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The Influence of Values and Social Environment on Parents’ Environmental Attitudes: Lithuanian Case Study

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Abstract: The conducted research reveals the significance of parents’ values and social environment factors, and their influence on pro-ecological attitudes. Parents from Lithuania were invited to participate in the study by filling out a questionnaire that aimed to assess their personal and ecological values, as well as factors of their social environment; the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale was used to assessed the pro-ecological attitude of the respondents. The results demonstrate that, among the personal values of parents, money takes a place of priority, but this cannot be treated only in the context of materialism, because parents seek the good of their children by fulfilling their needs, while also contributing to their education regarding financial literacy and consumption. In the context of ecological values, the results reveal the values of safe food and fresh air, showing how much parents care about their own and their children’s health, as well as noting air pollution as one of the pressing eco-problems. The results also show that family and school are factors of the social environment that most significantly influence parents’ pro-ecological attitude. The results reveal the respondents’ overall support for a pro-environmental worldview, and that parents who are older, more educated and live in the city are more likely to have a pro-environmental attitude.

Keywords: values; social environment; New Ecological Paradigm; ecological approach

1. Introduction

Climate change, air and water pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss threaten many species, ecosystems, the biosphere and global societies. In order to reduce trends of environmental degradation, we must increase ecological awareness to reduce the damage caused to the environment as we move towards a sustainable future [1]. Human insensitivity to nature has become the cause of major environmental problems, so solutions are needed to ensure the sustainability of the environment and the provision of natural resources for future generations. In order to retain the qualitative aspect of the Earth for future generations, sustainable development is important, which would be evaluated by the internal parameters of human beings as a whole in the world. The concept of sustainable development can and does contribute to the quality of life for the current society by preserving natural and social resources while accumulating them for future generations [2]. Environmental sustainability, manifested in maintaining the quality of the environment, does not question the people’s economic needs and quality of life while implementing the social aspect, ensuring human rights, equality, cultural diversity, etc. [3]. In order to achieve sustainable development goals, not only politicians or schools come to the rescue, but primarily the family, where children acquire knowledge and develop their attitudes and behavior towards the environment.

Children's behavior is primarily formed in the family, which is the first school for learning about the world and oneself; family is a factor of socialization, as well as the core of human development, which creates the conditions for the “balance between growth and individualization and the socialization of each member” (p. 113, [4,5]). Every person, both
in the family and at school, develops behavioral habits manifested in human activities, which are characterized by honesty, practical work, healthy lifestyle and independent learning. In early childhood, “cultivating good behavior habits in this period can help individuals to better adapt to the requirements of society and is essential for individual development” (p. 1, [6]).

The family as the main social context is an example of control and organization, providing social and emotional support in which values, attitudes and competences are formed [7]. The family is the most important factor of social interaction, one that transmits information about cognitive and emotional autonomy and functionality as well as about the social position, beliefs and values that determine the behavior of parents and children. Family education plays an important role in the process of information transfer—that is, parents take certain values from their own parents and pass them on to their children through various activities. Children imitate the transmitted values of their parents, growing up as observers of their parents’ behavior, and so behave in a way that they relate to reality [8]. Parents, as the main factors of socialization, influence their children’s beliefs, values, attitudes and behavior patterns in the early years of life [9]. Scientific research confirms the daily favorable behavior of parents, which influences children’s perception of the relationship between humans and nature, at the same time determines their ecological intentions. Nevertheless, previous studies have revealed the actualization of young people as active because they copy the behavior of their parents; at the same time, positive attitudes of young people towards environmental problems have been revealed, while at the same time they have been found to be less favorable to the environment itself [10,11].

Human behavior is usually the main cause of various environmental problems, such as the greenhouse effect, pollution, climate change and the loss of biodiversity [12]. Various environmental problems threaten sustainability due to human behavior that we must change in order to reduce the impact on the environment [13–15]. A person learns about behavior toward the environment from the activities of the community, whose favorable behavior towards the environment becomes a motive to take care of it. Children imitate environmental activities because they do not have enough knowledge to distinguish between environmentally-friendly and harmful activities. Parents are the “teachers” of children’s subjective norms, and children who spend more time with their family respond with subjective norms of behavior. In order to change human behavior, attitudes and perceived behavioral control are needed, which have a direct influence on behavior and intrinsic motivation [16]. The ecological and environmental problems we face today can be solved by improving the understanding of human behavior, and the ecological attitude transmitted by parents to children, depending on family communication methods, can be one of the principles of children’s ecological behavior [17]. Research has shown that children’s positive attitudes on the sustainability scale is higher than that of their parents, and the latter’s behavior is more positive than their children’s. The results of the research also showed weak overlaps between harmonious attitudes and behavior among children and parents. Finally, it was revealed that discussions in the family have a decisive influence on the overlap of attitudes, but these discussions do not influence the overlap of behaviors [11].

The aim of this article is to find out whether values, attitudes and social environment have an influence on environmental attitudes. The respondents’ attitude towards the relationship between humans and nature was assessed using the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale. A one-time analysis was performed; therefore, this article does not investigate and analyze the causal relationship.

After the analysis of the scientific literature, the following questions were raised: (1) do value attitudes affect the ecological attitudes of the respondents; and (2) is the pro-ecological attitude of schools applying ecological elements of education and schools belonging to the ECO school network more significant than that of parents of children attending regular schools?
The research was conducted using an electronic survey system among parents of children attending different types of schools, and the analysis process is described in the methodology section. In the research, we investigated the priority values of parents and the factors of the social environment that influence pro-ecological attitudes.

The following hypotheses were raised: (H1) personal and ecological values influence pro-ecological attitudes; (H2) social environment factors determine parents’ pro-ecological attitudes; (H3) parents of children attending schools that use elements of ecological education in the educational process and belong to the ECO school network have a more pro-ecological attitude. It is expected that schools will be interested in paying more attention to working with parents by involving them in environmental education in order to inculcate the principles of sustainable development.

2. Literature Review: Value Attitudes and the Significance of the Social Environment for the Environmental Approach

In order to understand human behavior, it is important to understand the concept of values, which must be clearly expressed—that is, consciously recognized as a value. Various conditions and situations influence the discovery and perception of human values, which become known aspects of unconscious and implicit reality [18]. Values have a positive influence on social changes, are the moral and basic principles of life that a person desires, are developed from childhood, and facilitate the achievement of human goals [19], while people also follow them in different situations when making daily decisions [20,21]. In human life, values help to distinguish right from wrong, and provide appropriate behavior to critically evaluate not only other people, but also oneself [22,23]. Twito [24] points out that children’s values are associated with behavior that reflects value motivation. Values are understood as criteria on the basis of which we evaluate our own and other people’s actions, because they have a decisive influence on attitudes and behavior and help to avoid the assumed specific consequences of the environment [25,26].

