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To Punish or Educate? Female Students of Law and Resocialization on the Corruption of Minors

Karać czy wychowywać? Studentki prawa i resocjalizacji wobec demoralizacji nieletnich

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to present the opinions of female students of law and resocialization pedagogy regarding hypothetical situations involving juvenile offenders. The study used “the vignette method.” Ninety-six female students were included. They evaluated six episodes depicting hypothetical situations in which the corruption of minors was shown. It turns out that the female law students were slightly more likely to formulate assessments that correspond to the letter of the law, while the assessments of female pedagogy students showed their flexibility, which was expressed in the fact that they were more willing to give “a second chance” to juvenile offenders.

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja ocen sformułowanych przez studentki prawa i pedagogiki resocjalizacyjnej wobec hipotetycznych sytuacji odnoszących się do różnych aspektów związanych z nieletnimi sprawcami czynów zabronionych. W badaniach zastosowano metodę

KEYWORDS

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SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

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vignette. Objęto nimi 96 studentek. Studentki oceniały sześć epizodów przedstawiających hipotetyczne sytuacje, w których ukazana została demoralizacja nieletnich. Okazuje się, że studentki prawa nieznacznie częściej formułowały oceny, które pokrywają się z literą prawa, podczas gdy w ocenach studentek pedagogiki widać było elastyczność, która wyraża się w tym, że były one bardziej skłonne do dawania „drugiej szansy” nieletnim sprawcom czynów zabronionych.

Introduction

An area that unites the professions of a lawyer—especially those specializing in criminal and family law—and a resocialization educator is crime and preventing the problems it entails. Obviously, lawyers take preventive action by using specific tools of the law, while resocialization educators create the educational conditions that foster positive changes for those who break moral and legal norms. It is therefore to be expected that lawyers and educators are also trained in this spirit. The aspect of crime prevention and bearing the consequences for breaking the law is emphasized during law students’ education, while prevention, upbringing, and resocialization is emphasized during pedagogical studies.

Of particular importance in the prevention of moral corruption and crime, in both legal and educational terms, is the treatment of children and adolescents. Polish legislation stipulates that an adolescent who is not yet fully formed socially and psychologically and who commits criminal acts requires special upbringing, not punishment *sensu stricto* (Konopczyński 2015; Włodarczyk-Madejska 2019; Kuszta 2021). The basic document regulating the treatment of juvenile offenders is the Act of June 9, 2022 on the Support and Resocialization of Juveniles (Journal of Laws 2022, item 1700). The latest Act (as well as the previous one) gives family judges many possibilities when it comes to individualized interactions with “sub-judice” youths (Klaus 2008; Szczepanik et al. 2018), despite a clear tightening of the policy for dealing with juveniles (Wojnicz, Mościcka 2023).

While lawyers first and foremost have to uphold the law and interpret and apply it appropriately, educators have the task of educating for compliance with the law and forming beliefs about its validity. Proper upbringing is geared toward internalizing the values

that create them, rather than creating fearful attitudes of the consequences of breaking the law (cf. Wołodkiewicz 2015; Falba 2019). Regardless of the methods and tools of a lawyer and an educator, it is clear that the issue of morality is extremely important in both professions. Most legal and criminal norms are either covered by or strongly based on moral norms (Szczepanik 2008). In the field of pedagogy, morality is already manifested in the very idea of moral education (Nowak 2019).

This raises the question of what assessments of punishment and reactions of formal social control in cases of youths who break legal and moral norms are formed by those studying law and resocialization pedagogy. It can be assumed that the field of study will clearly differentiate these evaluations: legal candidates will evaluate the behavior of a minor primarily in strictly normative terms, while those studying pedagogy will be guided by a certain flexibility. This article presents the results of a study aimed at answering such a question. The research involved 96 female students of law and resocialization pedagogy who were at a similar stage of their studies at the time the research was conducted. They were presented with hypothetical situations involving minors and the formal response to their reprehensible behavior. Are law students more focused on legal references in their assessments of hypothetical situations? Are resocialization pedagogy students more inclined to withhold harsh judgements with a view to helping them improve their lives?

The results of the research lead us to the conclusion that evaluations of juvenile behavior indicating moral corruption or criminal acts are not the same. The law students were more likely to form assessments coinciding with the letter of the law, while the pedagogy students' assessments were more likely to be marked by flexibility, leaving space for the young person to improve and giving them a "second chance."

