

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The spiritual and social role of the mother in the Ukrainian family

Maryna Antonets<sup>1,\*</sup>, Olesia Silchuk<sup>2</sup>, Thecla Alordey<sup>3</sup>, Oksana Mokliak<sup>4</sup>, Olga Litvinova<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Plant Breeding, Poltava State Agrarian University, 36003 Poltava, Ukraine

<sup>2</sup> Department of Primary Education, Natural and Mathematical Disciplines and Methods of Teaching, Poltava National Pedagogical University named after V. G. Korolenko, 36000 Poltava, Ukraine

<sup>3</sup> «Grace» Christian School, 02000 Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>4</sup> Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Poltava State Agrarian University, 36003 Poltava, Ukraine

<sup>5</sup> Department Psychology, Pedagogy and Philosophy of the Kremenchuk Mykhailo Ostrohradskyi National University, 39600 Kremenchuk, Ukraine

\* **Corresponding author:** Maryna Antonets, antmarina63@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

The relevance of the topic lies in the study of the spiritual and social role of the mother in the Ukrainian family due to the crisis of the family in modern society. This crisis is manifested in the increase of divorces, fatherlessness, a free attitude toward sex before marriage, abortions, homosexual behavior, and a lack of trust and love between family members. Currently, during the war waged by Russia against Ukraine, Ukrainians are subjected to terrible sexual assaults, destruction, and abuse by the enemy. Because of this occupational war, the crisis in the family worsens even more. The study was conducted in 2021, before Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. The sample included families living in Kyiv. It was advisable to experiment with 30 families who believe in God and 30 atheist families. The following methodical tools were used in the research: T. Alordey's questionnaire, the method of 'Normative resistance' according to E. Eidemiller, and the projective method of 'Draw-a-Family-Picture'. The aim of the research was to show a special vital resource of Christian mothers, which affects the creation of an atmosphere of love and respect in their families, in contrast to the vital resource of mothers in families that do not believe in God. This vital resource affects the performance of the role of the mother. As a result of the questionnaire, husbands' understanding of the mother's role in the family was studied. Christian and non-Christian men showed that most of them were grateful to their mothers. From the answers in the questionnaires, it is clear that the life principles that husbands learned from their mothers, they practice in their own families. This forms the authority of the wife in the family and affects the role of the mother. Normative resistance in mothers from non-believing families was not ascertained. These mothers considered terrible, negative situations to be normal. Mothers who confess Christ ascertain normative resistance. They make great efforts so that children grow up in an atmosphere of joy and mutual understanding. Analyzing the drawings of children from non-Christian families, one can see psychological and spiritual problems in families. The pictures reflect children's experiences of conflicts in the family. An atmosphere of love and strong family relationships can be observed in the drawings of Christian children. Children have mothers who pray for them. The effectiveness of the 'I am a mother' training aimed at biological and social mothers is shown. The social mothers are preschool educators, schoolteachers, and academics in higher education institutions. Ukrainian mothers, teaching their children to love God and the motherland, positively influence society and form the spiritual, professional, and business cultures of the young

#### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 5 December 2023 | Accepted: 1 February 2024 | Available online: 21 March 2024

#### CITATION

Antonets M, Silchuk O, Alordey T, et al. The spiritual and social role of the mother in the Ukrainian family. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(6): 2295. doi: 10.54517/esp.v9i6.2295

#### COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2024 by author(s). *Environment and Social Psychology* is published by Asia Pacific Academy of Science Pte. Ltd. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

generation. Christian families have a special, vital resource. This resource enables mothers to fully fulfill their spiritual and social roles in the family. During the war in Ukraine, such mothers laid the foundations of new values that affect the whole world.

**Keywords:** biological mother; social mother; Christian and non-Christian families; training 'I am a mother'

---

## 1. Introduction

Recent events in the world make people think about the future and develop a lot of options for solving pressing problems. Man ominously asserts his dominance in the form of wars of aggression and the destruction of the civilian population. Godlessness, insolent behavior, ingratitude, and cruelty are problems from which people suffer. The consequence is the crisis of the family, which is manifested in the increase of divorces, fatherlessness, a free attitude toward sex before marriage, abortions, homosexual behavior, and a lack of trust and love between family members. The relevance of the topic lies in the study of the spiritual and social role of the mother in the Ukrainian family due to the crisis of the family in modern society.

During the aggressive war of occupation that Russia is waging against Ukraine, Ukrainian mothers are going through difficult spiritual, psychological, and social trials. A mother saves her children from war. The mother blesses her son, daughter, and husband for the defense of Ukraine, volunteers, collects aid for defenders, does not give up, and inspires her children. The mother, who faithfully serves God and helps the needy in the church community, collects aid for immigrants and low-income families. A mother-teacher during an air raid in a bomb shelter continues to impart knowledge to students and her own children at home, teaches them perseverance, and nurtures humanity.

