

OLESIA CHERNYAKOVA

Associate Professor of the Department of General Psychology, Donbass State Pedagogical University, Associate Professor
e-mail: *alisekisa@gmail.com*

ВІРА ДУБРОВІНА

Senior lecturer of the Department of Psychology, Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Master of Psychology
e-mail: *anyavarina22@gmail.com*

OLESIA PROKOFIEVA

Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology, Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor
e-mail: *prok.olesya@gmail.com*

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OLHA KOVALOVA

Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology, Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor
e-mail: *kovalova.ov.mdpu@gmail.com*

ANALYSIS OF MODERN YOUNG STUDENTS' IDEA OF PARENTING

ABSTRACT

The article presents the results of an empirical study of the modern students' idea of the phenomenon of parenting. The urgency of the issue presupposes that these ideas influence the quality of human life, contribute to the process of personality's formation, and help to form a conscious attitude towards family and marriage. As a result of the study, gender differences in the ideas of parenting have been identified. It was empirically proved that one of the main characteristics of parenting, in the opinion of young people, is responsibility, and this concept is interpreted differently by girls and boys: for boys, responsibility for a child is, first of all, financial support, creation of material wealth; for girls – creation of a favorable atmosphere at home, mental comfort.

KEYWORDS

phenomenon of parenting, idea of parenting, perfect image of a father, perfect image of a mother, responsibility

Introduction

Parenting (motherhood and fatherhood) is a basic life purpose, an important condition and a significant socio-psychological function of every person. The quality of these manifestations, their socio-psychological and pedagogical consequences are of lasting importance. What it depends on and how you can intervene in the process of parenting development, in our opinion, is a significant socio-psychological issue. The nature of parenting is reflected in the quality of life, ensures personal happiness and immortality. It can be stated that the future of society is the current state of parenting.

Parenting is a socio-psychological phenomenon, which is an emotionally and evaluatively colored combination of knowledge, ideas and beliefs about oneself as a parent, realized in all manifestations of the behavioral component. [3] As a supra-individual whole, parenting inherently includes both spouses who decide to start a new life and, of course, the child himself or herself. The upbringing of a child is characterized by the coordination of the views of men and women regarding the role of parents, functions, distribution of responsibilities, duties, etc. Until the child is born, the coordination of ideas occurs at a „theoretical” level, during conversations with each other, building the future, dreaming and planning. With a birth of a child, the coordination of ideas receives a „rebirth” when the theory begins to be realized in practice.

A developed form of parenting is characterized by relative stability and steadiness, realized in the consistency of the spouses’ ideas of it, the complementarity of dynamic manifestations [1].

We are deeply convinced that the overall picture of family upbringing and life in the family is largely determined by how people imagine parenting even before they actually become parents.

Despite the presence of a sufficient number of studies devoted to the ideas of parenting and psychological readiness for its implementation (G.G. Filippova, O.A. Karabanova, M.E. Lanzburg, O.R. Lemeshchenko, K.N. Polivanova, E.I. Zakharova, E.O. Smirnova, N.V. Mukhina, K.N. Belogay, A.I. Vodneva, T.V. Paltseva, D. Langridge, etc.), the issue of the sources, content and correspondence of ideas of motherhood and fatherhood among girls and boys, as well as effective parenting remains open and needs, in our opinion, a more detailed study, which determined the topic of our research. In our opinion, the issue of a search for the main directions of educational and psychological work, contributing to the enrichment of young people’s ideas of parenting and increasing the degree of their adequacy to effective parenting, remains an important one.

Research procedure and discussion

The **aim** of the research is to study the young people’s ideas of parenting in the premarital period.

The **object** of the research is parenting as a socio-psychological phenomenon, the **subject** of the research is young people’s ideas of parenting.

In our research, we are based on the **hypothesis** that there are differences in boys’ and girls’ ideas of parenting, due to stereotypes of society and traditional perfect images of a mother and a father.

