
Source: author's own elaboration.

The result of the chi-square test permits to state that the difficulties connected with rearing of a child differentiate, to a significant extent, the level of foster fathers' engagement in realization of the parental activity in family-run children's homes in the global dimension. The result is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) ($\text{chi}^2 = 4.79$, $p < 0.029$) and means that the more difficulty in rearing children there is, the lower the level of foster fathers' engagement in realization of their

father's activity in family-run children's homes. It can be thought that foster fathers take a dislike to undertaking care-rearing activities which do not yield expected effects. Mounting problems related to rearing, which occur and which wards manifest can contribute to disorganization of the life of the whole family and in consequence – even to resigning from caring for him/her.

The last of the examined causes were the factors stemming from the system of social welfare, which include the following: forms of substantive, psychological-pedagogical and material assistance provided to foster fathers, as well as cooperation with organizations which assist family-run children's homes and evaluation of it. The analysis of the research results showed that the evaluation of the degree of usefulness of the substantive assistance provided to foster fathers to a significant extent differentiates the level of their involvement in realization of the parental activity in both the global and partial dimensions in the following areas: *care*, *interest in the child* and *compensation for orphanhood*. It was also found that foster fathers' participation in workshops, trainings and courses devoted to coping with children's difficult behaviours differentiates to a vital degree the level of their engagement in realization of the father's activity in the global dimension. The obtained research results are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6. The theme of coping with children's difficult behaviours and the level of foster fathers' engagement in care and rearing of children in family-run children's homes ($p < 0.05$)

Theme of workshops, trainings, courses attended by foster fathers	Test	
	chi ²	p
Coping with children's difficult behaviours	4.71	0.030*

chi²- chi-square test, p – level of significance, * – $p < 0.05$
Source: author's own elaboration.

It follows from the analysis of the data that the subject matter of dealing with children's difficult behaviours differentiates to a significant degree the level of foster fathers' involvement in realization of the father's activity in the global dimension. The result, being statistically significant ($\text{chi}^2 = 4.71$, $p < 0.030$), should be read as follows: the more often the foster fathers attend workshops, trainings or courses dedicated to coping with children's difficult behaviours, the higher the men's level of engagement in carrying out the father's activity. Without a doubt, this subject matter is of the greatest interest to foster fathers and is the

most desirable in view of the specific nature of the care-rearing environment which the family-run children's home is. Children placed in foster care have been harmed to a greater extent and frequently cause more rearing problems than their counterparts brought up in biological families.

Table 7. Analysis of Spearman rho ranks order correlation between the evaluation of the degree of usefulness of the substantive assistance provided to foster fathers and the level of their engagement and its individual areas ($p < 0.05$)

Independent variable	Global engagement		Engagement in examined areas							
			Care		Rearing		Interest in the child		Compensation for orphanhood	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Evaluation of the degree of usefulness of substantive assistance provided	0.32	0.001*	0.33	0.014*	0.21	0.125	0.36	0.016*	0.35	0.008*

r_s – correlation coefficient, p – significance level, * – $p < 0.05$

Source: author's own elaboration.

On the basis of the data contained in Table 7, relating to the value of correlation and levels of significance of the isolated factor, it was found that there exists a moderate positive correlation between the level of the global engagement and the evaluation of the usefulness of the provided assistance. This means that the higher the level of the global engagement of foster fathers, the higher the evaluation of the degree of usefulness of provided substantive aid, or the higher the evaluation of the degree of usefulness of substantive assistance provided, the higher the global level of foster fathers' engagement. The result is statistically significant ($r_s = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$). The analysis of the correlation revealed, too, that evaluation of the degree of usefulness of the assistance provided significantly correlates, moderately and positively, with the level of foster fathers' engagement in realization of their parental activity in the partial dimension, that is in the following areas: *care* ($r_s = 0.33$, $p < 0.014$), *interest in the child* ($r_s = 0.36$, $p < 0.016$) and *compensation for orphanhood* ($r_s = 0.35$, $p < 0.008$). The results are statistically significant. This means that the higher the evaluation of the degree of usefulness of substantive assistance, the higher the degree of foster fathers' involvement in the following spheres

of father's activity: *care, interest in the child* as well as *compensation for orphanhood*, or the higher the level of foster parents' involvement in the distinguished area of father's activity, the higher the evaluation of the usefulness of the substantive assistance. It can be thus stated that the level of foster fathers' engagement in realization of father's activity in both the global and partial dimensions – within the areas of *care, interest in the child* and *compensation for orphanhood* – depends on the evaluation of the degree of usefulness of the substantive aid provided to them. The obtained result undoubtedly offers a clue to specialists working daily with foster fathers, regarding the quality of the work done by them.

Conclusion

The presented research results do not exhaust the problem area under discussion – they make a kind of introduction into further investigations and elaboration of successive studies relating to foster fatherhood. The results prove that the level of foster father's engagement in the realization of parenting activity in foster family homes, both in the global and partial dimensions, is conditioned to the most intensive degree by personality factors of foster fathers and to a lesser degree – by sociodemographic ones, embedded in the system of social support.

Foster fathers are aware of the significance of their engagement in meeting the biological and psychical needs of orphans, as well as in compensating the handicaps they have experienced, which causes the men to genuinely dedicate themselves to realization of their parental role. Still, learning about the factors that condition the level of their involvement in fulfilling their foster father's role, in both the global and partial dimensions, will enable specialists to prepare candidates for this function in a more effective and professional way as well as will equip them with tools necessary to offer support to those already being in the role so that foster fathers could undertake to successfully perform their parental duties. These undoubtedly should translate into improving the quality of functioning of children in a family-run children's home. In a broader framework, the cultural capital formed in the environment of a foster family is a vital element of functioning of its wards in their future adult lives.

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