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Psychological Readiness of Young People for Early Marriage: Desires and Reality

Iryna Hrytsiuk, Liudmyla Mahdysiuk, Tryhub Halyna, Khnykina Oksana and Zameliuk Mariia

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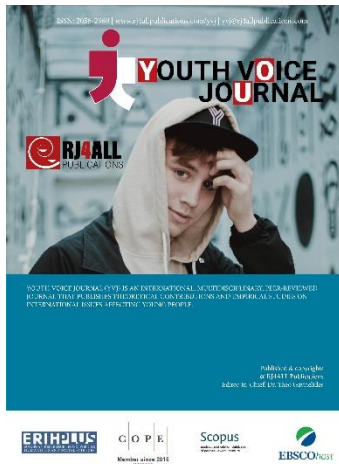
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**Iryna Hrytsiuk, Liudmyla Mahdysiuk, Tryhub Halyna, Khnykina Oksana and
Zameliuk Mariia**

Name and address of the corresponding author: Iryna Hrytsiuk, Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University,
Faculty of Psychology, Associate Professor of Practical Psychology and Psychodiagnostics. Lutsk, Ukraine

Contacts: Grytsiuk.Iryna@vnu.edu.ua

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6988-6012>

Author Biography:

Iryna Hrytsiuk: She was educated as a primary school teacher, later - a master of psychology, a teacher of psychology. In 2013 she defended her dissertation and received the title of Candidate of Psychological Sciences. He has been a lecturer at the Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and the Faculty of Psychology for 10 years. Research interests: family psychology, psychology of affective behavior, psychology of people with disabilities, art therapy approach in working with different categories of people. Married, mother of three children. Member of the Association of Family Psychologists of Ukraine, head of the Psychological Counseling Center on the basis of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University.

Liudmyla Mahdysiuk: She was educated as a primary school teacher, organizer of sports clubs and sections, later - a social pedagogue, teacher of pedagogy. In 2015 she defended her dissertation and received the title of Candidate of Psychological Sciences. Lecturer at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, Faculty of Psychology. Research interests: psychological counseling, forensic psychology, art therapy, crisis counseling. Married, mother of two children. Author of about 150 scientific, scientific-methodical works and scientific publications. Member of the Association of Family Psychologists of Ukraine, Member of the Association of Human Rights Defenders of Volyn Region, Member of the Association of Political Psychologists of Ukraine, Member of the Volyn Regional NGO "Ellipse".

Tryhub Halyna: She was educated as an English and German teacher. In 2013 she defended her dissertation and received the title of Candidate of Psychological Sciences. She has been a lecturer at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University for over 27 years. Areas of interest: the psychology of speech; psychological features of mastering a foreign language; the influence of interspherical manual asymmetry on psycholinguistic manifestations of language sense. Married, mother of two children. Author of about 10 scientific and scientific-methodical works and more than 20 scientific publications.

Khnykina Oksana: In 1995 she graduated from the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University (Lutsk). Specialist qualification awarded: teacher of English and German. Since 1995 I have been working as a lecturer at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. In 2010 she defended her dissertation on the topic: Semantic and communicative-pragmatic features of accusations in modern English (for the degree of candidate of philological sciences) in specialty 10.02.04 - Germanic languages at Ivan Franko National University (Lviv).

Zameliuk Mariia: She graduated from Volodymyr-Volyns'k Pedagogical School named after A.Yu. Kryms'koho, 1991, specialty: preschool education, qualification: educator in a preschool institution; Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, 2010, specialty: preschool education, qualification: bachelor, educator of preschool children; Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, 2010, specialty: Ukrainian language and literature (specialization: Ukrainian linguistics), qualification: Bachelor of Philology; Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, 2011, specialty: preschool education, qualification: Master of preschool education, educator of preschool children, teacher of pedagogical disciplines.

Abstract.

The institution of the family in the conditions of dynamic development of society has undergone significant changes in Ukraine. Young people are actively realizing themselves in various spheres of public life. But emotions and feelings remain a relevant factor that influences the choice of the future path, in particular the feeling of love, which is relevant for any age, but still in young people, more emotionally colored. At the moment, there is a disappointing picture in Ukraine, the number of divorces and single-parent families is growing, the nation is aging, the birth rate is declining, the living standards are deteriorating, and the value of the family is as such is declining. All of the above usually affects the readiness to start a family, contributes to the postponement of marriage, and weakens the motivation to procreate. In this article, we offer a study that empirically demonstrates the level of readiness of young people for early marriage. The research was conducted on the basis of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. We obtained up-to-date results that demonstrated a high subjective level of readiness of young people for early marriage. Factors that demonstrate the objective level of unpreparedness of young people for marital relationships were also identified. Because young people at an early age show a fairly low level of personal maturity, responsibility, and independence. Thus, we can conclude that young people want a healthy partnership, but in a symbiotic relationship, they quite rarely pay attention to objective factors such as personality traits, character, actions, both their own and partner. Being on the stage of a romantic relationship, they feel emotional uplift, idealize a partner, and their expectations regarding family life. But according to empirical data, at a young age you should work on the development of your own identity, the ability to interact effectively with others, resolve conflicts, hear yourself and your desires, strive for self-realization. But in the future, having reached a certain level of maturity, to fully realize the potential of their capabilities, create a well-functioning family that will develop, change, transforms, for the benefit of all its members.