Research objectives:

- 1) Study young people’s ideas of parenting as a socio-psychological phenomenon.
- 2) Identify the priorities and challenges of future parenting.
- 3) Describe the perfect image of a parent from the point of view of boys and girls.

To solve these problems and test the hypothesis, the following psychodiagnostic techniques were used:

- 1) test „Incomplete sentences”, designed by J. Rotter and D. Sachs;

2) Questionnaire by R.V. Ovcharova „Ideas of an ideal parent“.

The sample consisted of 40 students (20 girls and 20 boys) aged 18 to 22, single and without children.

The psychological dictionary gives the following definition of the concept of „idea of something“: „Idea of something is a visual image of an object or phenomenon (event) that arises on the basis of previous experience by means of its reproduction in memory or imagination“ [2].

The idea of parenting is a visual image of the phenomenon of parenting, which arises on the basis of existing experience (primarily in the parental family) through its reproduction in the imagination. The presentation of the image of this phenomenon is less vivid and less detailed than the ideas of the image in a real situation, but at the same time it is more generalized and schematized. The content of idea of parenting may include emotions associated with the process of upbringing of children, individual cognitive schemes (planning of a lifestyle under conditions of parenting), patterns of behavior, etc.

People have a desirable image of the phenomenon of parenting. For some young people, this image appears in the contrast to memories of their „difficult childhood“, for others, on the contrary, on the basis of a positive example of their parents, the third group of people bases it on the created ideal image of parenting, which exists in culture. So, at the first stage of our research, we studied the ideas of young men and women of parenting as a phenomenon using the „Incomplete sentences“ technique. Based on the analysis of the results of the technique, the following can be noted.

Responsibility is one of the first associations that the word „parenting“ brings to mind. Responsibility is associated with a certain anxiety, concern for the fate of a child, his or her health, mental and spiritual development. However, girls and boys put different content in the concept of responsibility. For young men, responsibility towards a child is primarily material support and creation of material wealth. For girls, responsibility means to create a favorable atmosphere at home, mental comfort; no wonder why they say that a woman is a keeper of the home-fire.

Responsibility for a child's life prompts parents to care and is based on love, according to the opinion of the respondents. At the same time, young people expect to face various difficulties in the process of upbringing of children, including financial difficulties.

While studying the ideas of young people of parenting, we were also interested in the priorities of family education and difficulties of future parenting. No significant differences were found in the responses of boys and girls.

Based on the analysis of the results of the „Incomplete sentences“ technique, the following conclusions were made:

- *the most important things for parents:*
 - be strict, but fair (75%),
 - be loving (70%),
 - understand your child (62.5%),
 - be attentive to your child (57.5%),
 - devote time to your child (42.5%);
 - provide a child with a material support (42.5)

- *the most important things for children:*
 - be understood by parents (87.5%),
 - receive more time and attention from parents (77.5%),
 - have a good relationship between the mother and father (55%),
 - be loved (47.5%);
- *in relations with children, parents must not:*
 - physically punish a child (90%),
 - insult a child (55%),
 - displace their anger on to children (45%),
 - spoil children in everything (37.5%),
 - destroy the family (35%).

The worst thing for parents, according to the common opinion of students, is a loss of child's health and life, as well as the use of alcohol, drugs by children, and their criminal activity.

The worst thing for children is a loss of parents, divorce, and poverty.

Finishing the sentence „**To become a good parent, you need to...**”, students do not emphasize such an important issue as the ability to properly bring-up children, pedagogical and psychological readiness for parenting. In the responses the students mainly mention only what kind of relation parents should have towards their children. They do not talk about what personal qualities parents need to develop, how to work on themselves, whether they need to work on themselves in order to become good parents. This reflects the narrowness of young people's ideas of parenting, psychological unpreparedness for it.