The starting point for the research was the sphere of moral values and the attitudes of law and pedagogy students toward minors. Therefore, the presentation of the results will be preceded by the moral context of law and resocialization pedagogy.

Moral Values and the Law

The coexistence of law and morality is not in doubt. The extent to which moral behavior, attitudes, and actions can be sanctioned is debatable (Wielgus 2006). The issue of the relationship between law and morality is related to the search for criteria with which to justify and evaluate the law. These issues are inextricably linked to the ideal of the state and the specifics of its action (Michalik 2005). The mere observance of the law can often lead to destructive consequences. The relationship between morality and law is considered on three levels: the formal similarities and differences between legal norms and moral norms, the scopes of applicability of legal and moral norms (whether they overlap, are separate, or contradict each other), the content of this relationship and structural/axiological, possibly evaluative dependencies (Michalik 2005).

We can distinguish between law and morality by referring to the duties that exist toward them. Corresponding duties that form bilateral relationships are legal relationships. Duties without obligations that are free in relation to others are moral duties (Petrażycki 1985). What we consider moral is determined by our own internal beliefs about what is right and wrong. Morality is shaped by many factors such as upbringing, education, and worldview.

Jan Woleński cites a lecture by Leon Petrażycki, who argued that law is a set of imperative-attributive experiences, whereas morality is only imperative (Woleński 2016/2017). Petrażycki also distinguished the so-called ethical emotions, consisting in the fact that a given sensation results in a sense of duty or obligation and entitlement (*ibidem*). Law and morality are also differentiated by Stanisław Wielgus, who writes that “law and morality neither completely overlap nor can they be separated from each other” (Wielgus 2006: 21).

Morality is undoubtedly one of the factors that influences the process of creating and applying the law, just as the law influences morality and shapes judgements, norms, and the moral consciousness of society (Parchomiuk 2010). According to Czarnecki, professional morality is conduct and behavior based on principles that are considered appropriate in a given profession or work environment (Czarnecki 2006: 157). Ethics in the legal profession is inextricably linked to the concept of public trust, formulated toward all legal

professionals who work on the values of justice, freedom, and dignity (Pieniążek 2008). Law as a tool to regulate societal relations should invariably refer to ethics and morality.

Moral Values and Resocialization Pedagogy

Those working as a resocialization educator are required to be effective, responsible, efficient, and highly competent (Becker-Pestka 2014). Resocialization practitioners carry out multiple tasks, such as taking care of the safety of their charges, organizing the conditions of upbringing (and resocialization), and carrying out the tasks of the institution itself in which they work. This multitasking makes the work of a resocialization educator unique; it is often said that those in such a profession should have a vocation or passion (Becker-Pestka 2014).

It is difficult to imagine that tasks as responsible as those performed by resocialization educators would be performed by people without the appropriate moral qualifications. Resocialization educators enter into direct and close relations with offenders who are suffering the consequences of their actions. It is for this reason that there should be no doubt as to the morals and principles of these professionals. For resocialization personnel, adherence to the principles of professional ethics is particularly important. Adherence to these principles is evidence of reliability and commitment and protects against abuse of those with whom social workers work. It is very important how resocialization staff communicate, what words they use, and how they build their authority (Machel 2001).

In the work of a resocialization educator, tolerance and human dignity are also important concepts alongside morality. Lesław Pytka (2013) wonders to what extent the notions of moral responsibility, guilt, and shame can be applied to the children and adolescents that resocialization pedagogues work with. After all, due to their age, minors require special support that takes into account their level of physical, social, and mental development.

Pedagogy looks for the positive sides of human nature and seeks positive methods of enhancing potential. The best evidence of this is the latest paradigm of resocialization pedagogy, according to which the upbringing of a minor is not to be based on correcting their flaws

and teaching them to bear the consequences, but on releasing and developing their potential (Konopczyński 2014; Michel 2017).

Students of Law and Resocialization Pedagogy Toward the Law According to Research

No studies comparing the opinions of law and resocialization students toward law and punishment have been conducted in Poland. Some light is shed on these issues by other studies, which show that law students are characterized by a more positive attitude toward the highest penalty: the death penalty.