The authors of the article are Christians and see only the positive manifestations and consequences of faith in Christ, both in their lives and in the lives of others. The authors are guided in their lives by the principle: 'All scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness' (1 Tim.3:16)<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore, it was expedient to conduct a study of the mother's role in two opposite groups of families based on their belief in God. One group is secular families, and the other group is Christian families.

Therefore, the research hypothesis arose: if the mother nurtures Christian principles in the performance of her role, then all family members have a good life perspective.

In this regard, the goal of the research was to show a special vital resource of Christian mothers, which affects the creation of an atmosphere of love and respect in their families, in contrast to the vital resource of mothers in families that do not know Christ. This vital resource affects the performance of the role of the mother.

To achieve this aim, it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

- To study the understanding of the role of the mother in the family by husbands;
- To identify the normative resistance of mothers in Christian and non-Christian families;
- To analyze the family situation based on children's views.
- To show the effectiveness of the training 'I am a mother', which is aimed at biological mothers and social mothers.

## 2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in 2021, before Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. The sample included families living in Kyiv. It was advisable to experiment with 30 families who believe in God and 30 atheist

families. Each Christian family is coded with Arabic numerals 1, 2, 3, and 4 ... Each non-Christian family is coded with Roman numerals I, II, III, IV, ... In families, the husbands took part in the survey according to the Alordey's questionnaire. Eidemiller's method of 'Normative resistance' described by Pomytkina et al.<sup>[2]</sup> was performed on the mothers. The children were involved in carrying out the projective method of 'Draw-a-Family-Picture' presented by Lytvynenko and Prasol<sup>[3]</sup>. Thus, all family members participated in the experiment.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. The understanding of the role of the mother in the family by husbands**

The Alordey's questionnaire among the husbands was conducted on the following questions:

- What negative character traits does your mother have?
- What positive character traits does your mother have?
- What impact did it have on your family members?
- What are the main things she taught you?
- What distinguishes women of the XXI century?

There were few answers to the first question of the questionnaire due to the reluctance of the men to mention the negative traits of their mothers. Of the 30 non-Christian men, only 10 answered this question and named such negative traits as hatred, envy, and rigor. One Christian man wrote that his mother, like all people, is imperfect and therefore beautiful. Five men wrote, 'Who am I to name my mother's negative character traits?' Three non-Christians wrote that they were ashamed to think about it. Seven believers wrote that their love for their mother was so strong that they would not mention it. The rest did not write anything.

The answers to the second question of the questionnaire are full of optimism. Almost all the interviewed men, both believers and non-Christians, name such positive traits of their mothers as kindness, honesty, femininity, fidelity, generosity, modesty, love, decency, respect for people, beauty, and openness. And only three non-Christians indicated such a trait as steadfastness.

The third question of the questionnaire concerns the influence of mothers on their family members. The answers of both Christians and non-Christians are full of positive remembrance. The mother tried to help everyone, cared for relatives, and helped to reveal the abilities, talents, and gifts of their children. Three non-Christians wrote that their mother did not divorce their father, and today their family is complete. So the mother influenced the preservation of family ties. One Christian mentioned that his mother accepted Christ and influenced the whole family spiritually and later all the members of the family accepted Christ. Today the family lives in peace and harmony. Five respondents, including two Christians and three non-Christians, mentioned that their mothers educated them by working two jobs because their father had died. Some of them also wrote that their mothers built good relationships in the family through constant prayer. They point out that the spiritual influence of the mother is to achieve love and to teach moral values. They also wrote that the mothers tried to prevent family conflicts as much as possible to preserve happiness for the entire family.

The fourth question speaks of the main virtues that their mothers taught them. About 85% of the respondents agreed that justice, diligence, respect for elders, helping others, and self-belief should be the priority. Other important answers are neatness, politeness, generosity, as well as honesty, optimism, and willingness to support others. Three believers and three non-Christians indicated that the main ability of

mothers is to be an example to their children. Twenty Christians and five non-Christian men wrote that their mother taught them to pray to God, attend church, read the Bible and build a close relationship with God.

The fifth question of the questionnaire was devoted to what distinguishes women of the XXI century from women of other times. 60% of all the men named traits such as the desire for equality, the ability to defend their opinions, business orientation, courage, variability, sharpness, rigor, management skills, aggressiveness, and talkativeness. Most of the Christian respondents see in a modern woman intelligence, progressiveness, sociability, education, purposefulness, and self-confidence. One of the answers was unexpected, namely a non-Christian pointed out in the questionnaire such traits as vulgarity and bad habits. It was also a pleasure to read the answer of one of the believing respondents. He noted a characteristic of a woman as the ability to be herself, that is, to appreciate their individuality, created in the image and likeness of the Creator. However, the answers of 60 respondents showed that all the husbands see the importance of both the spiritual and social role of a modern woman in creating a happy family.

### **3.2. Identification of normative resistance of mothers in the families**

The method of normative resistance according to Eidemiller involves the use of thirty-three cards, which will be sorted into two groups.

Here is the content of these cards.