Values are one of the personality traits that are acquired during education and become significant during childhood, when personality is formed. Value education first begins in the family, and then continues in educational institutions [27], because a young person, being immature in terms of values, can make an action harmful not only to themselves, but also to humanity. The main mission of the family, society and school is to develop human values [28] that have been adopted by individuals, which influence a person’s self-perception and the world around them, and emphasize the importance of one behavior over another, encouraging people to behave in a certain way. Values are an aspect of personality that include what people consider important in life [29].

Values as a goal are the main principle of human life, determining human choices and becoming important in specific situations, and they have a decisive influence on intentions and behavior [30], while also serving as principles for choosing actions because they are cognitive representations of abstract goals and means of behavior [31]. Values combine with norms and beliefs to drive behavioral intentions and reflect a person’s attitude [21,32], making them a strong determinant of action that predicts pro-environmental behavior [33].

A person’s attitude and behavior are developed in various social contexts, where values are one of the first steps of moral development in the family; parents not only transmit norms, standards and values, but also strengthen them through daily parenting practices [34]. The internalization of parents’ values depends on the age of the children and the relationship between parents and children, which promotes the assimilation of values based on the closeness and support of family members [35]. In everyday life, children follow the behavior of their parents, and if parents do not take care of the environment, then this behavior will be reflected in that of the children. The behavior and habits of parents become the basis for shaping the character of children and other family members [36]. The relationship between parents and children affects family resilience, which is determined by parents’ perceptions of children and their reasons and expectations, which are defined as attitudes about the meaning and function of having children in the family [37].
children’s warm relations with their parents is possible when children understand the values that parents consider their own. Parents’ concern for their children manifests itself through the allocation of resources, but also through emotional support that creates trust in their children, which can become the basis for adopting the parents’ values [38].

Attitude as an internal element has a strong influence on behavior [12], and we can define it as people’s evaluation of the environment in relation to an object, problem or event, which includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral components [39]. Attitude is an expression of favor or disfavor towards a person, place, thing or event, which influences not only a person’s behavior towards another person, but also their behavior towards the environment [40]. A person’s beliefs and behavioral intentions are a set of factors that influence attitudes towards the environment, helping us to understand a person’s beliefs or values, and influencing favorable behavior towards the environment [41]. Attitude towards the environment is a learned tendency through which consistent behavior towards the environment is manifested [42]; human perception forms attitudes towards the environment and determines behavior and positive or negative emotions caused by environmental problems, which influences individuals’ perspectives and preferences regarding environmental events [43]. When analyzing the influence of attitude on behavior, it is important to pay attention to the relevant behavior, which is determined by a person’s intention (motivational factors that influence behavior) to perform one behavior or another; the strength of the intention determines the probability that the behavior will be performed. Various factors (lack of time or necessary skills, etc.) cannot be ruled out as obstacles to the realization of one’s intentions through behavior [44–46]. Personal intentions are based on attitude towards behavior, and subjective norms and the control of perceived behavior are determined by behavioral beliefs, control and normative beliefs; therefore, a person performs the behavior without much effort after the attitude is established, and the behavior becomes persistent until it faces contradictions to the reason for the decision [47].

Family is one of the most influential factors in shaping young people’s attitudes, as their attitudes are shaped by the acquisition of knowledge in their early years. A child receives the influence that their parents offer as an example and gradually form their personal attitudes. The consistency or inconsistency of norms affects the acceptance or maintenance of these attitudes [48]. Children in the family are primarily influenced by their parents in the home environment, where parents pass on their cultural capital; at the same time, the home is an incubator of morals and values, where parents are not only the family’s cultural gate, but also control children’s cultural consumption and their lifestyle [49]. Passafaro [50] points out that sharing the same socio-physical space can be a source of mutual influence in a normative context, regardless of whether there are no direct social or emotional ties between individuals. Individual behavior will be effective as long as other members of the team participate in this behavior, and thus the perception of the behavior of other participants can affect the perception of the individual. Parents’ attitudes, beliefs, norms and behaviors shape and create the overall social and physical environment in the home that affects children’s behavior. Their attitude is shaped by the context, behavior, beliefs and level of perception, which can change the parent’s attitude as well [18]. Attitude as a psychological state is expressed through agreement or disagreement with a certain situation or value, and as a state of psychological evaluation, it mediates between different components defining the object of the attitude and people’s reactions, the components of which are cognitive (beliefs), emotional (feelings towards an issue) and behavioral [51]. Beliefs and perceptions about nature and environmental attitudes expressing an inclination towards the environment are significant for the attitude towards the environment. Environmental attitudes are influenced by their connection with nature and animals in childhood, which correlates with environmentally-friendly behavior in everyday life [15]. As humans become more connected to nature, environmental damage has a greater impact on human well-being, and a sense of connection with nature reveals closeness to each other [52].
Ecological awareness is understood as an approach to the natural environment and beliefs about it as a whole, as well as a system of values that a person applies in their behavior, and reflects concern and knowledge about the impact of behavior on the environment [53]. Environmental consciousness determines propensity for pro-environmental behavior, consisting of multidimensional constructs influencing attitudes, behavior, knowledge, actions and intentions. Environmental awareness includes environmental value, concern for the environment and knowledge, as well as emphasizing individual awareness that influences specific behavior [54]. Conscious behavior that affects the environment can be defined as environmental behavior, which is evaluated in the context of society as a way behaving in harmony with the environment, resulting from everyday human beliefs, concerns and attitudes [55,56]. Actions aimed at preventing or protecting the environment can be defined as environmentally-friendly behavior [57,58], which is identified with the purchasing of green items based on the changing behavior of consumers focused on environmental protection. With such behavior, a person seeks to take actions that promote positive changes in the environment and limit human activities that provide negative effects [12,54]. Ecological behavior is characterized by human actions or activities that are shaped by the goal of protecting the environment [26], while value attitudes form an attitude towards the environment that promotes change [59]. Adherence to favorable attitudes, awareness of social norms, behavioral control and strong personal norms of behavior encourage a person to behave in a more motivated way, as this becomes the basis for positive emotions [60].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants of the Survey

Due to the fact that Lithuania, like the whole world, was in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the study, the research questionnaire was administered to the respondents through an electronic survey system. Prospective research participants were parents of students who studied both in general education schools, and those who studied in schools whose students are educated based on the elements of ecological education in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on 16 July 2015 [61]. The research also included schools that joined the ECO school network (founded in 2016) and aim to educate students in harmony with the surrounding environment, fostering the ideas of creating an ecological environment and developing the community’s ecological competencies. The researchers applied to the administrations of the selected schools for permission to conduct research with the parents of the students in their schools. Instructions were prepared for the parents which stated the purpose of the research and asked them to participate in the survey, ensuring confidentiality. The research participants were informed that sending the answered questionnaire was considered as informed consent to participate in the research. The prepared questionnaires were anonymous, and individual participant data could not be traced.