Thus, Ewa Radomska's (2016) survey of Jagiellonian University law students on penal populism shows that thinking in terms typical of penal populists was not characteristic of the study group. The students strongly opposed demands to reinstate the death penalty, tighten criminal repression, and admit a citizens' initiative as a substitute for punishment. They also do not support the publication in the media of an image of the victim with a description of the act committed. In addition, students with more seniority in their studies and who have passed more examinations show a much higher resistance to populist slogans. Students manifest the view that a custodial sentence should primarily fulfil the purpose of crime prevention (here it is also noteworthy that almost a quarter of students believe that the most important purpose of a sentence is resocialization). Nevertheless, a quarter of them indicated that isolation of the offender from society was essential. It also appeared that a return to certain populist beliefs could be seen in students at the very end of their law studies. Radomska's (2016) research suggests that being further along in one's studies and having passed more exams are associated with lower levels of penal populism. Interestingly, men studying law manifested retaliatory behavior, while women preferred less drastic measures.

As far as students of resocialization pedagogy are concerned, the research carried out by Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg and Justyna Rak (2019) is noteworthy. The authors examined the opinions of students of resocialization pedagogy at two universities in Lublin—a secular one (UMCS) and a Catholic one (KUL)—on the use of the death penalty. Nearly half of the students at the secular university expressed the belief that the death penalty should be applied in Poland, while

the Catholic university students were overwhelmingly opposed to it. Half of the students at the secular university and one in three students at the Catholic university claimed that people who commit the most serious crimes have no chance of being rehabilitated. The very negative attitude toward perpetrators of serious crimes is evidenced by the fact that as many as three fourths of the students of resocialization pedagogy at the Catholic university and just under 65% at the secular university were convinced that such persons should not be allowed to live.

The Research: Methodological Notes

The aim of the research was to obtain the assessments of female students of law and resocialization pedagogy about the punishments applied to juvenile offenders and adolescents with symptoms of moral corruption. The aim was to answer research questions centered around three issues. Firstly, there is the legitimacy of referring children's and adolescents' cases to the courts and the evaluation of the results of this intervention. (What evaluations of the court's intervention with children with behavioral difficulties at school are given by female students of resocialization pedagogy versus law? How do these groups of students assess the validity of the use of mediation as an alternative means of resolving peer conflicts? How do they assess the severity of court-imposed punishment of youths who use the internet against their peers?) The second issue was assessments regarding the labelling of the behavior in question as moral corruption. (What assessments do female students of educational pedagogy for resocialization give to the sexual behavior of adolescent children, and what assessments do their female peers studying law give to it? How do these two groups assess the legitimacy of court intervention in cases of animal abuse by minors?) The final field of interest was their assessment of referring juvenile cases to adult courts. (How do female law and resocialization pedagogy students assess the legitimacy of trying teenage parent abusers as adults?)

The research used the vignette method, otherwise known as the episode method, which is situated between projective methods and psychological scales (Tłuściak-Deliowska 2018). It consists of presenting a specific element of reality (a description, scenario, or

episode) to the subject and asking them to express their opinion in its context. The respondents were presented with six episodes related to the punishments applied to juvenile offenders. The episodes were structured to briefly describe the story concerning the different offences and the punishments applied to them. The protagonists of the episodes were girls and boys in early adolescence. After reading the story, the respondents were asked questions for each episode using a modified Likert scale, from which the answer “I have no opinion” was removed. The respondents were informed of the procedure at the beginning of the survey.

The research was carried out from June to July 2023 and involved 96 female students (49 of resocialization pedagogy and 47 of law). The selection criteria for the research were female gender and being in the first or second year of the first degree of law or resocialization pedagogy. The group of respondents was selected using the snowball method. The vast majority of the participants (68.8%) were second-year students. Just over a third (31.2%) were in their third year of study. This selection was deliberate for two reasons. The aim was to ensure that the respondents were of a similar age and that their level of education was similar. The first year was deliberately omitted because at the beginning of a university program, one’s views on the related topics are still relatively unformed.

As far as the gender criterion is concerned, previous research indicates that this is an important modifier of moral attitudes and judgments (cf. Radomska 2016). Furthermore, it was decided to examine only women because pedagogy departments in particular primarily contain women and it would have been difficult to collect a suitable group of students otherwise.