- The wife is in this marriage not for love but to take revenge.
- The wife in this family married not a man she loves, but someone who would give her everything: security, acquaintances, interesting leisure.
- She is married to her current husband because she was expecting a child from another.
- The wife despises her husband and does not hide it.
- She tries to arouse her husband's jealousy.
- She likes to torture and humiliate her husband.
- Her husband beats her.
- Her husband puts her through humiliating tests because of her marital fidelity.
- The wife feels disgusted with her husband but hides it for the sake of peace.
- Her husband does not consider her opinions and forces her to do everything the way he wants.
- Her husband works as a night watchman or janitor.
- She is very afraid of her husband.
- She is very jealous of her husband.
- She puts up with the fact that her husband is cheating on her.
- The husband does not love his child.
- She fulfills any whims of the child.
- She tried to commit suicide.
- When her wishes are not fulfilled, she gets hysterical.
- She deceives her husband with his friend.
- Her husband was serving a sentence for a crime.

- She disrupts any bad mood on her husband.
- She disrupts any bad mood in her child.
- Her children do not like her.
- She is embarrassed to appear in public with her husband.
- She is jealous of her son to his girlfriends.
- She mocks her child.
- She obediently endures the betrayal of her husband.
- She hates her mother-in-law, although she treats her well.
- She does everything to make her husband obedient.
- She openly tells her husband that he is a sexy loser.
- She is dissatisfied with her marriage.
- She loves her husband without reciprocity.
- She cannot solve any issue without a scandal.

Normative resistance is ascertained if, in the left group of cards (most shamefully), there were 12 or more cards. Normative contrast is ascertained if the share of dividing the number of cards in the left group by the number of them in the right (not shamefully) is equal to or greater than 0.8.

Each woman had to sort the cards with negative situations in family relationships into the left group (very shameful) and the right group (not very shameful). The sorting took place subjectively according to the spiritual and moral attitude of women to the thirty-three situations recorded on the cards. Situations had to be ranked—from the most terrifying to the least negative. The results of the method of normative resistance on women who are Christians are shown in **Table 1**. According to **Table 1**, mothers from families 1, 2, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30 ascertained normative resistance. All thirty-three cards were placed in the left group due to the negative attitude towards all thirty-three situations. These thirteen uncompromising women try to live by biblical principles. There is peace, tranquility, and harmony in their families. Normative contrast in these families is simply absent. They have the correct understanding of the norm.

**Table 1.** Normative characteristics of negative family situations shown by Christian mothers.

Christian mothers in families	Normative resistance		Normative contrast
	Left group	Right group	Left indicator/right indicator
1	33	0	-
2	33	0	-
3	30	3	10
4	29	4	7.3
5	31	2	16
6	30	3	10
7	28	5	5.6
8	27	6	4.5
9	33	0	-
10	29	4	7
11	30	0	10

**Table 1.** (Continued).

Christian mothers in families	Normative resistance		Normative contrast
	Left group	Right group	Left indicator/right indicator
12	33	0	-
13	29	4	7
14	27	6	4.5
15	33	0	-
16	31	2	16
17	33	0	-
18	27	6	4.5
19	29	4	7
20	33	0	-
21	33	0	-
22	33	0	-
23	33	0	-
24	33	0	-
25	29	4	7
26	30	3	10
27	30	3	10
28	31	2	16
29	33	0	-
30	33	0	-

Mothers from families 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 16, 19, 25, 26, 27, 28 also ascertained normative resistance. These women also clearly distinguish between good and evil and are aware of high spiritual standards in relationships. In all, twenty-six of the thirty mothers Christian have roughly the same moral family standards.

Four women from families 7, 8, 14, and 18 stated respectively a normative contrast of 5.6; 4.5; 4.5, and 4.5. This suggests that these mothers also rightly understand the essence of moral and spiritual norms in the family. In general, all the mothers from Christian families ascertained normative resistance.

According to **Table 2**, among thirty non-Christian families, the normative contrast was not observed for twenty-seven women. These mothers perceive negative situations as the norm. They lack spiritual and moral standards. Perhaps they have deep spiritual, mental, and social problems. Only five mothers from families II, XI, XXI, XXII, and XXX have twelve or more cards in the left group. Thus, they ascertained normative resistance. In mothers from families XXI and XXX normative contrast is stated. It is equal to 0.8. Only one woman from the family XIV demonstrates a position against all negative situations. She put all the cards in the left group. This mother understands the essence of moral and spiritual standards in families and ascertains normative resistance.