The whole variety of responses can be reduced to two basic issues, two generalized types of young people's ideas of parenting:

- 1) idea of parenting as a difficult, complex process that requires a lot of effort, energy, time and money (40% of girls and 60% of boys);
- 2) idea of parenting as a process that brings joy, happiness, pleasure, giving meaning to life (60% of girls and 40% of boys).

The difference in the boys' and girls' ideas of parenting lies in different evaluation of the significance of parenting characteristics. So, girls put responsibility, love and difficulties in upbringing of children to the first place. The young men give the first place to the problems of ensuring financial security for a future child, parental authority (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative analysis of boys' and girls' ideas of parenting (fragment of the table)

Features of parenting	Girls	Boys
Love	60	55
Responsibility	75	60
Understanding	45	45
Care	50	35
Difficulties	85	45
Role-model for a child	50	70
Giving a child a better future	35	50

The perfect image of a father and the perfect image of a mother together constitute the perfect image of a parent. Due to the fact that mothers spend more time with their children than fathers, and are more involved in upbringing of a child, a mother is considered to be a main personality influencing the child. Hence the perfect image of a mother is almost the same for girls and boys – caring, loving, responsible, spending a lot of time with a child, cooperating, kind, and altruistic.

The traditional role of a father has remained unchanged for many generations, which is reflected in the characteristics given by young people: the perfect image of a father is a successful person, providing high financial security, having authority and respect, domineering, strict, independent, not very emotional. The perfect image of a father meets certain standards, namely:

- 1) level of success or status (social value of a man is determined by the amount of his earnings);
- 2) norm of masculinity (a man should be emotionally „firm”, thus, not very emotional and be able to resolve his emotional problems without the help of others);
- 3) norm of anti-femininity (a man should avoid „feminine” manifestations).

It should be noted that these stereotypes are currently undergoing major changes. As for the latter norm, especially among girls, the perfect image of a father can be very contradictory and includes polar qualities. If for young men a father remains the symbol of power and authority, then girls expect affection and tenderness from the ideal father, gentle care for children, active help to the mother not only in the upbringing of a child, but also in caring for a child.

For some girls (20%) and boys (15%), the perfect image of a mother and a father shifts towards accentuation, for example, a mother who lives for the sake of her child, sacrificing herself and her time; a father who should aim all his efforts at maintaining authority and fostering obedience and discipline.

In general, if you look at the perfect images of a father and a mother, they both have positive traits that can be combined into a single perfect image of a flexible parent. We assume that there is currently a tendency towards common perfect image of parents.

Young people (18 to 22 years old) see parenting as a difficult and demanding process that takes time; they believe that it is necessary to be prepared for it. They think that they will need such qualities as patience, will, understanding, trust and kindness. In their opinion, they will have to take care of their children a lot, experience financial difficulties and ultimately provide them with a good future. Representatives of this age group believe that parenting will require them to show love, but they, in turn, will receive it from their children. An analysis of the results of the „Incomplete sentences” technique showed that those, who took part in the research, poorly differentiate ideas of parenting in general and ideas of their own future parenting. It turned out that for the respondents the role of an abstract parent and the role of oneself as a parent appear to be practically identical.

At the next stage of the research, the students had to assess 54 characteristics according to the principle of semantic differential (Questionnaire by R.V. Ovcharova „Ideas of an ideal parent”).

Table 2. The processing of the results was carried out according to six antinomies, presented in the table

Antinomies	Cognitive aspect (index number of questions)	Emotional aspect (index number of questions)	Behavioral aspect (index number of questions)
Positive - Negative	1-3	19-21	37-39
Obligatory - Not obligatory	4-6	22-24	40-42
Warm - Cold	7-9	25-27	43-45
Acceptable - Rejected	10-12	28-30	46-48
Achievable - Unrealizable	13-15	31-33	49-51
Simple - Complicated	16-18	34-36	52-54

The respondents have approximately equally expressed cognitive and behavioral components, from the point of view of feelings (emotional component), ideas of a perfect image of a parent are more realistic and positive than from the point of view of knowledge and thoughts.

