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**THE CONCEPT OF FUTURE PARENTING AMONG RUSSIAN  
AND AZERBAIJANI YOUTH**

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*Abstract*

The study was aimed to identify culturally determined differences in the views of future parenthood of the Russian and Azerbaijani youth in the period of emerging adulthood. The sample was consisted of Azerbaijani (Baku) and Russian (Moscow) student youth (210 men and female). The author's questionnaire "The harmony of ideas about parenthood", the projective essay "My future parenthood", the projective technique "Uncompleted sentences", concerning parent-child relations, were used. The revealed differences cleared more positive attitude to parenthood and the priority of the value of emotional closeness and child's loyalty to the family in Azerbaijani sample and the high significance of success as an educational goal, as well as a higher level of harmony of ideas about the future parenting of Russian youth, which cleared the orientation to the age features of the child, more realistic and adequate parental position and the balance of the educational goals, emotional support and nurturing child's personality traits in favour of the first. The Russian youth discovered a wide range of attitudes towards parenting, including positive, ambivalent and neutral attitudes, a focus on success as the key goal of education. The disharmony of parenting concepts is manifested in the preference of prohibitions and punishments, as compared with the demands and encouragements.

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**Keywords:** Parenthood, harmony of ideas about parenthood, goals and means of education, socio-cultural differences.



## 1. Introduction

The low psychological readiness of young people to perform parenting is one of the signs of the crisis of the modern family. Parenthood is associated by young men and women with the necessity to choose between the self-realization in a professional or leisure field and the self-restraint and rejection of a professional career in favour of a family career and raising children. The value conflict of self-determination in the parenthood reveals itself, starting from adolescence (Devjatyh, 2006). First of all, a low level of cognitive readiness, heterogeneous and contradictory conceptions about the parenthood, combining both traditional and modern cultural patterns, discover the essence of the conflict youth's attitudes (Dolgih & Zakharova, 2018). Future parenthood conceptions of the modern youth are characterized by a high degree of idealization and inconsistency. The declaration of a child's high value, focusing only on his external characteristics, believes that the child's behaviour will be conflict-free and fully meeting the parent's requirements are combined with emotional distance and focusing primarily on their own problems (Pavlova, 2012; Smirnova & Chernova, 2011; Dolgih & Zakharova, 2018). Ideas about parenting methods and childcare skills in adolescents and young people are extremely superficial and fragmentary, statements reflecting the necessity of adoption to the child's individual and age features are absent in 72% of the sample (Abdullina, 2018). This is consistent with the research, which recorded a high degree of idealization the future parenthood of girls and boys in the period of emerging adulthood, lack of orientation to the age characteristics of the child, a distorted idea of the parental position, which allows to conclude that the latter do not correspond to the model of effective parenting (Dolgih, 2018). All of the above determines the relevance of the task of studying the conditions for the formation of ideas about future parenthood as a basis for family planning by young people and professional careers and personal choices.

## 2. Problem Statement

The experience of child-parent relations in the origin family, which accumulates and maintains the traditions established in the cultural environment is the real source of spontaneous ideas about the future family life and parenting. The way to study the role of ethno-cultural traditions in the development of the parent's position is to compare the conceptions of future parenthood among youth young people brought up in different cultures. Therefore, we focused on comparing the conceptions of the youth in modern Russia and Azerbaijan, who have significant family structural and functional differences.

The Azerbaijani family preserves the features of the traditional culture of the peoples of the Caucasus, where the traditions of collectivism prevail (Alekseev, Kazenin, & Suleymanov, 2006; Mamedli & Solov'eva, 2017). The interests of the clan and family here are priority over personal interests, because they allow you to get help and protection in difficult life situations and ensures the experience of security. Extended patriarchal family is the guarantor of support and well-being both for young people, who do not possess the competence necessary for independent life, and for the older generation at the age stage of aging and old age. Therefore, family relationships are of paramount importance for a person, occupying the leading place in the hierarchy of values. The laws of the family prevail over legal laws and social norms (Gadirzade, 1983; Kulieva, 2005).