In order to find out parents’ values, social environment factors and pro-ecological attitudes, a representative survey was conducted in October-November 2020, during which 364 randomly-selected parents from six Lithuanian schools whose children studied in grades 5–12 were interviewed. The sample size was calculated in such a way that with 95% confidence, the difference between the study sample and the overall mean of the general population would not be more than 5%. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.
Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey participants.

|               | Number (N) | Percentage |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| Gender        |            |            |
| Male          | 58         | 15.9       |
| Female        | 306        | 84.1       |
| Residence     |            |            |
| City          | 162        | 44.5       |
| Town          | 83         | 22.8       |
| Village       | 119        | 32.7       |
| Age category  |            |            |
| Up to 30 years| 14         | 3.8        |
| 31–40 years   | 113        | 31.0       |
| 41 years and older| 237    | 65.1       |
| By education  |            |            |
| Secondary     | 82         | 22.5       |
| Vocational    | 73         | 20.1       |
| Higher        | 125        | 34.3       |
| Non-state higher (college) | 29    | 8.0        |
| Post-secondary| 52         | 14.3       |
| Other         | 3          | 0.8        |

Three hundred and sixty-four parents of various genders, ages and education levels participated in the research: 15.9% men and 84.1% women. According to age categories, the results reveal that 3.8% of parents were under 30 years of age, 31.0% of respondents belonged to the age group 31–40 years, and 65.1% of parents belonged to the age group 41 years and above. With regard to the place of residence, the results show that the majority of respondents lived in the city, at 44.5%. Overall, 34.3% of respondents had a higher education, while 22.5% of parents indicated that they had a secondary education, and 20.1% had a vocational education.

3.2. Empirical Research Measurements

In order to obtain the respondent’s degree of agreement or disagreement with a statement or set of statements, a Likert scale was used in the questionnaire [62]. The questionnaire instrument on respondents’ personal values was measured using a Likert scale ranging from very important (6) to very unimportant (1), while ecological values were measured from very important (5) to very unimportant (1), constructed based on Kalenda’s [63] separation of ecological values, which analyzes the relationship with the natural environment as the basis of existence. Factors affecting respondents’ behavior in nature were measured on a Likert scale, i.e., strongly determined (1) and not determined at all (5). The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) instrument [64] was used to assess the main aspects of parents’ attitudes towards the environment, based on which “... worldviews are shifting from anthropocentric to eco-centric, the latter of which considers human beings’ impact on nature and suggests limits be placed on growth” (p. 1, [65]).

In scientific research, to find out the relationship between variables, correlation analysis is used, which examines the degree of connection and correlation between variables, and the correlation coefficient [66,67], ranging from −1 to +1, is used to evaluate the strength and direction between variables, where a positive coefficient indicates excellent positive correlations, while −1 reveals negative correlations between two variables, and a correlation coefficient of 0 indicates no linear relationship between the variables [68,69].
3.3. Data Analysis

The research questionnaire was created using a Likert scale; therefore, in order to assess the internal consistency, reliability and strength of the questionnaire, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used, which is a reliability assessment method that contributes to the research objective and the quality of the instrument. The alpha coefficient shows the reliability of the conducted surveys, the minimum criterion of which is 0.70, which reflects the accuracy of the research decisions [70–73]. The results (Table 2) of these studies show the positive reliability of the data acquisition in the conducted inquiries, as the Cronbach’s alpha values were greater than 0.70. The data collected during the research were statistically processed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software version 26 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Table 2. Questionnaire variables, questions, response categories and internal reliability.

| Variables                        | Questions                                      | Answer Category                      | Cronbach Alpha |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Personal values                  | Justice                                      | 6—very important                    | 0.801          |
|                                  | Work                                         | 1—very unimportant                  |                |
|                                  | Love                                         |                                      |                |
|                                  | Money                                        |                                      |                |
|                                  | Health                                       |                                      |                |
|                                  | Peace                                        |                                      |                |
| Ecological values                | Fresh air                                    | 5—very important                    | 0.920          |
|                                  | Fresh water                                  | 1—very unimportant                  |                |
|                                  | Beautiful landscape                          |                                      |                |
|                                  | Lush vegetation                              |                                      |                |
|                                  | Rich fauna                                   |                                      |                |
|                                  | Unchanged climate                            |                                      |                |
|                                  | Safety food                                  |                                      |                |
|                                  | Recreation in nature                         |                                      |                |
|                                  | Environmental protection                     |                                      |                |
| Scale of attitudes              | 1—completely agree                            | 1—completely disagree               | 0.884          |
| towards the relationship between | 5—I completely disagree                      |                                      |                |
| human and the environment (NEP) |                                               |                                      |                |
| Social environmental factors    | Media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines)      | 1—very decisive                     | 0.880          |
|                                  | Family                                       | 5—not at all decisive                |                |
|                                  | Friends                                      |                                      |                |
|                                  | School                                       |                                      |                |
|                                  | Famous people                                |                                      |                |
|                                  | Religion                                     |                                      |                |
|                                  | Non-governmental organizations               |                                      |                |
|                                  | Advertising                                  |                                      |                |

4. Results

4.1. The Influence of Personal and Ecological Values on Ecological Attitudes

Among the parents, considering the human values (Figure 1), the values of money, love, justice and peace emerged most significantly.
Money was indicated as a priority value by 96.42% of the respondents, and 1.37% of the respondents indicated that this value was not important to them. This result leads to the conclusion that money becomes a relevant value for parents as a means by which they can ensure the well-being of their family, and especially satisfy the needs of their children. Overall, 82.70% of the respondents indicated health as an important value, and 5.80% of the respondents indicated it as unimportant. During the analysis of parents’ personal values, a statistically-significant relationship was found between gender and personal values, because the values of justice \( (x^2 = 24.309; df = 16; p < 0.000) \) and peace \( (x^2 = 21.172; df = 5; p < 0.001) \) were more important for women. During the analysis of the relationship between parents’ education and values, a statistically-significant relationship between the value of money and higher education was determined \( (x^2 = 32.663; df = 20; p < 0.037) \), which means that the higher the education of parents, the more significant the value of money.

Linear correlation analysis showed statistically-significant linear relationships between the selected variables \( (p = 0.00, p < 0.01) \): the value of justice correlated with the values of love (0.529) and peace (0.507); the value of work correlated with the value of health (0.521); and the value of love correlated with the value of peace (0.561).

The analysis of ecological values (Figure 2) revealed that the ecological values of fresh air (97.53%), healthy food (96.70%), fresh water (96.16%) and environmental protection (94.51%) were the most significant for the respondents. The least significant value was indicated by the respondents as rich fauna (88.19%).
The obtained results lead to the conclusion that air pollution is considered the cause of health problems, as the largest number of respondents indicated fresh air as the most significant value. At the same time, it can be assumed that the respondents living in the city, while valuing the importance of fresh air, also value healthy food, which is valuable in terms of health.