**Table 2.** Normative characteristics of negative family situations shown by non-Christian mothers.

Non-Christian mothers in families	Normative resistance		Normative contrast
	Left group	Right group	Left indicator/Right indicator
I	10	23	0.4
II	12	21	0.6
III	8	19	0.4
IV	6	27	0.2
V	9	24	0.4
VI	7	26	0.3
VII	4	29	0.1
VIII	5	28	0.2
IX	10	23	0.4
X	11	22	0.5
XI	13	20	0.7
XII	9	24	0.4
XIII	8	25	0.4
XIV	33	0	-
XV	7	26	0.3
XVI	6	27	0.2
XVII	3	30	0.1
XVIII	4	29	0.1
XIX	6	27	0.2
XX	2	31	0.1
XXI	16	19	0.8
XXII	12	21	0.6
XXIII	9	24	0.4
XXIV	7	26	0.3
XXV	4	29	0.1
XXVI	3	30	0.1
XXVII	7	19	0.7
XXVIII	4	29	0.1
XXIX	9	24	0.2
XXX	15	18	0.8

The results showed how many non-Christian mothers live a compromising life and do not resist the negative factors that can destroy their families. Comparing the data in **Tables 1** and **2**, it becomes clear that mothers from Christian families ascertain normative resistance.

### 3.3. The analysis of the family situation based on children’s views

The next step of the research was to reveal children’s attitude and self-perception concerning their family and significant others (the projective method of ‘Draw-a-Family-Picture’).

The drawings of different-age and different-sex siblings differ depending on their understanding of the meaning of family. It is important to note that some drawings were easy to interpret, while others had to be

accompanied by questions. For example, a twelve-year-old boy from the XXVIII family found it difficult to draw his family. He sat and looked at the paper and could not start anything. When asked, 'Why don't you draw?' He replied that he did not know how to portray it since his family is dysfunctional. His mother heard and saw this. He then drew all the members of the family with strong hatching and in very small sizes, without colored pencils. At the same time, there was a high level of tension on the part of the boy, but he tried to control himself. This indicates an unfavorable mental state of the child due to family problems. A thirteen-year-old boy from the XXII family painted a beautiful house and a tropical landscape but without any family members. He said it was his dream family house. He wants his family to live in peace and harmony, like this home with this beautiful environment.

In families IV, XVI, XVIII, XX, II, V, XXV, VII, IX, and XV children schematically depicted real-life events. They portrayed the family the way they see it, for example, the grandmothers watching TV, the mothers constantly talking on the phone, and the fathers are constantly in their garages or near their cars. Children are given very little time. Mothers do not perform their roles in the family regarding children who are waiting for attention.

Three children aged thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen, respectively, from the families IV, XVI, and XVIII, drew one family member with a sad look distanced from everyone. When the children were asked why, their answers were the same. They said that he or she thinks they don't like him. This indicates that children are suffering from family conflicts. In these families, mothers do not worry about the favorable emotional state of the family.

Not all family members were depicted in the families VII, VIII, XXV, XXVI. For example, a thirteen-year-old girl from the XXVI family portrayed her father, mother, and herself, but she still has a one-year-old brother. When asked, 'Why so?', She said she had no time to draw. She was told that there was enough time, but she replied that she would not draw him because she did not love him. She explained that all the parents' attention is directed to him only. She sees the family without him. And it's sad. The mother did not create a good emotional atmosphere in the family. But in families V, XI, XXI, XXVII, and XXX, the children were happy to draw their siblings. They loved them and drew them wholeheartedly.

In the families of V and XVII, an eleven-year-old boy and a nine-year-old girl show a position of contempt for the father. Each of them first drew his mother, and then his father with a question mark on his face. When the children were asked, 'Why?' The boy said he did not know what his father looked like because he was constantly drunk, and he recognized his mother as the head of the family. The girl replied that she did not know him, although he lived with them, and her mother was also the head of the family. Their mothers heard it all. They do nothing to change the situation because they do not know what to do.

Such situations demonstrate a perverted family model. There are many such dysfunctional families in Ukrainian society. Mothers do not perform spiritual or social functions in the family properly. The children's drawings expose all the ethical problems in families.

In the drawings of families V, VIII, XVI, and XX there is a cat or a dog as a family member. When asked by a 10-year-old boy from the XX family why he drew a cat lying on his mother, he said that the cat is a favorite member of the family. And his mother said that the cat does not insult her, as does her husband all the time. This speaks of negative family relationships. The mothers from families V, VIII, XVI, and XX do not ascertain normative resistance, and their normative contrast is equal to 0.4; 0.2; 0.2; and 0.1. This shows difficulties regarding the implementation of the spiritual and social role in the family.

Most of the drawings of children from Christian families are drawn in large sizes, and bright colors, which indicates a good family atmosphere and lack of tension in family relationships. In most of the pictures,

there is a beautiful interior. This suggests that the children love their home, even if the apartment is not big. In the pictures, they stand together, holding each other's hands. A seven-year-old boy from family 1 drew his family at a church service holding hands with his mother and father.

Two girls aged thirteen and fifteen, respectively, from families 5 and 12, drew their family with their younger brother and sister in their arms. This indicates a good family relationship. A seven-year-old girl from family 15 drew a clock on the wall, which shows eight o'clock. She drew her older sister putting her to bed while her mother was busy with other things. The picture of family 21 drawn by a sixteen-year-old boy was a beauty. He first portrayed his mother, who was 41 years old, then his father, who was 49 years old in a wheelchair between him and his nineteen-year-old brother. When asked, 'Why did you draw it like that?', He replied, 'My father is disabled and we support him not only as children but also as men, while mom is busy with the household chores'.