Azerbaijani family is child-centered. Children are the core around which the efforts of several generations of adults are united, and parental participation is not decisive. Both child parents and numerous brothers and sisters are involved in childcare, which makes life easier for young parents, reducing the risks of the possible consequences of their inadequate parental competence. Older family members assume responsibility for the upbringing of children, which ensures the security and reliable support of young parents even in the case when the time of birth of the first child falls in adolescence. The support of the extended family becomes the basis of having many children in the nuclear family. Therefore, in Azerbaijan, the tradition of the birth of children in the first year of marriage is preserved. As a rule, the modern family brings up two or four children (Mamedli & Solov'eva, 2017). The whole life of an extended family is organized to solve the main task - the birth and upbringing of children. This is reflected in the preservation of a number of traditional holidays and rituals associated with the naming of babies (usually in honour of grandparents), the transition of the child to the next stage of socialization, accompanied by advances in the development of his abilities in the field of physical culture and art. Family clan support does not stop with adulthood, but remains an integral part of a person's daily life. The work of a mother in an Azerbaijani family is considered extremely important and honourable. Mothers are prescribed selfless service to children, bordering on self-sacrifice. Maternity is the main sphere of self-realization of the Azerbaijani woman, prescribed by the ethno-cultural traditions.

Following the precepts of the ancient Azerbaijani mathematician and philosopher Nasreddin Tusi, the child must be disciplined, trained in good manners and respect for elder family members, whom children must obey unconditionally (Gasanova, 2009). However, both family and extra-familial social environments exhibit extraordinary tolerance for manifestations of children's whims, pranks, which traditionally cause not so much irritation as tenderness and admiration (Azerbajdzhan v menjajushhemsja mire: Materialy literaturnogo konkursa, 2013).

The modern Russian family is characterized by inconsistency. The increasing role of women in cultural and social life, in production, a high educational level, their acquisition of full civil rights, necessarily leads to the transformation of the family as a social institution in the direction of the wide variation in the forms of marriage and family relations, the revision of the normative content of marital and parental roles as any innovative phenomenon that generates social risks, which is reflected in a number of crisis phenomena of the modern family that generates (Golod, 1995; Vishnevskij, 2014). The consequences of the liberalization of marriage and family relations are one-child and childlessness families, the early separation of children from the parental family and later marriage, the later birth of the first child, the increase in the number of children born out of a registered marriage, the weakening of intergenerational family solidarity in favour of social solidarity. This trend is getting worse by some decline in the value of parenting and raising children in modern society. The transition from a large family to a small family in modern society is due to the inclusion of women in industrial sphere; high-tech professional activities and education requirements; value orientations of success and personal achievement, combined with depreciation and low social prestige of motherhood and parenthood; social and economic conditions of the modern family, as well as attitudes towards a woman as an object of consumption, spread by a number of media. At the same time, the modern Russian family is characterized by a high responsibility of personal choice, love as the basis of the modern family, a change in gender

family roles due to the active involvement of women in production, the growth of conscious parenthood, planning for the birth of “desired” children, high value of the child, transition from multi-generation, multi-core extended family to the nuclear family. Thus, the Russian family is a modern family, and the Azerbaijani belongs to the traditional culture.

### **3. Research Questions**

How does the socio-cultural situation influence on the development of the attitude of youth to future parenthood?

What are the differences in youth’s ideas about the goals and methods of raising children in different cultures?

What is the degree of harmony of ideas about parenting children in different cultures?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of our empirical research was the study of culturally determined differences of conceptions of future parenthood of young people in the period of emerging adulthood. The way to study the specifics of parenthood in the families of modern and traditional cultures was a comparative analysis of parenting concepts of Azerbaijani (Baku) and Russian (Moscow) youth.