After the analysis of ecological values by gender, the obtained results show that all the ecological values are more significant for women than for men. The values of fresh air (82.97% of those who view it as important were women and 14.56% were men), safe food (82.15% of those who view it as important were women and 14.56% were men) and fresh water (81.60% of those who view it as important were women and 14.56% were men) stand out, as these values were the most significant for both men and women. The respondents indicated a beautiful landscape as the least significant ecological value (77.75% of those who view it as important were women and 13.19% were men), while 75.83% of the respondents who indicated rich fauna as a significant ecological value were women and 12.36% were men.

The results of the linear correlation analysis (Table 3) reveal strong positive correlations.

Table 3. Correlation of ecological values.

| Ecological Values          | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Fresh air                  | 0.729 * | 0.568 * | 0.527 * | 0.495 * | 0.525 * | 0.647 ** | 0.538 ** | 0.520 ** |     |
| Fresh water                | 0.497 * | 0.491 * | 0.427 * | 0.439 * | 0.643 ** | 0.507 ** | 0.467 ** |       |     |
| Beautiful landscape        | 0.715 * | 0.615 * | 0.530 * | 0.455 ** | 0.629 ** | 0.605 * |        |       |     |
| Lush vegetation            | 0.762 * | 0.624 * | 0.471 ** | 0.605 * | 0.597 ** |        |       |       |     |
| Rich fauna                 | 0.605 ** | 0.456 ** | 0.530 ** | 0.503 ** | 0.509 ** |        |       |       |     |
| Unchanged climate          | 0.514 ** | 0.541 ** | 0.570 ** | 0.533 ** | 0.896 ** |        |       |       |     |
| Safety food                |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |
| Recreation in nature       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |
| Environmental protection   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

The strongest correlation is found between recreation in nature and environmental protection (0.896), and a strong positive correlation is also observed between lush vegetation and rich fauna (0.762), and between fresh air and fresh water (0.729). These data allow us to assume that for the respondents, environmental protection has a decisive influence on choosing recreation in nature, and they realize that rich fauna is determined by lush vegetation.

In order to find out whether gender determines the ecological values of the respondents, the analysis of the chi-square criterion was applied (Table 4).

Table 4. Chi-square analysis of gender and ecological values.

| Ecological Values    | N of Valid CASES | Pearson Chi-Square Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-Sided) |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| Fresh air            | 364              | 13.882                   | 4  | 0.008                            |
| Fresh water          | 364              | 11.963                   | 4  | 0.018                            |
| Beautiful landscape  | 364              | 8.026                    | 4  | 0.091                            |
| Lush vegetation      | 364              | 14.565                   | 4  | 0.006                            |
| Rich fauna           | 364              | 18.334                   | 4  | 0.001                            |
| Unchanged climate    | 364              | 12.988                   | 4  | 0.011                            |
| Safe food            | 364              | 13.026                   | 4  | 0.011                            |
| Recreation in nature | 364              | 16.361                   | 4  | 0.003                            |
| Environmental protection | 364          | 8.945                    | 3  | 0.030                            |

p < 0.05.
Chi-square data analysis revealed statistically-significant differences in terms of gender and ecological values, which means that ecological values are more significant for women than for men.

The first hypothesis (H1) of the study states that personal and ecological value attitudes influence pro-ecological attitudes (Table 5).

Table 5. Regression of environmental attitudes on values.

|                      | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
|                      | B   | Std. Error | Beta | t    | Sig. |
| ECO school (Constant)| 2.312| 0.581      | 3.976| 0.000|     |
| Personal values      | 0.098| 0.106      | 0.075| 0.925| 0.356|
| ECO school (Constant)| 3.074| 0.518      | 5.938| 0.000|     |
| Ecological values    | −0.006| 0.014      | −0.036| −0.442| 0.659|
| Regular education school (Constant)| 3.763| 0.542| 6.938| 0.000|     |
| Personal values      | −0.191| 0.096      | −0.136| −1.979| 0.049|
| Regular education school (Constant)| 4.030| 0.453| 8.903| 0.000|     |
| Ecological values    | −0.036| 0.012      | −0.201| −2.967| 0.003|
| Both types of schools (Constant)| 3.527| 0.409| 8.618| 0.000|     |
| Values               | −0.155| 0.082      | −0.099| −1.887| 0.060|

Dependent variable: Environmental approach. *p < 0.05.

The obtained results show that the personal and ecological value attitudes of parents of children attending an ECO school do not affect their environmental attitude, while the ecological values of parents of regular school students influence their pro-ecological attitude. Since the values do not affect the respondents’ pro-environmental attitude (*p < 0.060*, when *p < 0.05), the first hypothesis is rejected.

4.2. Influence of Social Factors on Attitude

During the research, the aim was to find out what factors of the social environment affect the respondents’ values (Figure 3) and environmental attitudes.

Parents are most influenced by their family (69.50%), which allows us to assume that the family is not alien to and understands the problems related to the ecological problems that humanity is experiencing.

Health problems that may be experienced by family members can be decisive, and prompt us to analyze the causes, which also lie in environmental pollution, etc. Following the influence of the family is that of the school, which was indicated by 49.73% of parents. The influence of the school is understandable, because children are educated in the school as in the family, and in school the children receive specific knowledge that they share in the family environment. Respondents indicated that another factor influencing their attitude towards the environment is friends (49.17%). Among the influencing factors, we want to single out religion, which does not have a significant influence on the respondents (33.25%), which allows us to assume that religion is losing its moral authority, which in the historical context had a significant influence on people’s lives. Here, we want to single out Christianity, which has made a significant contribution to raising awareness regarding the consequences of human activity in relation to nature. The most striking example of this is Pope Francis, who, in his encyclical “Laudato Si”, appeals to the people of the whole world to change their attitudes in order to save the world by ensuring a sustainable future for future generations [74]. The obtained data showed that more respondents
(36.54%) indicated that religion as a factor of the social environment does not affect their attitude towards nature and its problems. Non-governmental organizations (38.74%) and advertising (37.91%) stand out as having no influence.

![Figure 3. Social environmental factors determining parents’ behavior in the natural environment.](image)

Linear correlation revealed statistically-significant relationships of moderate strength between some social factors (Table 6).

The obtained results show moderate correlations between family and friends (0.661), friends and school (0.621), school and famous people (0.635), non-governmental organizations and famous people (0.631), advertising and non-governmental organizations (0.663) and famous people and advertising (0.670). Communication between friends and within families, cooperation with educational institutions, and the participation of famous people and non-governmental organizations in advertisements influence the environmental attitude of parents.

