

**EdCW 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference Education in a Changing World: Global Challenges and National Priorities****THE ATTITUDE OF MODERN STUDENTS TOWARDS FAMILY AND PARENTING**

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**Abstract**

The article examines the attitude of young people, namely students, to the issues of creating a family and seeing themselves as a future parent. One of the sides of the problem under study is the fundamental changes in the sphere of parenting that are taking place in modern reality and are both positive and negative. These include the formation of a new type of parenting (“responsible parenting”); wide spread of conscientious motherhood and fatherhood; the growth of unregistered marriages and the birth of children in them; variability of parenting strategies; the emergence of a conscious refusal of parenting in order to achieve individual goals (“childfree”) and others. The tendencies of self-realization, career growth, material well-being, characteristic of modern young people, are gradually replacing such traditional values as family and parenting. The article analyzes domestic and foreign studies of students' ideas in the field of marriage and family relations, their values, and priorities. An analysis of Russian and foreign works devoted to the marriage and family attitudes of young people shows a change in views on the roles of women and men in the family, a tolerant attitude towards cohabitation before marriage and the position of conscious childlessness, an increase in the age of marriage and the birth of children. The respondents in the study were students of NovSU.

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## 1. Introduction

The intensity of socio-political, economic, cultural changes taking place in the modern world and in Russia has a negative impact on such traditional values as marriage, family and parenting in many issues; family ties are weakening (Poushter & Fetterolf, 2019).

According to foreign researchers, over the past 30 years, relations between men and women have changed more than in the previous three thousand years, a significant transformation has also occurred with the institutions of marriage and family (Coontz, 2016; Martin, 2018). According to Coontz, the correct research question in today's world is not "what type of family do we want people to live in?", But "what do we know about how to help each family strengthen its strengths and minimize problems?" (as cited in Gurko, 2020, p. 32).

As noted by Pyatunina and Shubina (2016), the subsequent development of society depends on the emerging youth attitudes in matters of family and reproductive behavior. A special contingent of the younger generation is students. Families in which the modern young generation was born and raised were formed in the post-Soviet era of a crisis in family relations (90s - early 2000s) (p. 72).

## 2. Problem Statement

In the modern works of foreign scientists in the context of the problem raised, the following aspects are investigated: students' assessment of family relations and competent parenting (Matejevic & Jovanovic, 2014); the impact of parental divorce on youth attitudes toward marriage and family (Collardeau & Ehrenberg, 2016); the relationship between parental education and family breakdown (Brons & Härkönen, 2018); diversifying the institutions of marriage and parenting (Knapp & Wurm, 2019); parental values and their influence on the socialization of children (Sever Grama & Chiş, 2019) and others.

Among the domestic studies of marriage, family and parenting, one should note the works devoted to the role of the parental family in the orientation of young people towards creating a family (Merzlyakova, 2014); the importance of family factors in the formation of parental attitudes among students (Karabanova & Molchanov, 2017); students' ideas about marriage and family relations (Gurko & Tarchenko, 2019; Nazarova & Zelenskaya, 2019; Tarchenko & Biyzhanova, 2018); students' value attitudes towards children as value and responsible parenting (Akutina, 2018; Bezrukova, 2017; Gurko, 2019); identifying the values of student youth and their relationship with professional self-determination (Koh & Orlov, 2020); transformation of the family as a social institution (Gurko, 2020).

In our opinion, the attitude of young people towards creating a family and subsequent parenting is largely related to the nature of relationships in the parental family. The process of family socialization, which occurs from the birth of a child, allows mastering not only the family roles of a son/daughter, brother/sister, grandson/granddaughter. The behavior patterns of parents as husband/wife and father/mother influence the formation of the desire to create a family in the future, to be a parent. According to the results of the study by Elkina (2019), students first of all value the sincerity and

openness of relations in the parental family, which contributes to respect and love for parents, and this is most likely to be fundamental when creating their own family (p. 284).