The girls and boys, involved in the research, were more in line with their ideas of what the ideal parent feels and does than with their ideas of what he or she thinks.

Students imagine the ideal parent rather positively, but there are differences between girls' and boys' responses according to individual indicators and in antinomies in general.

Using this technique, we have identified the following ideas, graphically presented in Figures 2.1 - 2.6

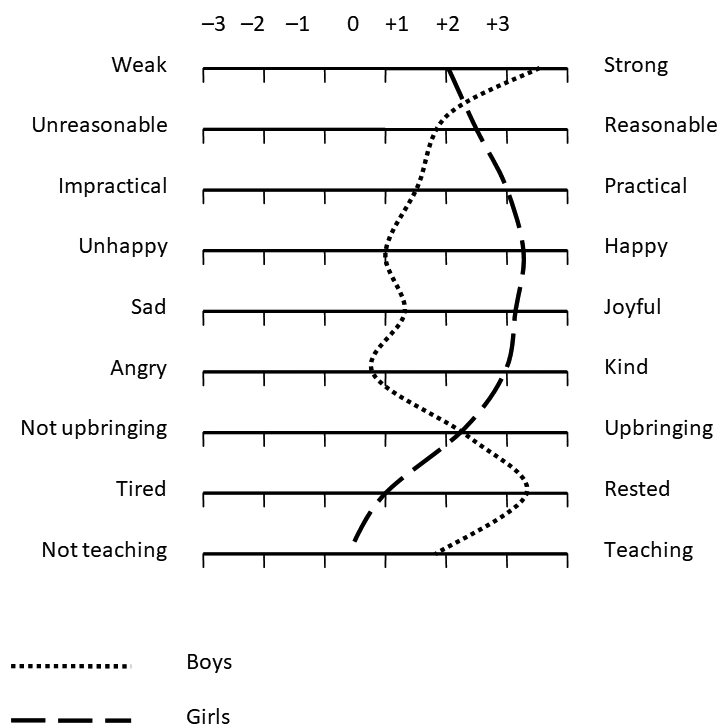


Fig.1. Correlation of boys' and girls' ideas of an ideal parent according to the antinomy „positive-negative”.

The girls think that the ideal parent should be happy, joyful, kind. She or he should simultaneously show prudence and practicality, be strong enough. Young men, on the other hand, consider upbringing and education important for the ideal parent, which requires significant effort. Young men are more inclined to assess parenting as a difficult process, associated not with a feeling of joy and happiness, but with emotional stress, therefore they emphasize the need for rest for a parent.