The second hypothesis (H2) states that factors of the social environment determine respondents’ pro-ecological attitudes (Table 7).

| Table 6. Correlation of social environment factors. |
|--------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      |
|------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Media (TV, radio, magazines)            | 0.440 **| 0.555 **| 0.466 **| 0.530 **| 0.299 **| 0.465 **| 0.562 **|
| Family                                  | 0.661 **| 0.476 **| 0.311 **| 0.254 **| 0.258 **| 0.240 **|
| Friends                                 | 0.621 **| 0.555 **| 0.348 **| 0.475 **| 0.404 **|
| School                                  | 0.635 **| 0.428 **| 0.462 **| 0.446 **|
| Famous people                           | 0.520 **| 0.631 **| 0.670 **|
| Religion                                | 0.566 **| 0.430 **|
| Non-governmental organizations          |        |        |        |        |        |        |        | 0.663 **|
| Advertising                             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

The obtained data support the hypothesis H2, because $p < 0.000$, which means that the factors of the social environment have a decisive influence on parents’ pro-ecological attitudes.
Table 7. Regression of environmental attitudes on social environmental factors.

|                      | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
|                      | Model B Std. Error Beta t  | Sig.                      |
| ECO school           | (Constant) 1.924 0.207 0.314 0.067 0.353 4.655 | 0.000                     |
| Social environmental factors | 0.314 | 0.067 | 0.353 | 4.655 | 0.000 |
| (Constant) 2.273 0.147 | Social environmental factors | 0.154 | 0.051 | 0.203 | 2.993 | 0.003 |
| Regular education school | (Constant) 2.108 0.122 | Social environmental factors | 0.230 | 0.041 | 0.282 | 5.603 | 0.000 |
| Both types of schools | (Constant) 2.108 0.122 | Social environmental factors | 0.230 | 0.041 | 0.282 | 5.603 | 0.000 |

Dependent variable: Environmental attitude. \( p < 0.05 \).

4.3. Parents’ Attitude towards the Relationship between Humans and the Environment (NEP)

The results reveal parents’ pro-ecological attitudes (Table 8), as the majority of respondents confirmed each statement.

Table 8. Agreement of the parents with the NEP scale items (%).

| Do You Agree or Disagree That: | Parents School Type | Completely Agree | Agree | Partially Agree | Disagree | Completely Disagree | Average |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|----------|---------------------|---------|
| The reality of limits to growth | P                   | 15.66            | 24.18 | 37.36            | 14.29    | 8.52                | 2.76    |
|                                 | 1                   | 4.95             | 9.89  | 17.03            | 6.87     | 3.57                | 2.86    |
|                                 | 2                   | 10.71            | 14.29 | 20.33            | 7.42     | 4.95                | 2.68    |
| 6. The Earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them | P                   | 28.02            | 28.85 | 26.10            | 10.16    | 6.87                | 2.39    |
|                                 | 1                   | 11.26            | 11.26 | 10.99            | 5.22     | 3.57                | 2.49    |
|                                 | 2                   | 16.76            | 17.58 | 15.11            | 4.95     | 3.30                | 2.31    |
| 11. The Earth is like a spaceship with very limited room and resources | P                   | 15.66            | 26.65 | 37.91            | 13.19    | 6.59                | 2.68    |
|                                 | 1                   | 6.32             | 10.44 | 14.56            | 7.14     | 3.85                | 2.81    |
|                                 | 2                   | 9.34             | 16.21 | 23.35            | 6.04     | 2.75                | 2.60    |
| Averages                        | 1                   | 7.51             | 10.53 | 14.19            | 6.41     | 3.66                | 3.66    |
|                                 | 2                   | 12.27            | 16.02 | 19.60            | 18.41    | 3.70                | 3.70    |
| Anti-anthropocentrism           | P                   | 11.54            | 17.31 | 34.89            | 22.25    | 14.01               | 3.10    |
|                                 | 1                   | 4.40             | 7.69  | 14.29            | 9.62     | 6.32                | 3.14    |
|                                 | 2                   | 7.140            | 9.62  | 20.60            | 12.64    | 7.69                | 3.07    |
| 7. Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist | P                   | 20.05            | 22.53 | 30.22            | 16.48    | 10.71               | 2.75    |
|                                 | 1                   | 7.69             | 8.52  | 10.99            | 9.07     | 6.04                | 2.94    |
|                                 | 2                   | 12.36            | 14.01 | 19.23            | 7.42     | 4.67                | 2.62    |
| 12. Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature | P                   | 9.07             | 19.23 | 34.89            | 25.00    | 11.81               | 3.11    |
|                                 | 1                   | 3.57             | 9.07  | 14.56            | 9.89     | 5.22                | 3.10    |
|                                 | 2                   | 5.49             | 10.16 | 20.33            | 15.11    | 6.59                | 3.12    |
Table 8. Cont.

| Do You Agree or Disagree That: | Parents School Type | Completely Agree | Agree | Partially Agree | Disagree | Completely Disagree | Average |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|---------|
| **Averages**                   |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
|                                 | 1                   | 5.22             | 8.45  | 13.28           | 9.53     | 5.86                |         |
|                                 | 2                   | 8.33             | 11.26 | 20.05           | 11.72    | 6.32                |         |
| **The fragility of nature’s balance** |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
| P                               | 1                   | 33.79            | 26.37 | 21.15           | 9.34     | 9.34                | 2.34    |
|                                 | 1                   | 13.46            | 9.07  | 9.89            | 4.40     | 5.49                | 2.51    |
|                                 | 2                   | 20.33            | 17.31 | 11.26           | 4.95     | 3.85                | 2.21    |
| 3. When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences | 1                   | 1.92             | 5.77  | 13.46           | 12.09    | 9.07                | 3.49    |
|                                 | 2                   | 4.40             | 10.16 | 15.38           | 18.68    | 9.07                | 3.31    |
| 8. The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations | 1                   | 8.79             | 13.46 | 11.54           | 4.40     | 4.12                | 2.56    |
|                                 | 2                   | 12.64            | 19.51 | 19.51           | 3.57     | 2.47                | 2.37    |
| **Averages**                   |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
|                                 | 1                   | 8.06             | 9.43  | 11.63           | 8.9      | 6.23                |         |
|                                 | 2                   | 12.46            | 15.66 | 15.38           | 8.9      | 5.13                |         |
| **Rejection of exceptionalism** |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
| P                               | 1                   | 14.56            | 19.23 | 43.96           | 14.29    | 7.97                | 2.82    |
|                                 | 1                   | 6.32             | 7.69  | 19.51           | 5.49     | 3.30                | 2.81    |
|                                 | 2                   | 8.24             | 11.54 | 24.45           | 8.79     | 4.67                | 2.83    |
| 9. Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature | 1                   | 23.08            | 31.87 | 30.49           | 8.52     | 6.04                | 2.43    |
|                                 | 2                   | 10.71            | 11.26 | 11.81           | 4.95     | 3.57                | 2.51    |
|                                 |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
|                                 | 1                   | 12.36            | 20.60 | 18.68           | 3.57     | 2.47                | 2.36    |
| 14. Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it | 1                   | 7.97             | 18.13 | 39.84           | 23.90    | 10.16               | 3.10    |
|                                 | 2                   | 3.02             | 7.42  | 15.11           | 11.81    | 4.95                | 3.19    |
| **Averages**                   |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
|                                 | 1                   | 6.68             | 8.79  | 15.48           | 7.42     | 4.94                |         |
|                                 | 2                   | 8.52             | 14.28 | 22.62           | 3.94     | 4.12                |         |
| **The possibility of an ecocrisis** |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
| P                               | 1                   | 35.99            | 29.67 | 16.48           | 8.52     | 9.34                | 2.26    |
|                                 | 1                   | 15.11            | 12.36 | 4.95            | 4.40     | 5.49                | 2.36    |
|                                 | 2                   | 20.88            | 17.31 | 11.54           | 4.12     | 3.85                | 2.18    |
| 10. The so-called “ecological crisis” facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated | 1                   | 8.79             | 11.54 | 32.69           | 31.32    | 15.66               | 3.34    |
|                                 | 2                   | 3.30             | 5.22  | 12.64           | 13.74    | 7.42                | 3.40    |
|                                 |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
|                                 | 1                   | 5.49             | 6.32  | 20.05           | 17.58    | 8.24                | 3.29    |
| 15. If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe | 1                   | 27.75            | 26.10 | 26.65           | 11.26    | 8.24                | 2.46    |
|                                 | 2                   | 12.64            | 9.34  | 9.62            | 6.32     | 4.40                | 2.54    |
| **Averages**                   |                     |                  |       |                 |          |                     |         |
|                                 | 1                   | 10.35            | 8.97  | 9.07            | 8.15     | 5.77                |         |
|                                 | 2                   | 13.83            | 13.46 | 16.21           | 8.88     | 5.31                |         |