In the family pictures of 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30 the children drew a Bible. These children know that their families believe in God. Eight children from families 2, 3, 7, 10, 17, 19, 23, and 26 drew their mother praying on her knees. This testifies to the spiritual influence of mothers on families.

It was interesting to compare the drawings of twin brothers from family 11. They both drew their family in the form of a metaphor-battle dressed in military uniform in the form of bats. They divided the drawing paper into two parts. One depicts their family, and the other depicts people who are also dressed in military uniforms. The children explained that they were fighting against the enemies so that they would not cross over to their territory.

A four-year-old girl from family 26 is the only child of her parents. She drew a child in the manger and said it was little Jesus. A nine-year-old girl from family 25 drew her grandmother, father, mother, and herself with an angel looking over them. This shows that spiritual values are important in their families.

### **3.4. The effectiveness of the training 'I am a mother'**

Analyzing the importance of the spiritual and social role of the mother, the training 'I am a mother' was developed. This training has a certificate of author's right № 95599 dated 23.01.2020. The program is conducted in kindergartens, schools, and higher education establishments for women who are biological mothers and social mothers. The social mothers are preschool educators, schoolteachers, and academics in higher education institutions. These social mothers affect the formation of the personality of children and young people. Training 'I am a mother' in higher education institutions contributes to the formation of professional and business culture of young people as well. The training has been conducted since 2014. The purpose of the training, which is indicated in the article by Alordey and Antonets is 'to help become a better mother based on the analysis of one's own mistakes and the application of spiritual principles from God's Word on raising children<sup>[4]</sup>'. Antonets et al. note that 'the training was designed as opposed to gender ideology to show the spiritual and social meaning of the mother's role in modern society<sup>[5]</sup>'. In December 2021, the training was conducted for widowed mothers. Their husbands died defending Ukraine from the Russian occupiers in 2014. On 28 October 2022, the training 'I am a mother' for preschool directors was held in Poltava. On 12 May 2023, the training was held for deputy principals of educational work in Poltava. On 21 December 2023, the training was held for the women teachers of the Poltava State Agrarian University. The trainer introduced the educators to new challenges regarding the role of Ukrainian social mothers under the conditions of the current Russian war against Ukraine.

## 4. Discussion

Alordey studied the role of a mother in family and mentioned: ‘Today, more than ever, a woman in the family must play the role of raising children in love, building a strong spiritual foundation in family relationships while remaining kind and just’<sup>[6]</sup>. The traditional analysis of the problem of role allows us to form a general idea of this issue, but did not take into consideration the spiritual aspect. An innovative approach to the study of this problem is demonstrated in the article of Alordey and Antonets<sup>[4]</sup> but needs further development.

The role of a woman in the family is a set of spiritual and socio-psychological functions that her relatives expect from her. Antonets notes that ‘firstly, the requirements for the role must create a holistic system. If the requirements for the role of the mother are contradictory, there will be problems in implementation. This occurs when the mother combines domestic and marital responsibilities, raising children, working outside the home, and serving in the church. Secondly, the set of roles that the mother plays should provide her with respect and recognition. Thirdly, the effective performance of the role must be commensurate with the woman’s capabilities. When the requirements are unbearable, there are nervous-mental disorders, anxiety, and internal discomfort. Fourthly, the system of family roles performed by the mother should be built on the principle of meeting both her own needs and the needs of other family members’<sup>[7]</sup>.

Alordey<sup>[8]</sup> states: ‘A woman is one of the most wonderful creations of God on this earth. Her nature is multifaceted and colorful. There is huge strength and potential hidden within her that help her achieve her goals in life. Her world is spirituality, tenderness, love, joy, elegance, flowers, shopping, jewelry, attractiveness, patience, sensuality. A woman is unique, and this is her charm’<sup>[8]</sup>. She is created by God in His image and likeness. Mothers need to understand and accept this to fulfill their role in both the family and society. Also Alordey adds: ‘A woman wants to fulfill her dream in life to the glory of God’<sup>[9]</sup>.

Glenn wisely states that ‘women can master any profession, except one - it is impossible to master the art of motherhood’<sup>[10]</sup>. Cloud and Townsend believe that ‘from the mother we learn intimacy, communication, the ability to keep distance. Mother teaches us how to cope with failures, anxieties, unfulfilled expectations, loss, grief’<sup>[11]</sup>. The child’s personality is formed by three components, namely cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. According to their opinion, ‘A mother determines the quality of the emotional component of personality, which affects the success of love and work’<sup>[11]</sup>.

The emotional component of a child’s personality is related to his spiritual development. Alordey and Antonets claim that ‘an integral part of modern family education is to increase the spiritual role of the mother in the family’<sup>[4]</sup>. The mother must teach the children to love God and to hate idolatry.

