

*Dawid Mędrala*

## **Depression as a consequence of applying a “hard” model of raising based on stereotyping in contemporary society**

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, social self-awareness is increasing in mental health issues. Until a few decades ago, this aspect was neglected by the majority of society. Today, knowledge in this field is changing, which is related to the development of sciences in the field of psychology, neurobiology and medicine, among others. Particular attention should be paid to one of the diseases which is depression. Due to the increasingly frequent scope of its diagnosis in recent years, it is called the disease of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is an interesting aspect in society regarding men and their prevalence of depression. Based on stereotypes and the resulting pattern of masculinity, men are considered to be people who are not, or should not be, exposed to this type of disease. As a result, male depression is socially ignored and considered taboo in some cultures. However, recent research shows that men are equally at risk of depression and represent a significant proportion of diagnosed sufferers worldwide. In the article, the author will refer in particular to the stereotype regarding the mental health of men and their tendency to depression. It is a particularly important mental illness in the social dimension, due to its dynamic spread and the increased number of diagnoses. The article aims to identify and emphasize depression as a particularly dangerous disease that affects men, contrary to popular stereotypes. The author in the article will analyze the actual state of depression among men based on the scientific literature on this issue, and will also indicate the factors that may lead to the occurrence of this disease. In the further part of the article, the author will analyze the phenomenon of stereotyping the occurrence of mental illnesses in men, with particular emphasis on depression, and the actual state of the disease, based on the literature and scientific research. The author will also analyze the factors influencing the occurrence of depression among men, basing on selected models of raising.

### **Stereotypical child raising based on “suppression of emotions”**

In search of the best options and methods of raising our children, we use various guides, books and lectures that can help us in this process. There are many raising methods that postulate the emergence of specific behaviors of children in specific age groups. Scientists, people specializing in raising children, create newer and more sophisticated methods, based on new research results in the field of such sciences as pedagogy, psychology, sociology and many others. Despite the aforementioned achievements and modern methods, it still seems that it is quite common to use one method of raising, which, despite the passage of time, is still present in the process of raising, especially boys. It is about the so-called “hard” raising. It is difficult to find the exact source of this approach in society, but we can try to answer the question: Why is this method still so common? Many researchers see the causes in the turbulent and at the same time tragic events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not only the events of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – World War I and II, but also the post-war period, when a totalitarian regime was in force in Poland and other countries of the Eastern Bloc. The constant threat, the inability to make independent decisions, and finally the declaration of martial law in the early 1980s, created a social need to be ready for new, inevitable threats. For this reason, some parents made efforts to raise their children so that they were ready to fight, in defense not only of their lives but also of their country. And this is what the ‘hard’ raising method is best suited to. People who remember that time were brought up in a similar way, which makes them almost automatically apply this method to their own children. They come from the assumption handed down from generation to generation; if I was brought up in this way and I am, in my own opinion, a person who can constitute an authority for our child, then this is the correct and appropriate method of education. In this matter, however, it does not take into account, and even denies, what the development of sciences in the field of pedagogy, psychology, sociology or neurodidactics has changed in the perception of raising children. Before deciding to raise children with an appropriate system or method, parents should read and consider not only what benefits will bring, but also what risks it can lead to. This is especially important when it comes to the “hard” method of raising, which carries risks for the child and creates the basis for problems that may worsen in his adult life (Cochran; Rabinowitz, 2003).

However, in order to better understand the problems and threats resulting from the use of the “hard” method of raising, it is necessary to precisely define on what grounds it is based and what are its main purposes. The purpose of this method of education is to shape a man with certain characteristics, teach him the appropriate behavior and way of thinking, so that he becomes someone described as a “real” man (Genuchi; Mitsunaga, 2015). True in the sense of the people who are raising him. There is no room for variety here, and a man should have specific features. If he does not have them, then he is not a man. This lack of diversity in the image

of masculinity is passed down to the child. This image builds in the mind of the child the initial and immediately deep social divisions. On the group of “real” men which he is represent and on the rest who have different characteristics or values. The child begins to divide society by differentiating between men. This division can lead to the deepening of the set boundary, emphasizing the differences and the belief that there is only one correct model of masculinity. A man should be strong, not only physically but also mentally. Moreover, it should be characterized by such features as independence, self-control and rational thinking in crisis situations. He should not feel fear of anything, because fear or anxiety is considered a sign of weakness. A man should also be predisposed to engage in extremely risky behaviors. In today’s world, these behaviors are often unnecessary, but rather have the character of proving that a person does not feel fear. Men brought up in this way often draw clear boundaries between the sexes and try to emphasize and deepen them. It emanates male features, and avoids anything that is associated, according to him, with female features (Napierała, 2020).