P, parents; 1, ECO school type; 2, regular school type.
In the subcategory regarding the reality of growth limits, parents rated the fact that the Earth is like a spaceship with limited room and resources highest (statement 11) (mean = 2.68; standard deviation (SD) = 1.09), and the lowest rated was the fact that we are approaching the limit of the number of people the Earth can support (statement 1), (mean = 2.76; SD = 1.14).

In the anti-anthropocentrism subcategory, respondents singled out statement 7, which affirms that plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist (mean = 2.75; SD = 1.25), and rated statement 12 the lowest, that humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature (mean = 3.11; SD = 1.12).

In the fragility subcategory of the balance of nature, parents rated statement 3 the highest, i.e., when humans interfere with nature, it often produces disastrous consequences (mean = 2.34; SD = 1.29), while they rated statement 13 the lowest, that the balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset (mean = 2.45; SD = 1.11).

In the rejection of exceptionalism subcategory, statement 9 received the highest rating, i.e., that despite our special abilities, humans are still subject to the laws of nature (mean = 2.43; SD = 1.12), while statement 14 was rated the lowest, i.e., that humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it (mean = 3.10; SD = 1.07).

In the subcategory regarding the possibility of an eco-crisis, parents rated human abuse of nature the highest (statement 5), (mean = 2.26; SD = 1.28), while less attention was paid to statement 15, i.e., that if things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe (mean = 2.46; SD = 1.24).

During the analysis of the results, parents’ attitudes towards the possibility of an eco-crisis emerged, where more than 65% of the respondents indicated that people abuse nature a lot (statement 5), as well as the respondent’s typical attitude to statement 3 in the subcategory regarding the fragility of nature’s balance (60.16%), stating that when humans interfere with nature, it often produces disastrous consequences. Parents have a lot of uncertainty or doubt about the statements, as indicated by more than 20% of the respondents. The highest uncertainty, at more than 43%, was reflected in the statement in the rejection of exceptionalism subcategory, that human ingenuity will ensure that we do not make the Earth unlivable (statement 4). In the same subcategory, 39.84% of respondents expressed doubt about the statement that humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it. Respondents also expressed uncertainty about the statement in the reality of growth limits subcategory that the Earth has limited room and resources (37.91%), and for the same subcategory statement, that we are approaching the limit of the number of people the Earth can support, 37.36% of respondents also indicated uncertainty. Doubts were also expressed for statement 12 in the anti-anthropocentrism subcategory, i.e., that humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature (34.98%), and statement 2, i.e., that humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs (34.89%).

The analysis of the results according to the types of school showed that parents of children attending schools that teach according to the conventional curriculum have a more pro-ecological attitude than respondents whose children are taught in schools based on elements of ecological education and schools that belong to the ECO school network. The respondents mostly agreed with statements 5 and 15 in the subcategory regarding the eco-crisis possibility: 38.19% of parents of children attending regular schools and 27.47% of parents of children attending ECO schools agreed with statement 5, and statement 15 was agreed with by 31.87% of respondents with children attending regular schools and 21.98% of parents of children attending ECO schools. In the subcategory regarding the fragility of the balance of nature, statement 3, i.e., that when humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences, received the most approval—specifically, 37.64% of respondents with children attending regular schools and 22.53% of those with children attending ECO schools agreed with this statement. In the same subcategory, the statement that the balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset (statement 13) was agreed
with by 32.15% of the parents of children attending regular schools and 22.25% of the parents of children attending ECO schools. The statement in the rejection of exceptionalism subcategory that, despite our special abilities, humans are still subject to the laws of nature (statement 9), which was agreed with by 21.97% of parents with children attending ECO schools and 32.96% of parents with children attending regular schools, also received considerable support from parents. According to the types of school, several statements received the most uncertainty: in the rejection of exceptionalism category, statement 14 was supported by 24.73% of parents of children attending regular schools and 15.11% of parents of children attending ECO schools, and the statement that human ingenuity will ensure that we do not make the Earth unlivable (statement 4) was supported by 24.45% of respondents with children attending regular schools and 19.51% of parents of children attending ECO schools. These data lead to the assumption that parents send their children to schools that use elements of ecological education in the educational process, as well as those that belong to the ECO school network, because of separate disciplines in which children are strongly prepared in terms of quality. The quality aspect overshadows the interests of the parents to educate their child in the context of ecological awareness. Another aspect that determines these data is the schools themselves, which may be located in the provinces and have a relevant student population, which determines the funding of the schools, so the issue of “survival” becomes more important than the effort to promote children’s eco-awareness.