We are close to the point of view of Bezrukova (2016) that

*the values of parenting include beliefs about the value of children and attitude towards them; motivating procreation, planning and organizing the birth of children; their number; the quality of care and education; how the relationship between parents and children should be built; what qualities need to be brought up in children. The parental consciousness of young people is characterized by heterogeneity, contradiction, a combination of stable traditional and labile modern cultural patterns.* (p. 119)

In a study by Gurko (2019), conducted in 2018 among students in Moscow and Stavropol, it is noted that most students plan to have children (85% of boys and 90% of girls), and more than half of them plan to have two children, no more than one the percentage of boys and girls can be classified as child-free or child-hate; they value the ability of men to fulfill the role of a father and rarely hold an essentialist view of parenting. Has the situation changed in two years? The study answers this and other questions.

### **3. Research Questions**

- What are the family and marriage attitudes of students?
- What factors influence the readiness of students to create a family?
- How are students motivated to prepare for their future family life?
- What is the content of the concept of "parenting" from the point of view of students?

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

The aim of the study is to identify the attitude of university students to the family, the prospect of its creation and future parenting.

### **5. Research Methods**

- The research included a theoretical analysis of foreign and domestic literature on the problem, writing an essay "Family: pros and cons" and questioning students;
- The diagnostic study was carried out based on the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University. Eighty-five second-year students of various training profiles took part in it;
- To study the attitude of students to family and parenting, we developed and conducted a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions (12 closed, 4 open), reflecting the opinion of respondents on family and parenting issues.

## 6. Findings

At the initial stages of the diagnostic study, to collect primary information about the parental families of students and their relationships, we used questions related to the composition of families and relationships with parents.

The following can be said about the composition of the respondents' families: 63% of the respondents were brought up in a complete family, 37% in an incomplete family. Most students describe parent-child relationships in their families as loving, accepting, positive (93%). The rest described the relationship with the parents as conflict (7%).

### 6.1. Marriage attitudes of students

The following questions were used: "What is a family for?", "Your attitude to creating a family in the future", "How many children in a family do you consider optimal?" and content of the essay to study the family and marriage attitudes of students.

Students' answers to the question "What is a family for?" can be divided into three groups, reflecting the main functions of the family:

1. Support (34 answers). *"For support, understanding, mutual assistance, protection", "For support at any moment, so that there is someone to rely on", "To have support and protection", "For a full life, a feeling of support, care and safety"*.
2. Procreation, raising children (30 answers). Here are some examples of students' answers: *"For the birth of children, caring for them and their development", "For procreation, education and socialization of the child", "For the upbringing of a full-fledged personality useful to society", "For procreation and transmission social experience and moral values for the next generations"*.
3. Emotional well-being (16 answers). *"The family is needed for emotional calmness, comfort", "To feel needed, loved", "For psychological comfort, the feeling of usefulness and importance", "The family is the main source of vital energy, love and warmth"*.

In the essay, the students noted that the family helps in solving many problems: "it is easier to cope with difficulties", "division of responsibilities in housekeeping", "the life expectancy of a family person increases", "responsibility, concentration, success in work is formed", "getting rid of loneliness".

The wording of the essay topic implied highlighting the negative aspects of family life, among which the students named the following: "the inability to be alone", "loss of personal time and space", "restriction of freedom", "sacrifice of one's own desires and career for the sake of the family," "necessity in changes in life", "routine, monotony of family life", "it takes a lot of effort and money". However, despite the understanding that the family is a problem and responsibility, when answering the question about the attitude towards creating a future family, most students said that they think about creating a family - 82%. The remaining 18% do not plan to start a family in the future.

As for attitudes towards the number of children in a family, 58% of the respondents consider the birth of one or two children optimal. 24% of respondents consider it preferable to have a large family with

three or more children, 13% of students believe that it is too early to plan children. 5% of the respondents answered unequivocally that they did not plan to have children at all.

### **6.2. Factors influencing students' readiness to start a family**

As we can see from Table 01 the greatest positive influence on readiness for family life is exerted by such factors as parental family (60 answers), measures of social support (32 answers), friends (27 answers). Factors that have a negative impact include: the Internet (16 answers), the media (14 answers), government policy (13 answers).