The participants’ motivations for choosing the course of study were also of interest. When asked about this, the most frequently chosen answers were the desire to develop in a particular field (63.8%) and curiosity (42.6%). The law students also chose options related to financial issues (36.2%) and the social prestige of the profession (40.4%). It is noticeable that the law students were primarily guided by financial aspects and the social prestige of the legal profession. On the other hand, among the students of resocialization pedagogy, the reasons related to curiosity and the desire to develop were definitely predominant. It is also noteworthy that more than one third of

the respondents chose this path because they were not accepted by a department in another field of study.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Motivations for Choice of Studies

Motivation	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
Curiosity	61.2	42.6	51.9
Desire to develop in this area	53.1	63.8	58.5
Failure to get into another course	34.1	8.5	21.3
Pressure from parents/family	4.1	12.8	8.5
Financial issues	0	36.2	18.1
Social prestige of the profession	2	40.4	21.2
Case	14.3	14.9	14.6
Other	2	8.4	5.2

Source: own elaboration.

The data do not add up to 100% because the respondents were able to select more than one answer.

Analysis of Results

In the following section, the episodes presented to the respondents are presented along with a short introduction, an opinion question addressed to the respondents, and an analysis of the results. The situations in relation to which the students were asked to form an opinion concerned referring a “difficult teenager” to family court, the use of mediation, bullying and cyberbullying and the severity of the punishment applied to the perpetrators, the criminal act of animal abuse, and the deprivation of a parent’s life.

Referral to family court

The first episode is an example of a teenager who creates problems with his behavior both at home and at school, but so far has not suffered consequences for his behavior. The story presents a cross-section

of behaviors that are not in line with social norms and involve aggression and ultimately a description of a criminal act.

Sebastian recently turned 16. The boy manifests educational problems. He is regularly caught smoking cigarettes, is notoriously truant, and gets into fights with other students. Parents and educators have tried to help him in many ways, but without success. Sebastian has been labelled a “bully” and everyone turns a blind eye to his antics. Any conflicts the boy is party to are resolved within the school community. The situation changes when the pupil is caught stealing money from the school shop. A discussion begins among the teachers on how to deal with the situation.

Do you agree that the situation and previous incidents indicate that Sebastian’s case should be referred to family court?

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Responses to Episode: Family Court Referral

Answer	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
I strongly disagree	10.2	2.1	9.4
I rather disagree	32.7	17	25
I rather agree	36.7	51.1	43.7
I strongly agree	20.4	29.8	25

Source: own elaboration.

The students of both faculties most often answered “I rather agree” (36.7% of those studying resocialization pedagogy and 51.1% of law students). Those studying resocialization pedagogy equally often chose the option “I rather disagree” (32.7%). The same option among law students gathered slightly fewer responses (17%). The third option most frequently chosen by the respondents was “I strongly agree”; it was chosen slightly more often by law students (29.8%), while among pedagogy students it comprised just over one fifth of the responses (20.4%). “I strongly disagree” was chosen least often, but it is evident that the students of social pedagogy more strongly disagreed with referring the case to family court (10.2%). Only one law student chose this answer (2.1%).

Mediation

In the next episode, a situation related to physical violence caused by a conflict between two teenage girls was presented. In this case, the respondents were asked to evaluate the use of mediation as an alternative way of resolving disputes between teenagers.

Zuzia and Maja have been friends since kindergarten. The girls are now 14 years old and in the same class. The relationship between them starts to deteriorate when a boy who Zuzia likes shows significant interest in Maja. When Zuzia finds out that her friend has gone to the cinema with her boyfriend, she is furious. A serious argument breaks out between the girls. The conflict escalates with each passing day, culminating in a fight after a P.E. lesson, which results in Maja's arm being broken and Zuzia being slightly injured. The case is referred to juvenile court. The educator's report clearly indicates that, given the girls' previous relationship, the best solution is to refer the case to mediation. However, the judge decides to grant the girls probationary supervision.

Do you agree that mediation would indeed be the best solution in this case?

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Responses to Episode: Mediation

Answer	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
I strongly disagree	8.2	4.3	6.2
I rather disagree	10.2	8.5	9.4
I rather agree	36.7	40.4	38.6
I strongly agree	44.9	46.8	45.8

Source: own elaboration.

For the second episode, the opinions of the two groups were very similar. Almost half of the students of both law (46.8%) and resocialization pedagogy (44.9%) strongly agreed that mediation would be the best solution in this situation. It was slightly less common for the respondents to select "I rather agree." This answer received 36.7% of responses among the resocialization pedagogy students and 40.4% among the law students. The opinion that mediation would not be a good way to resolve a conflict received far fewer supporters. "I rather disagree" was chosen by only 10.2% of the students of

resocialization pedagogy and by 8.5% of the law students. It was even less common for respondents to select “I strongly disagree,” which received 8.2% of all responses from resocialization pedagogy students and only 4.3% of responses from the respondents studying law.