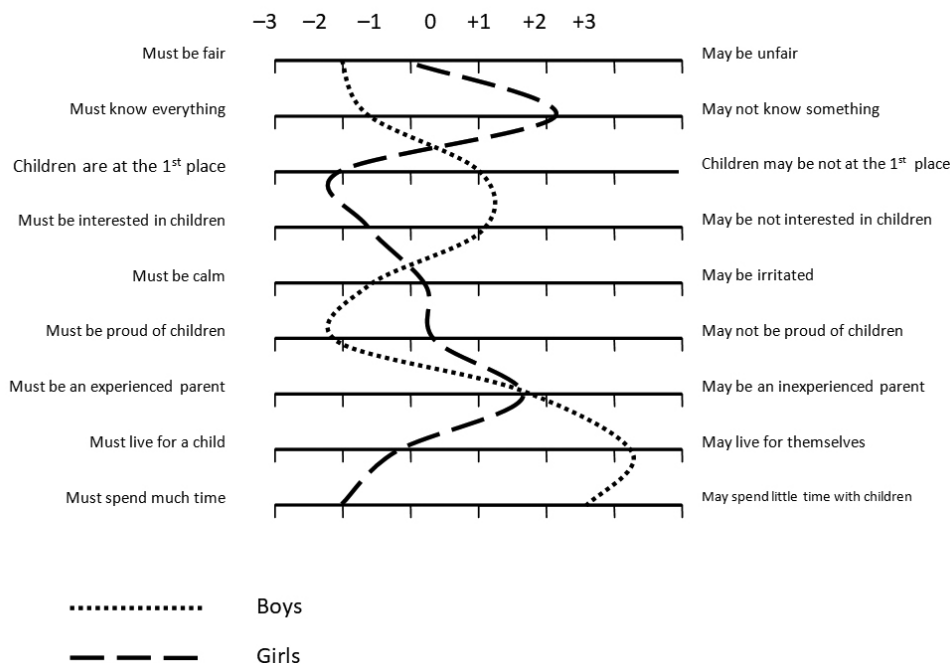


Fig. 2. Correlation of boys/ and girls' ideas of an ideal parent according to the antinomy „obligatory-not obligatory”.

According to the parameter „ obligatory-not obligatory”, the ideas of boys and girls are diametrically opposite: Boys consider such qualities as justice, calmness, pride for a child to be obligatory for the ideal parent, at the same time the ideal parent can live for himself or herself, spend little time with a child, i.e. a child may not occupy the first place in the life of a parent.

Girls believe that children should occupy the first place in a parent’s life, you need to live for them, and for the sake of their interests, spend a lot of time with them. Girls admit that the ideal parent may not know something, be not experienced enough, sometimes get annoyed, be unfair.

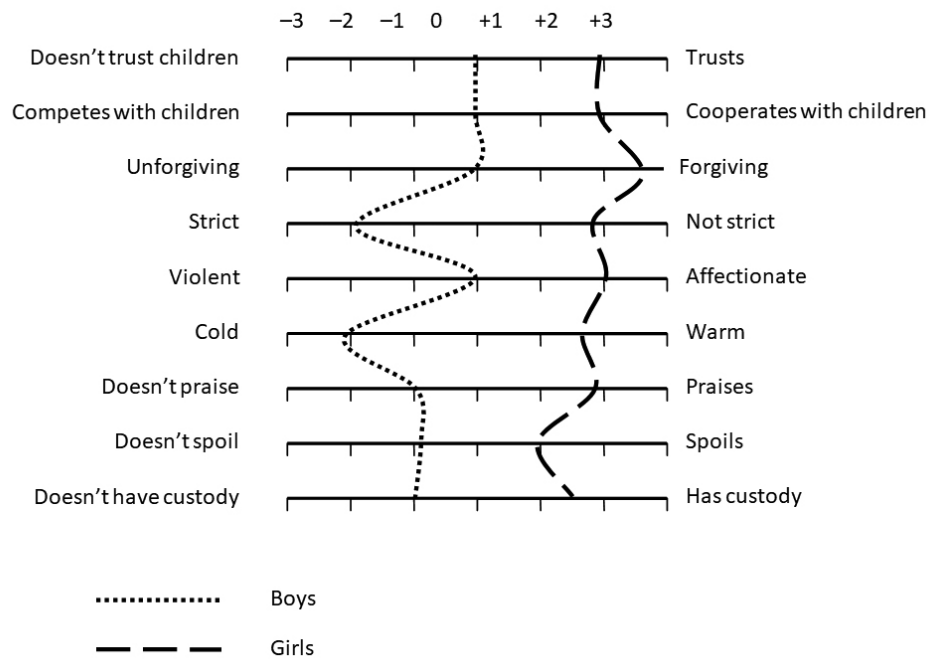


Fig. 3. Correlation of boys' and girls' ideas of an ideal parent according to the antinomy "warm - cold".

The graphs of the differential according to the antinomy „warm - cold” for girls and boys are almost the same, but for girls they are shifted to the right (which is considered to be more preferable) by an average of 2 points. Both girls and boys believe that children should be trusted and parents should cooperate with them. But girls mention warmer emotions towards a child: an ideal parent, in their opinion, is forgiving, gentle, affectionate. He or she can spoil a child and take care of him or her. The perfect image of a parent according to young men includes rigor and coldness. The ideal parent, from the point of view of young men, takes care of children less, praises them not so often, does not spoil them. The ideas of young men and women according to the antinomy “warm-cold” reflect the stereotype of masculinity – femininity.