The authors of this study aimed to find out whether age, education and place of residence determine parents’ pro-ecological attitude. The obtained results show statistically-significant differences between the place of residence and the statement in the reality of growth limits subcategory that they understand how many people the Earth can support (statement 1), \( (\chi^2 = 15.942; \text{df} = 8; p < 0.043) \), where parents who live in the city have a higher approval for this statement than respondents who live in a village or town. The statement in the anti-anthropocentrism subcategory, that humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs, revealed a statistically-significant difference with the respondents’ education (\( (\chi^2 = 34.677; \text{df} = 20; p < 0.022) \), i.e., the lower the respondents’ education, the higher the approval for this statement. A statistically-significant difference was also found between the age categories of the parents and the statement in the fragility of nature’s balance subcategory that when humans interfere with nature, it often produces disastrous consequences (statement 3) (\( (\chi^2 = 36.856; \text{df} = 8; p < 0.000) \), i.e., the higher the age of the parents, the greater the support for this statement. A statistically-significant difference between different age categories was found in the support for the possibility of an ecocrisis subcategory statement that the so-called “ecological crisis” is exaggerated (statement 10) (\( (\chi^2 = 33.817; \text{df} = 8; p < 0.000) \), where the older the parents are, the less they agree with this statement. In the anti-anthropocentrism subcategory, a statistical difference was found according to age regarding the support for the statement that humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature (statement 12), where the older the respondent, the more they disagree with this statement (\( (\chi^2 = 29.341; \text{df} = 8; p < 0.000) \). The results also reveal that female representatives are more in favor of the statement that the Earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them (statement 6) (\( (\chi^2 = 29.341; \text{df} = 8; p < 0.004) \).

A hypothesis was formulated for this research, stating that parents of children attending schools with elements of ecological education and belonging to the ECO network have a more pro-ecological attitude than parents of children attending regular schools. Using students’ \( t \) test to compare independent samples, the obtained results reveal that although there is no statistically-significant difference between the pro-ecological attitudes of the parents of children attending ECO schools and those of parents of children attending regular schools, \( p > 0.051 (p < 0.05) \), a tendency was observed that parents of children attending ECO schools value the pro-environmental approach more (2.8468) compared to parents of children attending regular schools (2.6933). Based on the obtained results, hypothesis H3 is rejected.
5. Discussion

In 2015 September, at a high-level meeting held in New York (USA), the heads of state and government adopted the document “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which sets out 17 sustainable development goals that cover many policy areas and are intended to be implemented by 2030.

Agenda 2030 is implemented in accordance with the principle of a global partnership characterized by shared responsibility, mutual accountability and the involvement of all interested parties [75]. The fourth goal of the 2030 Agenda is identified as separate and dedicated to education, to ensure inclusive education that is characterized by quality and promotion of lifelong learning. This aims to improve people’s ability to deal with environmental and development issues that are inextricably linked with sustainable development [76]. Sustainable development will not be achieved by technological solutions, regulatory systems or financial instruments alone, as people must learn to live sustainably. People need certain skills, values and attitudes in order to contribute to the creation of a sustainable society. If people’s environmental awareness is not developed, their attitude towards the environment cannot be changed, which will lead to further human-caused environmental problems and will continue to negatively affect the entire world. The purpose of environmental awareness is to provide knowledge about the environment, change attitudes towards the environment and engender appropriate behavior towards the environment.

In order to implement the goals of sustainable development and preserve the Earth, education is relevant to all sections of society, the priority of which can be considered the family as children’s first school, because “environmental awareness is a necessary feature of people in the contemporary world, especially those who teach ecology and promote ecological behavior, i.e., teachers in the teacher–student relationship, and parents in the parent–child relationship” (p. 3, [77]).

It is important to note that part of the current generation of parents in this study was born when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union, where conservation education was carried out with the aim of recognizing natural resources and using them for the needs of the national economy [78]. The received knowledge “contaminated” the consciousness of the youth at that time, which after Lithuania regained its independence had to be “cleansed” of false knowledge by revealing the Earth as a valuable gift for which humanity is responsible and has the duty to preserve. This study aimed to determine the values of parents and reveal the factors of the social environment that influence the ecological attitudes of the respondents, using the construct of the New Ecological Paradigm.

The authors of the study draw attention to the fact that the assessment of the pro-ecological approach in the context of values and social factors has not been carried out in Lithuania. More often, the results of various scientific studies analyze the factors that determine behavior, but the value context is not analyzed. Understanding the importance of value education and the importance of values themselves in achieving ecological awareness and eco-attitude formation in all groups of society, the authors of the study see it as novel and relevant, and able contribute to the implementation of the goals of eco-awareness education and sustainable development of children and parents themselves.

6. Conclusions

6.1. The Influence of Value Attitudes on the Ecological Approach

Money takes a place of priority in the list of parents’ values. The obtained data encourages us to think about the materialistic attitude of parents, which is one of the bases for raising their children in a materialistic way [79]. Material goods are one of the forms of communication with children, providing children with food, shelter, necessary seasonal clothes and other goods at the discretion of the parents, because they love their child and in this way bring them joy [80]. It is observed that materialism is negatively associated with various outcomes, including life satisfaction, emotional well-being, psychological health, marriage and child rearing. Materialism is often associated with negative relationship
outcomes, which “... include poorer interpersonal relationships and lower perceived social support” (p. 2, [81]).

Money has different meanings and serves different purposes to different individuals, and therefore behaves differently [82]. Money occupies one of the most important parts of a good life in people’s lives, because it is one of the most important priorities for most people and is an essential element of a person’s daily life and existence [83]. The fact that money is a value for the respondents shows that for parents, investment in their children and their future are relevant, because parents use money to allocate time and resources. This aspect reflects the emotional moment during which parents’ attention to their children is manifested [84]. Another important point is that with money, parents contribute to the education of their children in terms of consumption, as they encourage children to use environmentally-friendly products or to reduce water consumption [48]. The respondents’ prioritization of money leads to the conclusion that parents also contribute to the development of financial literacy, and at the same time to the financial socialization of the family, as this is how children’s financial behavior and well-being are influenced [85,86]. The value aspect of money also encourages consideration of the economic situation of families, which can become a divide between children—that is, some children feel comfortable due to the good material condition of their parents, while others may experience discomfort, which can become the reason for the child’s separation from the group. This can quickly be seen in kindergarten or school, because an unfavorable economic situation in the family has a decisive influence on the child’s academic achievements and behavioral problems [87].