The Bible mentions the negative deed of a woman who, instead of raising God-fearing children, nurtured the idea of making an image for her son Micah and spent a long-time raising money for it. The son stole the money, and the mother, unaware of it, cursed the thief. Micah returned them. ‘His mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah’ (Judges 17:3-4)<sup>[1]</sup>. The future life of Micah brought a curse to him and others.

The Holy Scriptures speak of a mother who rightly teaches the king’s son the basic principles of life: ‘It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead

the cause of the poor and needy' (Prov. 31:4,5,9)<sup>[1]</sup>. She advises her son to find a 'virtuous woman. For her price is far above rubies' and 'a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised' (Proverbs 31:10, 30)<sup>[1]</sup>. Alordey notes, that, undoubtedly, 'Chapter 31 of the book of Proverbs is a unique portrait for every woman who wants to fulfill her role in society to be truly priceless in the eyes of the Creator and others<sup>[12]</sup>'.

The mother in the family must ensure the intellectual, physical, spiritual and social development of the child by analogy of how Jesus Christ was raised by his mother. He 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man' (Luke 2:52)<sup>[1]</sup>. Mary perfectly fulfilled her spiritual and social role. She reverently received the news from the angel Gabriel: 'Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...and of his kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1:30-33)<sup>[1]</sup>. Mary's deed at the wedding in Cana of Galilee is mentioned. She immediately asked her son Jesus to serve the people, telling the servants: 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it!' (John 2:5)<sup>[1]</sup>.

For a long time, women were the guardians of the home. But in the 21st century, the situation has changed dramatically. A woman has a different status and vocation. Alordey and Antonets claim that 'she strives for equality and harmonious division of responsibilities between spouses. She wants to realize herself not only in the family but also in the professional field. She has other values and needs which call for a reconsideration of the role of women in the modern family<sup>[4]</sup>'.

As Munroe notes 'one of the most controversial issues of our time, which has been accompanied by many controversies and differences, is the role and rights of women. In history, in almost every country and culture, a woman was seen as a person who is inferior to a man and occupies a secondary place in the world'<sup>[13]</sup>.

The Catholic priest Sheptytskyi calls a woman a 'savior' of a man who converts him to God with his prayers. Also, he thinks that: 'A wife should love her husband and listen to him even if he is guilty of something and has not fulfilled his responsibilities. She can show disobedience only in the situation when her husband's orders will contradict God's instructions<sup>[14]</sup>'.

The lives of the following three mothers are an example of fulfilling a spiritual and social role in the family and society. Mother Tutu was born in 1817. Her name means 'joy'. She inherited from her mother a desire to develop Creole culture in Dominica in the form of epics, music, dance, and cooking. Tutu understood that her mission was to revive the cultural movement in all countries of the Eastern Caribbean. She headed the Belle organization. Together with her husband, a history teacher Adrian, they brought up the five children. Charles wrote in the study: 'Mother Tutu lived for 102 years, promoting strong family and Christian values. Today, her great-granddaughter, Henrietta Letang, continues to develop the Tradie Belle movement, trying to preserve the identity of the Creole people'<sup>[15]</sup>.

Of all the women of the twentieth century, Mother Teresa's personality is one of the most admirable. Osipov claims that 'her name became synonymous to exceptional kindness, sacrifice, and compassion during her lifetime. As an example of special mercy, she challenged selfishness, insecurity, and indifference to the needs of disadvantaged people. Agnes's philosophy of life was simple and accessible to all—each person embodies Jesus Christ. Mother Teresa said that 'poverty was not created by God, but by you and me, because we do not know how to share'<sup>[16]</sup>.

Among the women of the XXI century is a resident of Mariupol Olena Mokhnenko, who deserves special attention. She is the mother of thirty-five foster children and three biological children. Her husband, the pastor of the Church of Good Change, chaplain, about which Hollywood directors Malek and Hoover made the film 'Almost Holy', Mokhnenko observes in his book: 'Dedicated to my precious wife, who shared

with me all the sorrow and joy of pastoral work and work with adults rehabilitation and orphans'<sup>[17]</sup>. Olena Mokhnenko's huge pedagogical activity bore wonderful results. These are many changed destinies of children and teenagers who have realized their talents in life and honor God and family values. Today, Mohnenko's eleven sons and one daughter are fighting for Ukraine in the combat zone. The adopted daughter Victoria was killed in Mariupol in March 2022. Artem, her son, together with his team took 7000 people out of occupied Mariupol. As a mother, Olena Mohnenko raised true patriots of Ukraine. She is an example of an excellent Ukrainian mother.

In the third millennium, Ukrainian psychologists also deeply study the phenomenon of motherhood. Sidorenko and Hrisenko studied an important factor influencing the attitude towards motherhood. 'The article analyzes the problem of the influence of the relationship with the mother in childhood on the formation of a woman's attitude to her motherhood in adult age. Cultural-historical, biological, physiological and psychological aspects of the motherhood study are singled out. Two groups of women were studied, one group had a positive relationship with their mother, and the other had a negative one. In the course of the research, the differences between different types of maternal relations and the level of formation of a woman's personal attitude to motherhood are singled out'<sup>[18]</sup>. Antonets also notes that 'in the process of building an independent Ukraine, an important component of its current and future development is the attitude to motherhood'<sup>[7]</sup>.