According to the „Incomplete Sentences” technique, one of the main characteristics of parenting is responsibility, which is confirmed by the results of the „Ideal Parent” technique (Figure 3, 4). There are almost no differences in the ideas of young men and women in the antinomy „acceptable-rejected”: an ideal parent should love children, listen to them, and provide assistance. Girls also encourage such characteristics as altruism, unselfishness, young men allow some prudence towards children, „reasonable” egoism. According to young men, ideal parents are more authoritarian; they tend to give orders to children rather than ask them to do something, do not always praise and feel sorry for children.

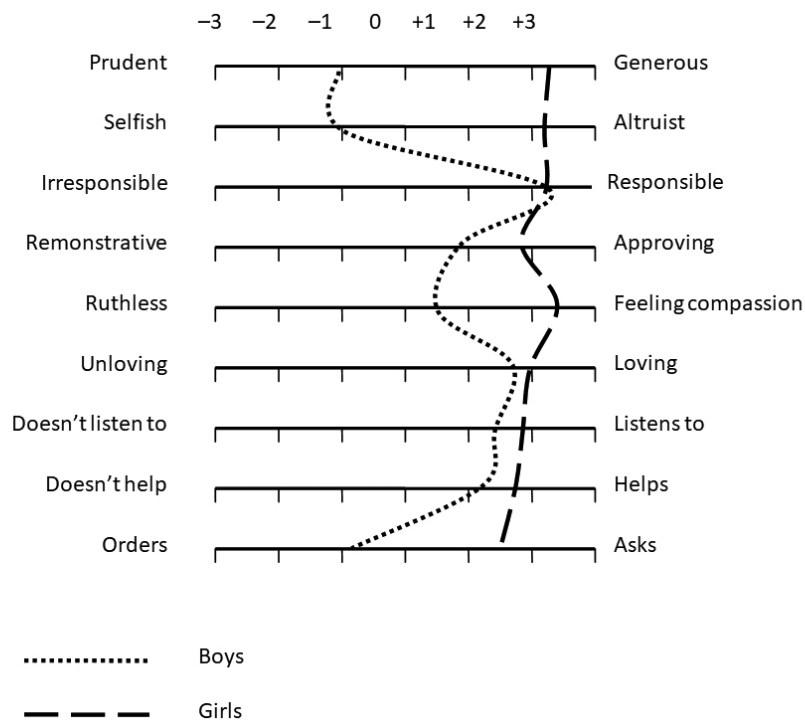


Fig. 4. Correlation of the boys' and girls' ideas of an ideal parent according to the antinomy "acceptable-rejected".