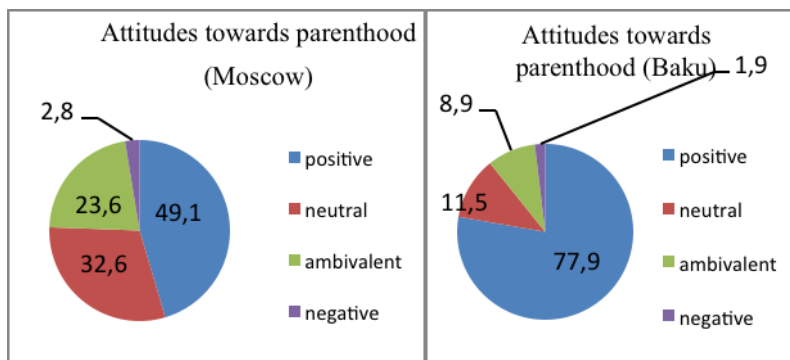
### **5. Research Methods**

The research methods were survey, projective method, methods of mathematical statistics. The author's questionnaire "The harmony of ideas about parenthood", the projective essay "I am like a future parent", the projective methodology "Unfinished sentences", modified by Dolgih (2018) were used. The questionnaire of harmony of parenthood conceptions was developed based on the content analysis of the essay "I'm like a future parent". The questionnaire includes 5 scales - “Adequacy of ideas about parental position”, “Realism of ideas about parenthood”, “Matching tools”, “Orientation on the age characteristics of a child”, “Balance of parental functions”.

The sample of the study was made up of student youth in Baku (104 students) and Moscow (106 students). Data collection in Azerbaijan was performed by Akhmedova B.

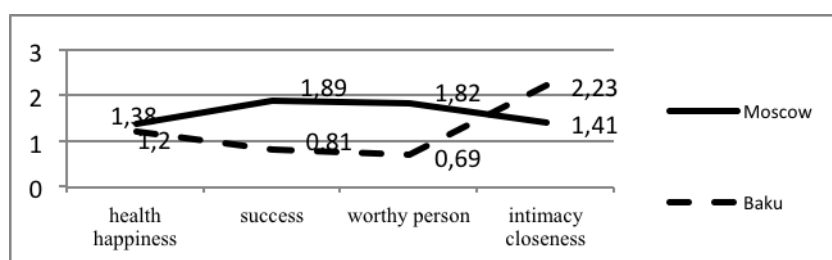
### **6. Findings**

The data presented in the diagrams (fig.01) indicate that Moscow students found a wide range of parental attitudes. A positive attitude was recorded in almost half of the sample, however, 23.6% of respondents found ambivalent attitude. One third of the young people turned out to be neutral with respect to parenthood, which represents for them a rather distant life perspective. In the Baku sample, the overwhelming majority of respondents have shown a positive attitude towards parenthood. In both samples, a negative attitude towards parenthood is extremely rare (2.8% and 1.9%, respectively).



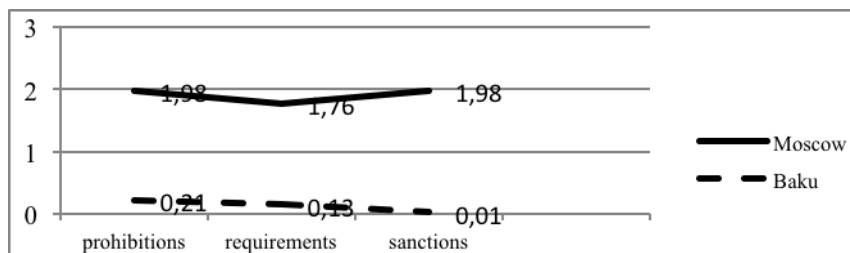
**Figure 01.** Distribution of types of emotional attitudes towards parenting in Moscow and Baku samples