Severity of punishment

In the next episode, the situation concerned the bullying and cyberbullying of a student by a group of teenagers. Peer violence is a common phenomenon in schools and, as below, it can be caused by the material situation of or various difficulties faced by teenagers. The episode shows an escalation of violence toward a new classmate, which moves from the internet into the real world.

Janek, Karolina, and Kuba are each 13 years old. They come from good homes and attend a prestigious private school. At the beginning of the new school year, a new classmate joins their class. The pupils are informed that the boy has arrived at their school on a scholarship he earned for winning a mathematics competition. Piotr is noticeably different from the group, with no expensive clothes or gadgets. In addition, he has a slight speech impediment, which makes him very shy and insecure in new relationships. Janek, Karolina, and Kuba decide that it will be fun to create a Facebook group where they can add doctored photos of their new classmate. The initially innocent jokes become more serious and move from the virtual to the real world. The intervention of Piotr’s mother leads to a referral to family court. The young people are contrite and apologize for their behavior. They remove the group, publicly admitting that their behavior was inappropriate. The judge remains adamant and decides that the consequence for the teenagers for their behavior will be 50 hours of community service at the botanical garden.

Do you agree that the punishment awarded to the teenagers was too harsh?

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Responses to Episode: Severity of Punishment

Answer	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
I strongly disagree	26.5	27.7	27
I rather disagree	38.8	44.7	41.7
I rather agree	26.5	14.9	20.8
I strongly agree	8.2	12.8	10.5

Source: own elaboration.

More than half of the respondents viewed the court's decision positively. Thus, it can be concluded that they are in favor of imposing obligations as a punishment for inappropriate behavior. The respondents in both groups most often chose the answer "I rather disagree" (38.8% of those studying resocialization pedagogy and 44.7% of law students). Nevertheless, a frequent answer was "I strongly disagree," selected by 27.7% of law students and 26.5% of resocialization students.

The disproportion was noticeable in the next two responses, leaning toward the opinion that the punishment given to the teenagers was too harsh. While "I rather agree" garnered 26.5% of the responses from those studying resocialization, only 14.9% of the law students chose this option. In contrast, the answer "I strongly agree" was slightly more popular among the law students (12.8%) than the pedagogy students (8.2%).

Moral corruption

The following episode deals with the issue of sexual intercourse between two young people. Although it is clearly stated that the act was consensual, the girl is younger than the accepted age of consent (15), which makes the act morally and legally questionable.

David and Patrycja are a couple. The girl is 12 years old and the boy is four years older than her. The lovers have been dating for more than six months and have decided that they want to experience their first time with each other. They intend to do this when Patrycja's parents are not at home. To this end, they leave school early. They have intercourse with each other, during which they are caught by the girl's father. Despite assurances from both his daughter and her boyfriend that everything was consensual, the angry man decides to call the police.

Do you agree that the situation is indicative of David's moral corruption and should be dealt with by a juvenile court?

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Responses to Episode: Moral Corruption

Answer	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
I strongly disagree	14.3	8.5	11.5
I rather disagree	32.7	12.8	22.9
I rather agree	22.4	40.4	31.3
I strongly agree	30.6	38.3	34.3

Source: own elaboration.

It can be noted that the law students were more likely to agree that David is morally corrupt. The option “I rather agree” was chosen by 40.4% of the law students and “I strongly agree” by 38.3%. The same responses in the resocialization pedagogy group were chosen by 22.4% and 30.6%, respectively. The students of resocialization education, on the other hand, most often chose the answer “I rather disagree” (32.7%). The same answer was chosen by only 12.8% of the law students. They were least likely to answer “I strongly disagree.” Here, too, the disproportion in responses is apparent. The students of resocialization chose this option slightly more often (14.3%) than the law students (8.5%).

Criminal act

This episode depicts a situation of intentional abuse of an animal with particular cruelty. Animal rights are now receiving much attention, and outrage is aroused by crimes against animals, especially when committed by young people. Violence by children or adolescents from a psychological point of view stems from mechanisms of displaced aggression directed at more accessible targets (Helios, Jedlecka 2017).

Roxana and Michał have published a video online in which they abuse their dog. They repeatedly kick, throw stones, and drag it by its paws and tail. In the video, the animal makes terrified squeaks accompanied by the laughter of the abusers. The footage quickly goes viral online, with enraged internet users demanding that the perpetrators be punished. Even more shocking is the fact that the perpetrators are only 15 years old.