Keywords: Love, Marriage, Readiness for Marriage, Family, Youth, Maturity.

Introduction.

According to J. Singer, a married couple or family are people who create a system for a long time. Such a community, according to the author, should meet the needs and prolong their lives for future generations. In addition, members of the family community not only coexist but also perform common tasks. The family is a social, cultural, and economic structural part of society (Singer, 2015). Nowadays, families can be extremely diverse. After all, all persons have the right to the personal choice of partner, ways of interaction, and coexistence.

In Ukraine, and in the world in general, the average age of marriage is gradually increasing. Yes, early marriages (under 18) are becoming less. In 2020, men in Ukraine most often married at the age of 25-29, and women - at the age of 20-24. Statistics show that early marriages break up much more often.

According to the law, the right to marry has persons who have reached the age of marriage, which is eighteen years. There is also the possibility of marriage at the request of a person who has reached the age of sixteen, by court decision he may be granted the right to marry if it is established that it is in his interests (Article 23 of the Family Codex of Ukraine). We are faced with the question of at what age it is best to get married, why early marriages break up more often, which traits help in the effective functioning of the family, and which, conversely, contribute to its destruction.

The strength of the family depends on a very large number of factors: socio-economic and legal protection; level of personal responsibility, ability to resolve conflicts; build personal boundaries and family boundaries, and many other personal factors. In our study, we suggested that the age of those who want to start a family also affects the sustainability of marriage.

The psychological literature, today, distinguishes the concept of readiness of young people for marriage and family life, which includes both physical and physiological maturity of the future spouse. Social maturity of persons seeking to marry. Social readiness includes the ability to perform social roles and responsibilities, the willingness to take responsibility for themselves and their children, the ability to provide for their family (independence). An important component of readiness is determined by ethical and psychological readiness for marriage. It includes the formation of ideas of future spouses about marriage and family, marital responsibilities, the ability to value personal qualities of the partner,

objectively assess their own feelings, focus on partnership, the formation of a psychologically healthy climate in the family, and the availability of appropriate skills. It is ethical and psychological readiness that determines the success or conflict of relationships in the family (Ushakova, 2017).

An important role is also played by sexual readiness for married life, which includes focusing on the common sexual and erotic experiences with a partner. It is the level of readiness for married life that determines the further stability and duration of the family's existence.

Family life, according to V. Satir, is the most difficult activity in the world. She believes that family relationships are reminiscent of the organization of joint activities of two companies that have joined forces to produce a single product (Satir, 2000). K. Rogers singled out such positive characteristics of a prosperous family relationship as:

- devotion and cooperation;
- communication that involves open self-expression;
- flexibility of relations;
- independence.

He proceeded from the fact that family relationships are a process of development of all family members. He gave a special role in strengthening family relationships to the shared experience of joy in the family, the authenticity of relationships, and tolerance of family members to each other (Rogers, 2016). And this again requires the formation of skills, values, and personal qualities.

A. Pease and B. Pease in their works claim that today we face such situations and circumstances in life that our ancestors have never encountered. We can change our own reproductive capacity through hormones, artificial insemination, and in vitro fertilization. We can meet new partners through wedding agencies and the Internet. We can improve our appearance with the help of cosmetics and plastic surgery. No other species can boast of anything like this (Pease, 2019).

According to these authors, marriage is one of the forms of acquired behavior. As a form of adaptive behavioral programs of mental activity, when a person catches the laws and rules by which changes

develop in the external and on the basis of perfectly established rules and laws build their behavior in real conditions. This knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation through the mechanisms of social and cultural tradition.

Animals have no problems with the process of finding and choosing a partner. Man is the only species that have difficulty with mating games. Love is a very abstract concept, but at the same time difficult to understand. Yet, little can bring so much joy and delight, and yet so much despair and pain as this feeling. Scientists are trying to determine the essence of love, resorting to various explanations. And everyone offers their own understanding.

The emergence of sexual desires, love and romantic experiences, the search for partners, the requirements for obligations - this is the work of the brain and hormonal system. People can't help but face the challenge of building a relationship that suits them.

But this does not mean that people are hostages to their own genes. The human brain has a frontal lobe that allows people to choose the course of action it deems optimal. A. Pease and B. Pease define in their works that when we talk about love, sex, romance, we include those inherited mechanisms that were characteristic of our ancestors. It is these mechanisms that shape our preferences and influence our choices and actions. So is marital behavior, which is different for men and women (Pease, 2019).