Parents raise boys to believe that they cannot show emotions because this is not a trait of a “real” man. It is a sign of weakness or awkwardness in a man. The model assumes that the child should not reveal his emotions, he should suppress them. When a child comes to their parents sad because something has gone wrong in their lives, the parents’ answer is to say that they should stop crying. They are telling the same child that his emotions are bad at that moment and he shouldn’t repeat them, he shouldn’t feel them. In the next, similar situations, the child will no longer cry and show emotions, which the parents may be happy about this because they managed to meet one of the assumed parenting goals: they made their child stop showing his emotions. However, in this situation the child makes a key change from the perspective of raising, he does not eliminate his emotions, as assumed by the model of raising, but will start to suppress them. It will stop manifesting them, which does not mean that these emotions will disappear, they will still remain in this person (Maślowski, 2021).

One more thing will also change at the moment that will affect the whole relational life of the child. When a child comes to a parent in great sorrow, he naturally wants to be comforted, to ease the pain he is experiencing at the moment. By his reaction, the parent makes you understand that the emotions you feel are wrong. Thus, the child analyzes this situation and draws the conclusion that the parent does not support him in this difficult situation, that he cannot count on his support in crisis situations. In the first years of its life, a child relies only on its caregiver and when there is an appropriate response in a crisis situation, the need for security is satisfied. But meeting this need by parents is only possible if the caregiver responds to the emotional needs of the child. In the first years of his life, a child sometimes even non-verbally shows us the need to be cared for. He does it by crying, stretching out his hands, running up and hugging the parent, holding his hand or maintaining eye contact (Lenkiewicz, 2022). The child, not getting what it needs, automatically

locks it. It limits the establishment of intimate social relationships. because he is convinced that no one will understand his feelings and will not be able to help him (Czarnecka, 2021).

### **The method of “hard” raising a child as a cause of depression**

The described model of raising shows how harmful it can be for a child on many levels of his life. As an adult, he may not be able to share his emotions, understand them and define them. There are also relational problems, problems with making closer friendships and a sense of trust in other people. The replaced factors may influence the occurrence of mental illnesses in a given person, especially depression (Flynn, Hollenstein, Mackey, 2010). An interesting aspect is that the spread of depression among men and women differs. Not only in terms of frequency, but also in terms of symptoms, their severity, and the treatment process and effectiveness.

Research on depression among men was not initiated until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which makes it a little known topic. One of the first studies that began to show a significant differentiation in the incidence and course of depression between women and men was carried out in the 1980s in Sweden. One of the country's islands has experienced rapid and negative social changes, including an increase in unemployment and migration, as well as a decline in living standards. These variables have caused behavioral changes in society, increased sales of sedatives, psychiatric hospitalizations, and increased trial frequency suicidal. Due to social changes, the Swedish Committee for the Prevention and Treatment of Depression, PTD created special programs that were to diagnose and treat depression in advance. The ongoing programs turned out to be a great success as the number of suicides decreased in the course of their duration. Eventually, the programs were discontinued, resulting in a resumption of increased suicide rates. The suicide data was later compared in three time intervals: before, during and after the programs were implemented, but the research group was divided according to gender. It turned out that only women were affected by the decreased suicide rate during the program. The male suicide rate was the same in all three time periods. The reason for these differences was due to the fact that a significant proportion of men did not use specialized programs. The programs were resumed in the 1990s and indicated the same frequency of their use in terms of gender as the previous ones (Chodkiewicz, 2016).