**Table 1.** Factors and their influence on the willingness to create a family as perceived by students

Factor / Influence	85 People	Positive	Negative	None	Difficult To Answer
Parental family		60	4	8	13
Friends		27	7	43	8
Mass media		5	14	50	16
Study at university		17	12	44	12
Internet		10	16	37	22
Religion		17	5	56	7
State policy		16	13	35	21
Social support measures		32	6	34	13
Social advertisement		8	10	49	17
Parenting preparation courses		22	3	44	16

### **6.3. Motivating students to prepare for their future family life**

To determine the motivation of students to prepare for their future family life, the following questions were chosen: “Do you think that a person needs special preparation for creating a family and parenting?”, “If you were offered to become a participant in a social project (activities) on preparing young people for responsible parenting, would you ...”, “Why would you refuse?”, “What activities would be most interesting for you?”. Thus, 75% of the students surveyed gave a positive answer to the question about the need to prepare for family life. The remaining 25% do not consider it necessary to prepare for family life and parenting. 67% of students are ready to personally participate in a social project to prepare for parenting. Students who gave a negative answer about personal participation in such events as a reason for refusal highlighted the lack of interest in this topic, or free time. The most desirable form of preparing for family life was communication training for young couples and families (42 choices) and exchange of experience with young families (36 choices).

### **6.4. Substantive content of the concept of “parenting” from the point of view of students**

To study the ideas of students about the concept of "parenting" the following questions were used: “What meaning do you put into the concept of “parent?”, “What do you mean by “responsible parenting”?”, “What qualities should a parent have?”

Students' answers to the question about the concept of "parent" reflect two functions of parenting: upbringing and emotionally stabilizing.

1. The educational function of parenting is to socialize the younger generation, to maintain the cultural continuity of society. This group includes the following students' answers: *"Responsible, attentive, caring educator"*, *"The main example for a child"*, *"The person who brings up a child"*, *"The person who brings up a child and shows a model of behavior"*, *"Mentor"*, *"Transmitting Experience"*.
2. Emotionally stabilizing function. It implies that individuals receive psychological protection, emotional support in the family. This includes the following answers: *"Anyone who accepts you and always supports"*, *"The closest person with whom you can share a lot"*, *"The closest and dearest person who is ready to help and support at any time"*, *"The one who will always protect and stand on your side"*.

It should also be noted that when defining the concept of "parenting", 14 people characterized it by the adjective "responsible".

We can say that the concepts of "parenting" and "responsible parenting" in the minds of students do not have strong differences. The only thing is that when describing the concept of "responsible parenting" one can clearly see such an aspect as the obligatory planning of the child's birth: *"Takes responsibility for the future of the child even before birth"*, *"The one who plans the appearance of children prepares, foresees difficulties that may arise"*, *"Planning for a baby and thinking everything in advance"* (see Table 02).

**Table 2.** Qualities of the ideal parent

Qualities of the parent	Number of choices (people)	Number of choices (%)
Understanding	45	52.9
Love for children	37	43.5
Responsibility	37	43.5
Kindness	19	22.4
Care	19	22.4
Attentiveness	14	16.5
Justice	14	16.5
Patience	14	16.5
Empathy	10	11.8
Ability to support	10	11.8

Based on the results of the answers to the questions characterizing the ideas of students about the concept of "parenting", it can be concluded that a parent is a person:

- accepting responsibility for the future of the child, even before birth;
- understanding, loving children, responsible;
- instilling basic life values in the child;
- ready not only to listen to the child, but also to act as an assistant and advisor.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the results of empirical research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Family and parenting have a value meaning for student youth, associated with a responsible attitude to creating a family and having children.
2. For most students, the parental family plays an important role in preparing for future family life. Emotional relationships in the parental family influence the formation of a value-positive attitude towards parenting. Young people who assess emotional relationships in the parental family as close and positive find the value of parenting to be highly significant.
3. The desired number of children on average is approximately 2 children per student.
4. About 2/3 of students note the need for special preparation for family life and express readiness to participate in social projects aimed at the family.
5. The survey also showed negative trends: 18% of students are oriented towards celibacy and 5% towards childlessness. Perhaps this difference indicates that some of the surveyed girls are focused on creating an incomplete family.

In general, the results obtained reflect the positive expectations of student youth in relation to their future family life and parenting.

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