The future parenthood conceptions were studied by the method of content analysis of a projective composition. Categories such as attitudes toward parenthood, goals of parenthood, parental functions, the value of parenting, feelings for the child, the expected style of upbringing, parenting tools, characteristics of the unborn child, and mother's qualities itself were highlighted. It was found that the respondents did not always fully take into account the leading role of the parent exercising control and having the right to make decisions for a infant. In some cases, the parental position is identified with the friendly “parent is first and foremost a friend to his child”. Often the full equality of the right to make a decision without taking into account the age possibilities of the child is declared. The second distinctive feature of youth’s ideas about parenthood is the idealization of parenthood and the baby’s image. Such statements as “my child will never be capricious,” “my husband and I will not have disagreements regarding the upbringing of the child” discover the unrealistic views of the respondents. They practically equate the capabilities of a child with the capabilities of an adult - “years from 3 children can be left alone - he will find something to do” or “it is enough even for the smallest child to explain the reasons for the prohibitions and he will comply with them”. Concepts of the educational goals are not accompanied by a clear view about the means to achieve them. In those rare cases when the means are mentioned, they are not adequate to the age of the child. For example: "To bring up responsibility, you must demand obedience from a child" or "For a child to grow up as a brave person, it is necessary that he often experience fear." The emotional side of parent-child relationships is emphasized, and parenting functions are underestimated. In some cases, a willingness to neglect the upbringing of the child in favour of his emotional state or friendship with the parent was recorded. Concepts of future parenthood of both groups include, first of all, a description of parental functions and goals of raising a child. The means of education are mentioned less frequently, what makes it obvious that young people do not yet imagine how they will achieve the desired goals of education.



**Figure 02.** The frequency of occurrence of references to the goals of education in the studied groups

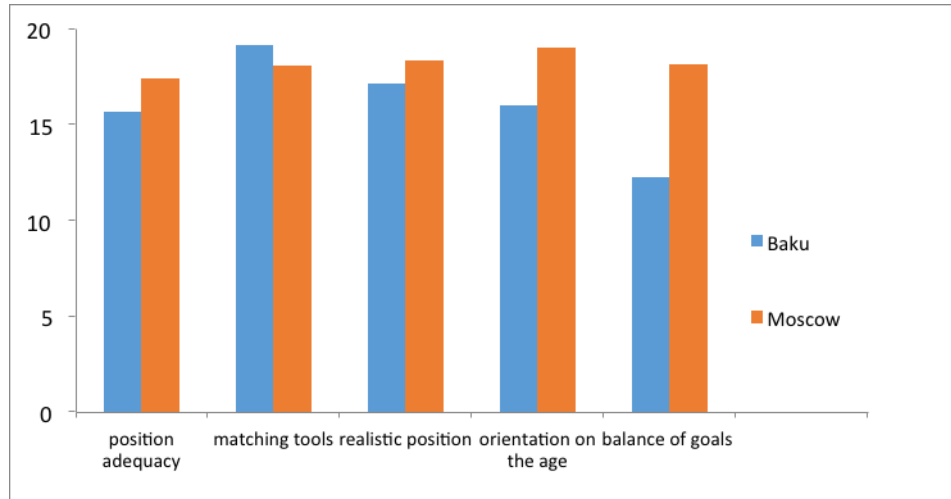
Both similarities and differences in understanding the desired goals of education, implemented in the parent activity were revealed (fig.02). The health and happiness of the child are not stated as the priority goal of rising in both samples. In the group of Moscow students, education of a successful and dignified person, what's based on, in their opinion, on a high culture of behaviour, respect for people, a high level of intellectual development, independence and initiative, is the main. Baku respondents, on the contrary, consider proximity of family relations as priority. Let's consider what methods and means of education respondents plan to use, becoming parents (fig.03).



**Figure 03.** The frequency of occurrence of references to the means of education in the studied groups.

First of all, let us pay attention to the almost complete absence of references to the means of education in the Baku sample, as compared with the Moscow. It can be assumed that this is due to the low significance of the value of success as the goal of education, compared with the value of achieving a child's proximity with parents and family, which leads to an imbalance between emotional acceptance and fulfilment of requirements. Absolutization of unconditional acceptance of a child generates the risks of violation of family education on the type of indulgence and permissiveness. This leads to the fact that the parent virtually eliminates the child's upbringing, socialization and training his pro-social personality traits. The Moscow sample demonstrates more realistic attitudes towards raising a child. But parenting settings are not harmonious. The predominance of prohibitions over requirements in educational system leads to a decrease in the activity, initiative, independence and child's ability to control his own behavior. Preference in the use of punishments in education does not match the effectiveness of parenthood. As stated above the indicators of the harmony of the child's upbringing are the adequacy of the parental position, matching tools, realistic ideas about parenthood, orientation on the age characteristics of a child, balance of parental functions (fig.04).