In addition, the teenagers write on portals that they do not regret their behavior and would have no problem repeating it.

Do you agree that Michał and Roxana committed a criminal act and that their case should be referred to family court?

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of Responses to Episode: Criminal Act

Answer	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
I strongly disagree	0	0	0
I rather disagree	0	0	0
I rather agree	4.1	2.1	3.1
I strongly agree	95.9	97.9	96.9

Source: own elaboration.

In the above scenario, the respondents in both groups were almost completely in agreement in their opinions. Almost all respondents from both groups (96.9% of all responses) strongly agreed that the teenagers had committed a criminal act and that their case should be referred to family court. Only 4.1% of the students of resocialization and 2.1% of the students of law chose the answer “I rather agree,” thus showing incomplete certainty in dealing with teenagers.

Being tried as an adult

The final episode concerns the murder of a parent. In the following episode, the situation is particularly difficult because it concerns one of the most serious crimes, which was committed by a very young person, and because her parent—the person closest to her—lost her life. The episode shows the manipulation, anger, and aggression of the girl. In the case of minors, however, it happens that the desire to satisfy the sense of justice is abandoned and, given their young age, educational considerations come to the fore.

Eliza recently turned 15. The girl is being raised by her single mother. Their relationship has so far been good, but has been deteriorating steadily for some time. On the internet, the girl met Jacek, ten years her senior, with whom she fell in love. After a short acquaintance, he proposed that they go to the seaside together. Eliza's mother is adamant that her daughter should end her relationship with Jacek. She claims that the man could be dangerous. The difference of opinion leads to more and more frequent arguments between mother and daughter. The teenager is heavily influenced by the man she met online. Jacek keeps saying that the girl's mother is damaging their chances of meeting. Eliza is very afraid of losing her boyfriend; she comes to the conclusion that the only way for them to be together is to get rid of her mother. During the next argument, Eliza carries out her plan and uses a knife to kill her mother.

Do you agree that Eliza should be held accountable as an adult for the act she committed?

Table 7. Percentage Distribution of Responses to Episode: Being Tried as an Adult

Answer	Students of resocialization pedagogy (N=49)	Students of law (N=47)	Total (N=96)
I strongly disagree	8.2	6.4	7.3
I rather disagree	24.5	6.4	15.6
I rather agree	28.6	19.1	24
I strongly agree	38.8	68.1	53.1

Source: own elaboration.

A significant disparity in the responses from both groups is apparent. More than half of the law students (68.1%) strongly agreed that Eliza should be tried as an adult. Among the resocialization students, the same answer was given by 38.8%, which still makes it the most frequent answer in this group. In turn, 28.6% of the resocialization students and 19.1% of the law students tended to agree with the statement. Nearly one quarter of the resocialization students tended to disagree with Eliza being tried as an adult, while among the law students, the same answer was chosen by only 6.4%. The option "I strongly disagree" was the least common response in both groups—among students of resocialization it was 8.2% and among law students only 6.4%.

Summary

The majority of the female students surveyed positively assessed the validity of the school handing over the case of a teenager notorious for causing behavioral problems to the intervention of the court. However, it is noteworthy that slightly more students of resocialization pedagogy than of law were in favor of delaying a formal reaction toward such a teenager. Perhaps this is why the results regarding the resolution of conflicts between students by means of mediation are surprising. Comparing the responses of the two groups, it can be observed that slightly more respondents studying pedagogy indicated that mediation is not the best solution. These results may come as a surprise, all the more so as the story in question emphasized the opinion of the school pedagogue, who was in favor of such a solution. Previous research shows that, in Poland, juvenile mediation is still an undervalued tool for the resocialization of minors, and that the opinions of school pedagogues are not at all taken into account by judges in their decision-making (Szczepanik et al. 2018). On the other hand, the data are in line with the findings of Radomska (2016), which show that, although law students do not succumb to penal populism, they also believe that the law should be upheld primarily by the courts and not by citizen initiatives.