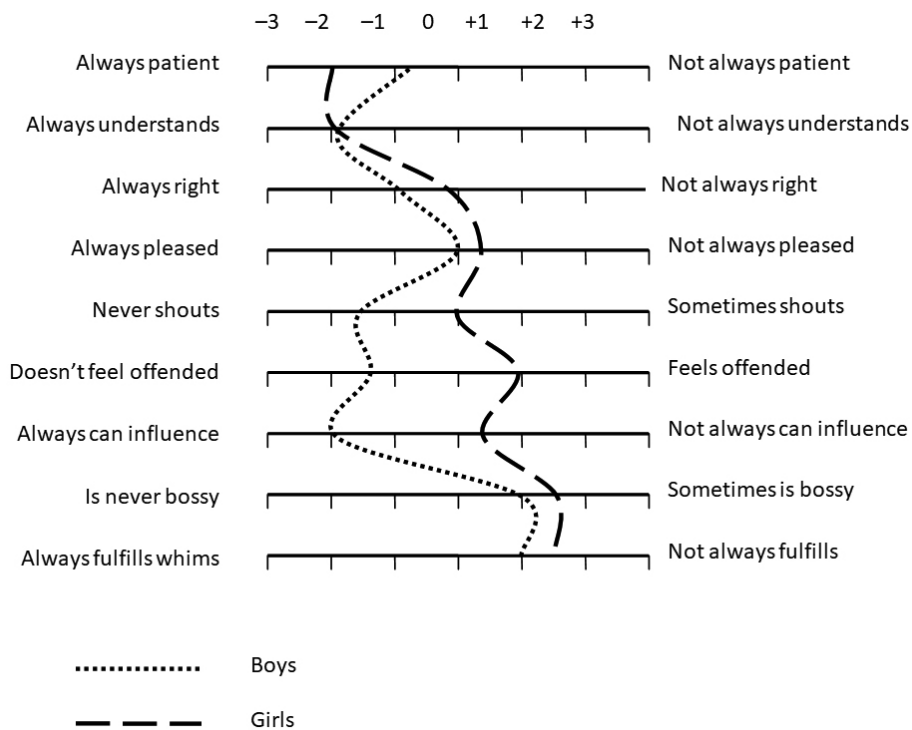


Fig. 5. Correlation of boys' and girls' ideas of an ideal parent according to the antinomy "achievable-unrealizable".

According to the antinomy „achievable-unrealizable”, the images of an ideal parent, given by girls and boys, are the same in several ways. Parents should be characterized by patience, understanding of children, despite their dissatisfaction with them. They may be wrong, sometimes give orders, do not always fulfill the child’s whims. Unlike girls, young men believe that a child can always be influenced without shouting or being offended.

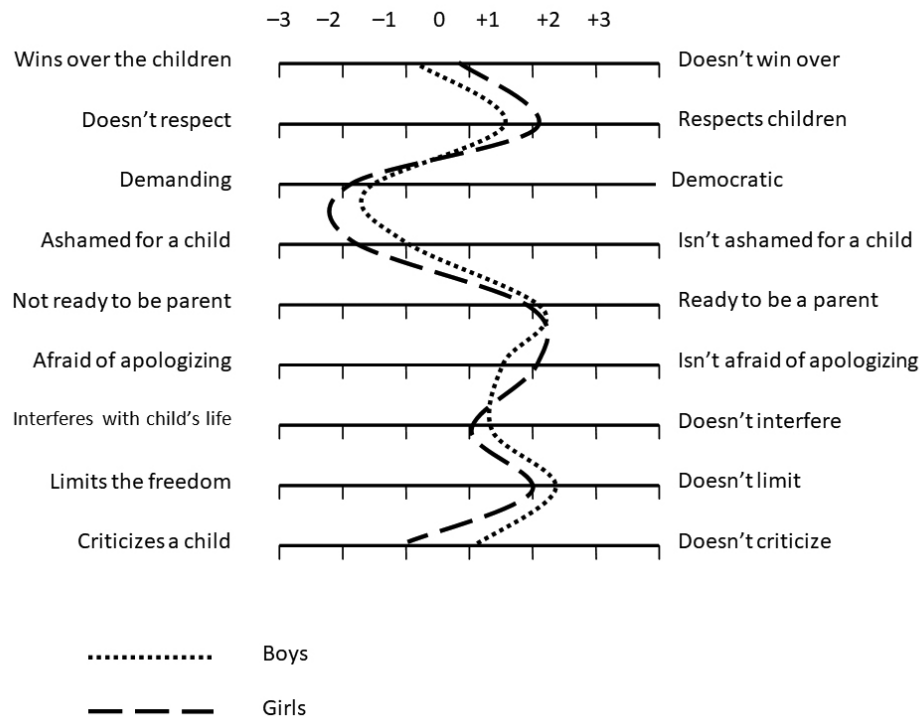


Fig. 6. Correlation of boys' and girls' ideas of an ideal parent according to the antinomy „simple-complex”.