There were revealed significant differences in all parameters of harmony of future parenthood concepts for two samples. The Moscow group found a higher level of harmony. Statistically significant differences were found for the scale "orientation on the age characteristics of a child" ( $U = 726.500$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Conceptions of Baku youth are less realistic and more idealized ( $U = 1486.500$ ;  $p = 0.013$ ), more often the inadequacy of the parent's position ( $U = 1272.000$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) is stated, the balance of goals ( $U = 94.500$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) of emotional support and personal quality education in favor of the first.



**Figure 04.** Average values of indicators of harmony of future parenthood concepts of Moscow and Baku students

## 7. Conclusion

The results confirm the hypothesis that youth's conceptions of future parenthood are determined by the socio-cultural situation of self-determination. Almost total positive attitude to the parenthood of the Azerbaijani sample convincingly confirms this conclusion. Youth from Baku continues the national tradition of child-centrism, considering parenthood to be one of the main sources of emotional well-being. For Moscow students, attitudes towards parenting are shaped by the situation of a wider range of possibilities in creating a life strategy. Social expectations and requirements for a young person to gain autonomy lead to the fact that the age of birth of the first child and the beginning of parenthood increases. It leads to prolongation of the moratorium and the task of self-determination in the field of parenthood is postponed later. Competing values of professional career and self-development and participation in social life significantly reduce the attractiveness of parenting for Moscow youth. The content of future parenthood conceptions clears significant differences between the Russian and Azerbaijani samples. In Azerbaijan, parenthood remains the main mission of a woman and provides, first and foremost, the strengthening of the family system, which centres on children. Supporting family relationships and loyalty to family obligations, taking care of elderly family members can be realized only on the basis of raising a child's deep emotional attachment to parents and a willingness to share family joys and sorrows, to become a reliable support in overcoming life difficulties. This determines the focus of parenthood on the formation of a relationship of emotional intimacy and loyalty to the family, defining the priority goal of education. The unconditional child acceptance is a condition for achieving this goal, but reduction in the level of requirements and control, a tolerant attitude to the child's limitations without seeking to increase his competence are the risks, which engender personality infantilization.

In modern Russian society greater youth's autonomy and the early separation from the family are welcomed. The well-being of the person is much more dependent on their own activity than on family support. The result is a high value of qualities that contribute to the achievement of success and social recognition. Focusing on social expectations, future parents express their readiness to direct the main efforts in educating a child to its intellectual development and nurturing qualities that ensure success in

life. The similarity of goals and strategies of education in the studied samples is expressed in the relatively low significance of the values of the child's health and happiness and in the insufficient harmony of future parenthood conceptions.

Differences in youth's concepts of the future parenthood are due to the socio-cultural differences of the Russian and Azerbaijani cultures.

Azerbaijani youth are characterized by an unconditional positive attitude towards parenthood, a center-centered orientation and high value of the goal of raising child's emotional attachment, intimacy, closeness and loyalty to the family. The risks of parenting are lack of reflection methods and tools of education, a low degree of adequacy and realism of the future parenting and upbringing, insufficient consideration of the age characteristics of the child.

The Russian youth discovered a wide range of attitudes towards parenting, including positive, ambivalent and neutral attitudes, a focus on success as the key goal of education. The disharmony of parenting concepts is manifested in the preference of prohibitions and punishments, as compared with the demands and encouragements. The ideas about future parenthood, as compared with the Azerbaijani sample, are more realistic, focusing on the age characteristics of the child and there a balance of nurturing goals was found.

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