One of the authors of this article studied the phenomenon of maternal deprivation together with her master's student. 'It was determined that maternal deprivation is a traumatic experience that has an impact on the development of brain structures responsible for the cognitive and emotional development of the child. The lack of tactile warmth leads to the blocking of the child's sensory development. It is noted that a surrogate family, which takes on the responsible mission of compensating for the negative consequences of maternal deprivation, will be able to restore a sense of peace, love and acceptance to the child's traumatized psyche'<sup>[19]</sup>.

Prachenko and Khanetska researched the peculiarities of the influence of maternal attitude on the occurrence of psychosomatic disease in preschool children. 'The results showed that mothers of children who are often ill are prone to authoritarian symbiotic relationships with the child. That is, they try to be closer to the child, but formally satisfy any needs and whims. In addition, they are fully confident in their actions and never take responsibility for failures. Mothers of healthy children, on the contrary, when providing the basic needs of the child (safety, comfort, and recognition) tend to distance themselves from the child, thereby giving them more space to realize their needs'<sup>[20]</sup>.

Mothers' emotional burnout negatively affects the role of the mother in the family. Abanina and Neborachko researched 'the problem of mothers' emotional burnout. They used three methods: questionnaire, interviews, and surveys. The results of their research confirm the presumption that frustration, dissatisfaction with motherhood and anxiety may be the main reasons for mothers' emotional burnout'<sup>[21]</sup>.

Shevtsiv and Biletskyi 'studied the social and psychological ramifications of single motherhood during armed conflicts. This research makes a significant contribution to understanding the challenges faced by single mothers during armed conflicts. Feelings of social isolation and stigmatization can undermine self-esteem and mental well-being of single mothers'<sup>[22]</sup>. This makes it difficult to fully fulfill the role of a mother.

Petyak and Rudenok offer psychological counseling for successfully mastering the role of the mother after the birth of the first child. 'It was found that three groups of psychological conditions are important in the process of mastering the role of the mother: the level of rigidity of the woman, the justification of

expectations about motherhood, and the attitude to the components of this role (maternal functions, attitude to the role of mother and emotional attitude to the newborn). Mothers with a high level of rigidity rate the difficulty of adapting to the birth of a child as the highest. Difficulties associated with caring for a newborn are more easily tolerated by women, with acceptance related to the components of the mother's role'<sup>[23]</sup>.

So, according to the results of the study of the spiritual and social role of the mother in the Ukrainian family, the hypothesis was confirmed, namely if the mother nurtures Christian principles in the performance of her role, then all family members have a good life perspective.

## **5. Conclusions**

- As a result of the questionnaire, husbands' understanding of the mother's role in the family was studied. Christian and non-Christian men showed that most of them are grateful to their mothers. From the answers in the questionnaires, it is clear that the life principles that husbands learned from their mothers, they practice in their own families. This forms the authority of the wife in the family and affects the role of the mother. A mother in a family should work on the development of such components in children as understanding good and evil, making important decisions, compassion, and love for the motherland. These characteristics can be traced in one way or another in the answers of 60 men who know Christ or are unbelievers.
- Normative resistance in mothers from non-believing families was not ascertained. These mothers considered terrible, negative situations to be normal. This leads to internal conflict and negative emotions toward children, husbands, and others, instead of having a positive effect on family relationships. Mothers who confess Christ ascertain normative resistance. They make great efforts so that children grow up in an atmosphere of joy and mutual understanding. Such mothers contribute to the formation of high spiritual and moral values in society, namely faith, hope, love, and wisdom.
- Analyzing the drawings of children from non-Christian families, one can see psychological and spiritual problems in families. The pictures reflect children's experiences of conflicts in the family. Unfortunately, some mothers cannot adequately respond to these problems. They are either emotionally broken or do not understand the cause of the problems. Children expect love from mothers, but actually, they see nervous, tired, silent, or noisy women. The absence of such love is caused by the absence of a relationship with God. An atmosphere of love and strong family relationships can be observed in the drawings of Christian children. Children have mothers who pray for them.
- The effectiveness of the 'I am a mother' training aimed at biological and social mothers is shown. The social mothers are preschool educators, schoolteachers, and academicians in higher education institutions. Ukrainian mothers, teaching their children to love God and the motherland, positively affect society and form the spiritual, professional, and business cultures of the young generation.

Christian families have a special, vital resource. This resource enables mothers to fully fulfill their spiritual and social roles in the family. During the war in Ukraine, such mothers built the foundations of new values that affected the whole world.