The ideas of young men and women about an ideal parent according to the antinomy „simple-complex” practically do not differ, which is reflected in Fig. 6.

The ideal parent respects children, does not restrict their freedom, is not afraid to apologize to a child, but he or she can have the right to criticize a child, feel ashamed for him or her, and resolve some issues. You have to be ready for parenting, but, as it was noted in the analysis of „Incomplete sentences” technique, the concept of readiness is vague, is not filled with realistic content.

In general, the ideas of student youth of an ideal parent can be limited to the following:

- in girls' opinion – caring, loving, responsible, spending a lot of time with a child, disinterested, gentle;
- in young men's opinion – authoritative, strict, fair, but at the same time not limiting freedom, respecting children. We can say that an ideal parent for all respondents is a cooperating parent (mother is a friend, father is a friend), but girls more often have an image of a parent who is dependent on children, forming a symbiosis, and boys have a bias of the ideal towards the prevalence of „masculine qualities”.

Thus, the perfect image of a parent among young people is quite realistic and achievable within the framework of the norm and is based on the awareness of social stereotypes of an ideal father and mother.

All the variety of responses according to the „Incomplete sentences” technique can be limited to two generalized types of young people’s ideas of parenting:

- 1) idea of parenting as a difficult, complex process that requires a lot of effort, energy, time and money (40% of girls and 60% of boys);
- 2) idea of parenting as a process that brings joy, happiness, pleasure, giving meaning to life (60% of girls and 40% of boys).

Conclusions

1. One of the main characteristics of parenting, according to young people, is responsibility, but girls and boys put different content in this concept. For young men, responsibility towards a child is primarily material support and creation of material wealth. For girls, responsibility means to create a favorable atmosphere at home and provide mental comfort; no wonder why they say that a woman is a keeper of the home-fire. Responsibility for child’s life encourages parents to care and is based on love. At the same time, young people expect to face various difficulties in the process of upbringing children, including financial difficulties.

2. Significant differences in the responses of boys and girls about the priorities of family upbringing for upcoming parenting haven’t been found:

- the most important thing for parents: to be strict but fair, be loving, understand their child, provide material security for him or her;
- the most important thing for children is that their parents understand them, give them more time and attention, to feel that they are loved;
- the worst thing for parents, according to the common opinion of students, is a loss of health and life of a child, as well as the use of alcohol, drugs by children, and their criminal activity;
- the worst thing for children is a loss of parents, divorce, poverty.

3. Students do not single out such an important issue as the ability to properly bring up the children, pedagogical and psychological readiness for parenting. In their responses the students mainly mention only how parents should behave in relation to children. They do not talk about what personal qualities parents need to develop, how to work on their own development, whether they need to work on themselves at all in order to become a good parent. This reflects the narrowness of young people’s ideas of parenting and psychological unpreparedness for it.

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ANALIZA KONCEPCJI RODZICIELSTWA WSPÓŁCZESNYCH STUDENTÓW

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań empirycznych nad koncepcją rodzicielstwa współczesnych studentów. Wnikliwość zagadnienia zakłada, że idee te wpływają na jakość życia ludzkiego, przyczyniają się do procesu formowania osobowości, pomagają kształtować świadomy stosunek do rodziny i małżeństwa. W wyniku przeprowadzonych badań zidentyfikowano różnice płciowe w poglądach na rodzicielstwo. Udowodniono empirycznie, że jedną z głównych cech rodzicielstwa w opinii młodych ludzi jest odpowiedzialność, a pojęcie to jest różnie interpretowane przez dziewczynki i chłopców: dla chłopców odpowiedzialność za dziecko to przede wszystkim wsparcie finansowe, tworzenie dóbr materialnych; dla dziewczynek – stworzenie sprzyjającej atmosfery w domu, komfortu psychicznego.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

zjawisko rodzicielstwa, idea rodzicielstwa, doskonały obraz ojca, doskonały obraz matki, odpowiedzialność