Studies show that depression in men is much more difficult to diagnose and cure than in women. Research conducted in Sweden showed that men, being depressed, attempt suicide 3 to 4 times more often than women. Men exhibit depression in a different way than women. In women, the most common depressive symptoms are: depressed mood, headaches, constant pessimism, feelings of guilt and resignation, problems with concentration (National Institute of Mental Health, 2009). Different symptoms were observed in studies conducted among depressed men. Among men, there may be highly aggressive behavior, very often it occurs towards the closest

people. In the early stages, they may not necessarily be perceived by other people, but may take the form of hidden actions. These may be activities that are intended to evoke negative emotions in another person in the initial phase. At this point, the depressed person loses his negative emotions and temporarily improves his mood. At the same time, it is one of the symptoms that which leads to the second important condition among men suffering from depression, namely interpersonal conflicts. In addition, you can often observe narcissistic behavior, as well as resorting to substitute measures that are supposed to bring temporary relief and make them forget about their problems. The most common of these substances are various stimulants, usually alcohol, but there are also drugs (Rabinowitz; Cochran, 2008). Depressed men often engage in risky behaviors, such as fast driving or practicing highly extreme sports.

The spectrum of causes of depression among men is very wide, but loneliness, divorce or professional problems are the most frequently indicated. It seems that the reason may also be fulfilling a multitude of social roles at the same time. In the stereotypical family model, it is the man who is to be her "head" on which she relies on many aspects of her life. Among other things, men should have to earn enough to secure family financially. Still a very popular view is that men should earn more than women. Such a view forces men to set specific requirements towards themselves, and when they are unable to fulfill them, they become frustrated and, as a result, reduce their self-esteem as a man.

Increasingly, research recognizes another cause of depression in men, which is the time before and after the partner gives birth to a child. Although there is not much research on this topic, this problem affects nearly 10% of fathers from the first trimester of their partner's pregnancy to the year after childbirth. The highest rate of depression in women in the perinatal period occurs up to three months after childbirth, while in men this time is shifted and occurs from 3 to 6 months after childbirth. Studies show that this time is not accidental, because if a woman develops depression in the first three months, the chances of developing this disease in her partner increase by about 50% (Sokół-Szawłowska, 2020). Among the factors influencing the occurrence of depression in this situation, studies indicate, among others, reduced or disappearance of sexual life. Men who become fathers for the first time are much more likely to suffer from perinatal depression, often fear that they are not prepared to fulfill their new role and doubt their abilities. Men who have experienced depression in their lifetime are at greater risk. Another extremely important aspect that causes depression among men is the relationship with the partner. Often, when a woman gives birth, she pays full attention to the baby and less attention to her partner. This can educate the partner to feel ignored and sometimes even rejected. There is also an increase in the amount of time devoted to the baby during the postpartum period, which also includes activities during the night hours, which can reduce work efficiency, which can increase the level of frustration caused by the new role of fatherhood. In the postpartum period, there are rapid

changes that force a change in existing habits, behavior and lifestyle. The added fatigue of a newborn that requires attention may, in extreme cases, lead to symptoms of aggression (Ochwat, 2019)

Men in the stereotypical model of masculinity want to participate and solve all problems related to family and professional life. Due to the tendency to suppress emotions, they do not share their problems, which also results in the fact that they are unable to ask anyone for help in a crisis situation. Each challenge is accompanied by a high level of stress caused by the necessity to go beyond the standard framework of conduct. This is associated with leaving their safety zone and facing the problem, the natural reaction is stress, which is to mobilize to do the task. However, if men will have the goal of solving all problems and doing them without the help of others, they will remain under severe stress on their own (Kaczmarzyk, 2020).

More recent studies on depression and the gender gap in its prevalence today report different results than those obtained in Sweden in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2019, a report by the World Health Organization was published on the number of suicides in European Union countries. The female suicide rate in Poland was 3,4 per 100.000 people. The surprising data concern the suicide rate among Polish men, as it is 23,9 per 100.000 people. The organization publishing the report also indicated that in highly developed and developing countries, men are three times more likely to commit suicide than women (World Health Organization, 2021).