It is true that the students in both fields of study were in favor of the court imposing community service as a punishment for young people's misbehavior, but slightly more students of resocialization pedagogy than their peers studying law negatively assessed the decision of the court to punish adolescents for violent behavior despite their expression of remorse. Undoubtedly, this is a moral dilemma: Should one ruthlessly punish a child for bad behavior or should they consider that remorse and a promise to improve is a sufficient way to close the case? An additional element that may raise moral doubts about this story is the type of "punishment." Should forced labor be a punishment in itself? Can it fulfill an educational role or, as Michel Foucault (2009) suggests, does it take the form primarily of "training"? The story assessed by the respondents relates to research on the educational measures used by courts against juveniles (Szczepanik et al. 2018). They found that directing children to work in a botanical garden was almost a standard response of one court to juveniles,

regardless of the symptoms of their moral corruption or types of criminal acts. The researchers were critical of the upbringing measures used by the courts against juveniles due to the automatic nature of their application and the failure to exploit the educational values inherent in them. The upbringing measures applied by the court, especially the obligation to perform socially useful work, were completely detached from the nature of the upbringing difficulties.

Issues related to the sexual sphere of adolescents aroused rather unequivocal and negative evaluations from the respondents. Three quarters of the law students surveyed (78.7%) were more or less negative about the risk of sexual contact between adolescents. The women agreed that such a case should be subject to a judicial review for moral corruption. A similar assessment was expressed by half of the resocialization students (53%). The story presented for assessment contained an essential element that raised moral and legal questions. It was not the age of the children, but the age difference of the couple “interested” in sex (a 12-year-old girl and a 16-year-old boy); this was probably what came to the fore in the law students’ assessment of the situation.

The research also showed that animal abuse is viewed in an unqualifiedly negative light by the respondents. Almost all of them were of the opinion that such behavior is a symptom of moral corruption and that the teenagers’ case should go to court. It is not clear what prompted those surveyed to be so unanimous—whether sensitivity to the harm to the animal and the desire to punish the perpetrators of violence or the intuitive belief that animal abuse in childhood creates a very serious risk of violence and aggression toward people later in life (Longobardi, Badenes-Ribera 2019). Therefore, the behavior of adolescents requires an absolute and firm response of formal control.

Half of the respondents rated the 15-year-old girl’s murder of her mother as an act that should be judged with absolute severity. Most of them believed that she should be treated by the court as an adult, not a teenager. In practice, this means punishing the girl rather than placing her in an educational center. The resocialization pedagogy students were more divided in their assessments. It is true that most of them formulated similar assessments to their law school peers, but a quarter of them expressed doubts about whether the teenaged killer should be held accountable as an adult for her act.

Comparing the assessments by students of resocialization pedagogy and law, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the assessments of the former were characterized by faith in the young person and their ability to change (upbringing), while the assessments of juvenile behavior by the latter coincided with the legal assessment of the situation (punishment). However, it should be emphasized that this statement should be treated as a starting point for further research and that it should be verified with a larger research sample and statistical analysis. Our own research was carried out with a very small research group and with a simplified procedure for selecting people for the study (non-representative group). The results can lead to the formulation of hypotheses that can be verified in further research and the research itself expanded.

The first context within which the results can be interpreted is knowledge of the developmental rights of the young person and the mechanisms and consequences of violence. When talking about episodes related to referral to family court, moral corruption, or being tried as an adult, the more lenient assessments of the resocialization pedagogy students may be related to their wider knowledge of human psychosocial development. Similarly, an attempt can be made to explain the results in the case of the bullying and cyberbullying episode: the students of resocialization pedagogy may have been harsher in their responses because of the fact that bullying is repeatedly addressed during their university program, often in the context of the consequences that it can have on the victims of violence.

It is noteworthy that by far the most shocking, and at the same time the most harshly assessed, situation for both groups of students was that concerning animals. Thinking in terms of a moral obligation for the welfare of animals and the numerous campaigns against animal abuse (including the enactment of stricter laws in this regard) undoubtedly influenced the moral assessments formulated by young people (cf. Górnicka-Kalinowska 2017; Cynk 2019).

It is certainly surprising to see greater recognition of mediation as a method of dispute resolution by the law school students. Mediation, after all, means that lawyers “hand over” the conflict to the victim and the perpetrator. The lesser popularity of mediation among the students of pedagogy is surprising, especially since research with students of resocialization pedagogy shows that they regard the

resolution of conflicts by means of mediation as very helpful in their educational work with children and adolescents (Urbańska 2019). Perhaps the students of resocialization identified it as a method for less serious conflicts between students. On the other hand, bearing in mind the evaluations of the episode involving a much more serious crime (the murder of the mother), the same students were more in favor of giving a second chance to the young offender.

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