Respondents indicated the value of health as important, but the least important. Adaškevičienė [88] drew attention to the fact that health is a human asset that conditions the development of children for a democratic society as independent, active, free, creative, able to learn, improve and solve problems constructively: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p. 432, [89]). Social well-being is an integral component of health because “… health is closely linked to the social environment and living and working conditions” (p. 432, [89]) [90]. Parents take responsibility for the health, life and well-being of their children because children are dependent on their parents, who must protect them in the event of various health problems. Research has found that the use of healthcare services by parents is positively associated with children’s healthcare, reflecting similarities in health status and intergenerational patterns of help-seeking [91]. The results of this research lead to the conclusion that money becomes a tool for the respondents to help ensure their children’s dignity, and at the same time, parents become teachers of financial literacy by teaching their children how to handle money properly. The value aspect of money allows us to assume that parents, while raising children from a financial standpoint, simultaneously “put together” certain rules for proper consumption. Finally, the ability of parents to educate their children in the perspective of “being” while avoiding the perspective of “having” is important, thus contributing to a harmonious family environment, because “… possessions define our identities pose a serious threat to the proper development of the young generation and provide fertile grounds for the growth of materialism as a character trait” (p. 10, [79]). Parents who involve their children in the decisions of family affairs in this way not only provide social competences, but also by adopting the values of parents they contribute to environmentally-friendly behavior. Thus, it is likely that young adults will behave consistently with their values and towards the environment [92].

Among the ecological values, fresh air, uncontaminated food and fresh water stood out. These eco-values show that respondents care about health and a healthy lifestyle, in contrast with personal values, among which health was the least significant value in their lives. Air pollution affects not only climate change, but also human health, and at the same time is one of the causes of increasing morbidity and mortality, which is related to the introduction of substances that are harmful to the human body into the environment and leads to a decrease in the quality of the environment [93,94]. Human activity is the main cause of the negative impact on the environment, as it pollutes not only the air,
but also the water we drink and the soil in which we grow vegetation suitable for food. Manisalidis [95] observed that the success of the Industrial Revolution at the technological level has simultaneously become the cause of huge amounts of harmful pollutants entering the air that affect human health and quality of life; anthropogenic air pollution has become the largest source of pollution in the world, being the cause of 9 million deaths annually. The home environment, work environment and study environment are spaces in which people spend more and more time, and the air quality of these spaces is determined by various factors, such as tobacco smoke, fireplaces and various heaters [96]. These factors include the time spent on the road to/from work, school or other environments [97], and therefore, urban policies that contribute to improving air quality by reducing the use of cars in the city and expanding public transport that emits less pollutants are welcome [93]. The results of scientific research have revealed the influence of parents on children’s actions by promoting instrumental behavior in order to achieve more sustainable behavior; mothers especially contribute to this, a contribution that is evident in contributing to everyday environmentally sustainable behavior [98].

6.2. The Influence of Social Environment Factors on Parents’ Environmental Attitude

In the case of Lithuania, it was found that the family, in which one of the main stages of relationship building takes place, has the greatest influence on parents’ pro-ecological attitude; this allows us to conclude that the current generation of parents had strong ties in their families, where the stages of self-education and formation took place. Personality is formed in the family, i.e., the child gradually becomes an adult who learns to communicate and gains self-confidence, and parents are the first to help in the formation of their personality. Communication between parents as partners becomes a model for children, who will communicate with their parents in the way that is observed [99,100]. For each person, different social environments have different effects on both attitudes and behavior. The home environment and its residents, primarily parents, influence their children, their values and behavior, because they have corresponding goals for their children’s future. Previous scientific research has shown the effect of socialization of parents on the environmentally-friendly behavior of children, and that the daily behavior of parents has a decisive influence on children’s perception of the relationship between human and nature. [10]. Kirsnan [101] found that the family’s influence on pro-environmental behavior is most pronounced in action, as parents influence such behavior. It was determined that it was the influence of parents that determined the ability of the study participants to maintain favorable behavior towards the environment, as children observed their parents’ behavior towards the environment. These results are also confirmed by Grønhøj and colleagues, who found that parental actions influence children’s inclination towards the environment, which at the same time becomes a strong factor in children’s socialization. These researchers also found positive correlations between pro-environmental behavior and children’s attitudes and behavior. Thus, parents by their attitude and behavior can become a stimulus for children’s attitude and behavior toward the environment [102].

6.3. Assessment of Parents’ Pro-ecological Attitude

Human activities are changing the ecosystems on which we—and all other living species—depend for our existence, and the growing recognition of the need for more sustainable forms of development suggests that a fundamental reassessment of the environment is underway. The basic worldview that has shaped our relationship with the physical environment is that “human activities are altering the ecosystems on which our existence—and that of all other living species—is dependent and growing acknowledgment of the necessity of achieving more sustainable forms of development give credence to suggestions that we are in the midst of a fundamental reevaluation of the underlying worldview that has guided our relationship to the physical environment” (p. 426, [64]).

In the case of Lithuania, the majority of parents confirmed the statements revealing their pro-ecological attitude, where concern for the possibility of an eco-crisis was most
A positive attitude towards the relationship between humans and the environment forms positive norms promoting environmental conservation, which is related to the moral obligation to protect the environment [103]. Parents strengthen children’s awareness of the values of activities and become a stimulus to learn from them and other family members. Parents are believed to influence the intergenerational transmission of favorable behaviors and attitudes toward the environment [10]. The values of the parents’ environment can have an impact on the child’s relationship with nature at a later age, and at the same time, the transmission of parents’ values to children also has an effect in the social context [104].

The results of the research reveal a contrast between eco-schools and regular general education schools, as parents of students in regular general education schools have a more pro-ecological attitude than parents of children attending eco-schools. The results encourage the search for answers as to why parents of schools where children are educated according to elements of ecological education are more distant from ecological awareness than respondents whose children study in regular schools. This could be due to too little cooperation between the school as an educational institution and the community and parents, because both sides must become a motivational stimulus for the development of students’ ecological positions, to which the interaction of ecological and moral education contributes. It is important not to forget that children’s environmental education “... can also affect parents’ knowledge and household behavior, because pupils transfer what they learn to their parents” (p. 103,[105]). This contrast encourages us to think about whether an interdisciplinary approach is relevant in all schools and in all disciplines (natural sciences and social sciences), which would contribute to the growth of children’s and parents’ ecological awareness; it is therefore important to integrate ecological ethics, ecological culture and similar disciplines to contribute to the education of parents and children in order to preserve nature. Efforts should be made to include ecological knowledge and eco-orientation so that the school can achieve this through the united efforts of all teachers. Research has shown that gender, age and school type have a decisive influence on children’s pro-environmental attitude and behavior, which reflect various personality changes at different age stages [106].

Finally, the authors of the research perceive some limitations in this study that they suggest should be taken into account. A small number of respondents revealed their communication and cooperation with educational institutions and teachers; therefore, we think that the findings cannot be generalized in relation to the population. In our opinion, the evaluation of the respondents in terms of gender must be treated with caution due to the large difference between the sexes represented in the sample. This aspect reveals the passive participation of male respondents in the research, which makes the findings one-sided in terms of gender and may not be properly generalizable. Despite these limitations, the results encourage further research, which would analyze not only children’s and parents’ pro-ecological attitudes and environmental behavior factors, but also the values of teachers and attitude issues that contribute to the development of children’s and parents’ awareness and attitudes in order that sustainable development goals would be met.

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