An important and one of the most important differences between women and men in a state of depression is the willingness to seek help or specialist support. Men are much less likely than women to admit that they are depressed. Men do not admit this thought and hide their condition from others. That is why noticing and diagnosing the occurrence of this disease is difficult, not only by the closest people, but also by general practitioners. Men very rarely due to mental problems compared to women who diagnose their emotional state more often and do not want to hide it before others.

In 2012, numerous interviews were conducted with men who made suicide attempts. They were asked how they felt before taking such a step. Before making the decision to take their own life, the men admitted that they experienced prolonged suffering and mental pain for a long time. Similar symptoms also occur among women who attempt suicide. But the main difference in this study was that men, at all costs, did not make it known. They tried not to tell anyone about it, concealed their true feelings and masked them with outbursts of anger or aggression (Napierała, 2020).

## Summary

Depression is a disease that is diagnosed more and more often in today's world. It is estimated that currently around 350 million people suffer from it worldwide, of which 1.5 million in Poland. Year by year data are more and more disturbing, and

the incidence rate is increasing by about 15% during the year. The last two years, the time of the pandemic, when the number of depression incidence rates have increased significantly, negative impact and the effects of this period of time will be felt by the society in this regard for many years to come.

The discussed cases, interviews and statistical data show how serious and real a threat is depression among men. This problem shouldn't be taboo. On the contrary, it should be a topic that society talks about, and education in this area is also essential. Increased knowledge can help you better capture symptoms that may indicate this disease. This will help men understand and accept that they are not immune to depression and that they are at high risk in some situations.

The basic methods that will help us determine whether a person may have depressive symptoms is, first of all, talking to them. Maintaining good relationships based on trust and empathy. Listening carefully to the other person, inquiring when in doubt, and making sure we understand what is communicated appropriately. Because it is precisely creating and maintaining relationships that is the basic and one of the most important methods that can prevent the emergence of a depressive illness (Wilhelm, 2009). Close relationships with another person make us able to meet one of the basic needs of every human being, which is security. Showing concern and warm towards men can break a key barrier in their lives, especially if they were raised according to a "hard" method, namely forbidding them from talking about their feelings, emotional states, what they do not like or what they are afraid. Men should take care of their mental health, should treat each other with respect and be understanding for themselves when something goes wrong in their life. In this aspect, it is also important to rest, find time for yourself, to realize your hobbies. When we are very exhausted, we lack patience and find it difficult to maintain good relationships with other people. Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl introduced the term dereflexia in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, paying attention to other factors of life while being depressed. It is a method of creating an environment in which a person engages in activities that benefit others. Frankl based on his research, he proved that such a method has better emotional effects for this person than if it worked for the benefit of itself (Frankl, 2019).

Based on the above data, an important conclusion can be drawn: men are also at risk of developing depression. This is a real threat for them, which, according to statistics, is getting stronger day by day. In order to help men in a better and more complete way, we should break the taboo related to the topic of depression. Let's talk about it and extended our knowledge in this field, because only in this way can we help each other.

However, in order for men to be aware of the real danger of depression, they need to know what they are feeling. They should understand their emotions and that the occurrence of specific feelings in a given situation is natural for every human being. For this to be possible, they cannot suppress their emotions and deny their existence. As a result of being raise up according to the "hard" model in childhood,



they will not be able to define their emotional states in adulthood. It can be seen that already in the childhood stage, parents are authority and have an undefined influence on the possibility of developing mental illnesses in their own children, such as, for example, depression.

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#### **Abstract**

With the passage of time, with the changes taking place in the modern world, with the expansion of knowledge, technological advances, and rapid social changes, our society must make the right choices. We have to adapt to the requirements of the new times and new technologies, but we must also pay attention to the threats arising from the above-mentioned factors. As a result, we should modify our behavior on an ongoing basis and not trust stereotypes uncritically. Reproduced stereotypes are not verified, they structure themselves in society and influence the perception of specific areas of life. I suggest paying attention to the stereotypes about men, because their lives seem to be particularly strongly affected by them.

**Key words:** “hard” raising, masculinity, depression, relationships, empathy

#### **Dawid Mędrala, MA**

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

email: dawidmedrala@o2.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-4089-9175