## **Author contributions**

Conceptualization, MA and TA; methodology, MA; software, OM; validation, OS, OL and OM; formal analysis, OS; investigation, TA; resources, OL; data curation, TA; writing—original draft preparation, MA;

writing—review and editing, OS; visualization, OL; supervision, OS; project administration, MA; funding acquisition, OM. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Olena Mokhnenko (Ukraine, Mariupol), a mother of 36 foster children and three biological ones, for her successful performance of the spiritual and social role in the family, in the church, and Ukrainian society as a whole.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. King James Version of the Bible. Available online: [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/religion-past-and-present/\\*-DUM\\_11577](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/religion-past-and-present/*-DUM_11577) (accessed on 28 February 2024).
2. Pomytkina LV, Zlahodukh VV, Khimchenko NS, Pohorilska NI. Psychology of the family (Ukrainian). Available online: [https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Pomytkina\\_Liubov/Psykholohiia\\_simji.pdf](https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Pomytkina_Liubov/Psykholohiia_simji.pdf) (accessed on 28 February 2024).
3. Lytvynenko IS, Prasol DV. Projective drawing techniques (Ukrainian). Available online: [http://dspace.mdu.edu.ua/jspui/bitstream/123456789/839/1/%D0%9B%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%2C%20%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BB\\_%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BD%D1%96\\_%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8E%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%96\\_%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8\\_%D0%9F%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F\\_2.pdf](http://dspace.mdu.edu.ua/jspui/bitstream/123456789/839/1/%D0%9B%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%2C%20%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BB_%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BD%D1%96_%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8E%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%96_%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8_%D0%9F%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F_2.pdf) (accessed on 28 February 2024).
4. Alordei TDB, Antonets MO. The role of a mother in modern family (Ukrainian). In: Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference; 17 May 2019; Brovary; Ukraine. pp. 57-63.
5. Antonets M, Silchuk O, Bozhko K. The spiritual development of university students: A fundamental role of the humanities and social sciences. *European Journal of Science and Theology*. 2019, 15(5): 27-37.
6. Alordey T. The role of a mother in family. In: Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian Scientific Internet Conference; 15 October 2021; Odesa, Ukraine. pp. 163-168.
7. Antonets M. The role of a mother in modern society (Ukrainian). Available online: [https://www.ispp.org.ua/backup\\_ispp/1229966208.pdf](https://www.ispp.org.ua/backup_ispp/1229966208.pdf) (accessed on 28 February 2024).
8. Alordey T. The role of women in modern society (Ukrainian). In: Proceedings of the 14th International Students Scientific and Practical Conference; 16–17 April 2019; Bucha, Ukraine. pp. 15-18.
9. Alordey T. *Woman, Fulfill Your Dream* (Ukrainian). Christian Publishing House; 2007.
10. Glenn D. *Mother's Wisdom* (Ukrainian). Lutsk; 2006.
11. Cloud H, Townsend J. *The Mom Factor*. Zondervan; 1996.
12. Alordey T. *Woman, You are Priceless* (Ukrainian). Christian Publishing House Breakthrough; 2008.
13. Munroe M. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Women* (Ukrainian). Fares; 2007.
14. Sheptytskij A. *Marriage and Family* (Ukrainian). Lvov; 1998.
15. Charles A. *Fanm Kouway: Profiles of Seven Rural Women in Dominica's Development*. Small Project Assistance Team; 1990.
16. Osipov A. *Mother Teresa. Endless Triumph of Love*. FOP Bondaruk L.N.; 2010.
17. Mokhnenko G. *Non Pedagogical Poem* (Russian). Knygonosha; 2019.
18. Sidorenko T, Hrisenko N. The role of the relationship with the mother in childhood in forming a woman's attitude towards her own motherhood (Ukrainian). *Young Scientists*. 2020, 11(87): 244-248. doi: 10.32839/2304-5809/2020-11-87-51
19. Litvinova O, Vidnichenko L. Features of the psychosocial development of a child raised in conditions of maternal deprivation (Ukrainian). *HABITUS*. 2023, 53: 69-74. doi: 10.32782/2663-5208.2023.53.11
20. Prachenko O, Khanetska T. The attitude of the mother towards the child as a factor in the occurrence of psychosomatic diseases in preschool children (Ukrainian). *Věda a Perspektivy*. 2023, 1(20): 298-309. doi: 10.52058/2695-1592-2023-1(20)-298-309
21. Abanina H, Neborachko S. Maternity frustration as a factor that leads to emotional burning (Ukrainian). *Scientific Notes of "KROC" University*. 2020, 4(60): 226-232. doi: 10.31732/2663-2209-2020-60-226-232
22. Shevtsiv Y, Biletskyi O. The phenomenon of single motherhood in Ukraine under martial law (Ukrainian). *Young Scientist*. 2023, 7(119): 25-30. doi: 10.32839/2304-5809/2023-7-119-5

23. Petyak O, Rudenok A. Conditions for the successful development of the role of mother and the formation of motherhood in psychological counseling for women (Ukrainian). *Psychology Travelogs*. 2021, 1: 126-137. doi: 10.31891/PT-2021-1-11