A. Varga and G. Budinaite claim that there has been an increase in emotional, personal and semantic, value factors in marital relationships. The authors draw attention to the fact that almost the only function of marital relations is an emotional and semantic exchange in a couple (Varga, 2017). From the point of view of M. Bowen, in the framework of his theory of family systems, it is also determined that all processes in marriage depend on the individual, on the couple, and on the processes in the whole family (Bowen, 2017). This again indicates the growing role of the age aspect, which plays a significant role, both in the conscious search for a partner and in creating a strong family. When there is insufficient internal support, unformed external guidelines, lack of necessary competencies, it is difficult for young people to make the right choice of partner and save the family.

Materials and methods.

The organization of an empirical study of the psychological readiness of young people for early marriage took place in three stages. The first stage was the search (September 2020 - May 2020). During this period, we selected those couples who were in a relationship and fell in love, aged 18-20 years. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, as evidenced by the informative consent given by all participants. The study was attended by first-year students of the Faculty of Psychology and students of natural and mathematical specialties of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and students of Lutsk Pedagogical College of Volyn Regional Council. In the course of our work, we also analyzed scientific sources on youth readiness for marriage, summarized the main components of youth readiness for marriage, systematized the views of various scholars and current research on this topic (Titarenko, 2013; Ivleva, 2003; Kovalev, 2008). Also during the search phase of the study, we selected methods that allowed us to study the level of readiness of young people for marriage and determine the presence or absence of certain personal characteristics that experts believe form this readiness (Fedorenko, 2020; Kravets, 2000).

The second stage (May 2020 - September 2021): organization and conduct of empirical research. This stage included: forming forms of empirical study methods, compiling instructions, and conducting diagnostics with respondents who expressed a desire and gave their voluntary consent to participate in our study. For the empirical study we have chosen the following methods: "Value orientations" M. Rokich; K. Thomas' test "Determining the style of behavior in a conflict situation"; "Emotional Response Scale" by A. Megrabian and N. Epstein; "Methods of diagnosis of personal maturity" V. Ruzhenkov, V. Ruzhenkova, I. Lukyantseva; "I. Yund's scale for assessing readiness for family life" (Fedorenko, 2020).

The final stage of the study, which lasted from March 2021 to December 2021, included - quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results obtained during the study and summarizing. The sample consisted of 60 people who gave informed consent to participate in the study. Students of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and students of Lutsk Pedagogical College of Volyn Regional Council became the subjects. Age of respondents from 18 to 20 years (30 women and 30 men). The respondents were single and did not live with their partner at the time, but felt, according to the respondents, during the previous interview, a strong love affair and would like to start a family.

Results and discussion.

As a result of the assessment of young people's readiness to perform family functions, level of empathy, maturity, independence, positive thinking, desire for self-development, tolerance, responsibility, way of reacting in conflict situations, and values of youth, we obtained the following results.

To study the readiness of young people to marry and perform family functions, the I. Jund scale was used to determine readiness for family life" (see Fig. 1). This technique made it possible to assess the readiness to create a positive family background, raise children, maintain respect and harmony in relations with relatives, to establish a healthy family life. On the one hand, family "outsourcing", the development of technical progress, made it possible to reduce the burden on the family by involving technicians, cleaning assistants (Potemkina, Shestero, 2017). Nevertheless, in Ukraine, there is a tendency to preserve household functions, the functions of raising children by their parents, ie marriage partners. Therefore, in fact, this scale made it possible to analyze the presence of social and ethical, and psychological readiness of young people for marriage. Namely, the desire to worry, to sympathize, to be tolerant, to perceive the partner as a person with his own individuality, with his own habits, desires, ability to adapt. After all, an important aspect of an effective marriage is the growing role of emotional and personal manifestations in marital interaction, as well as the formation of value factors that affect marital relationships.

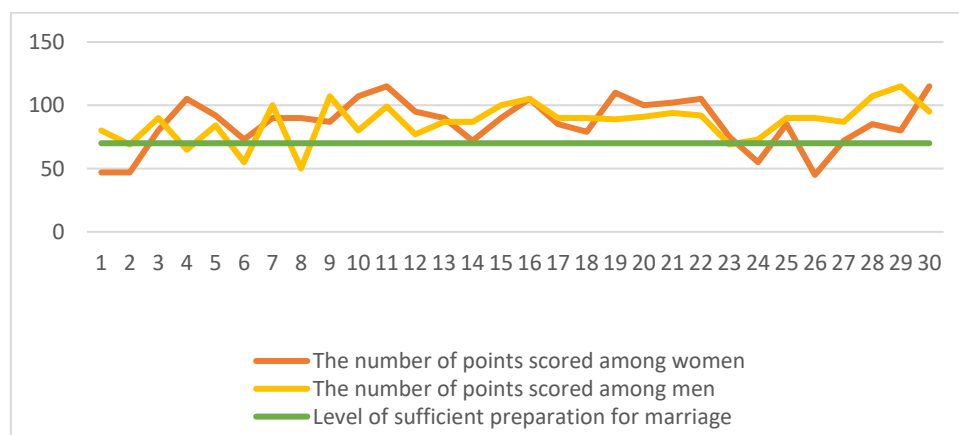


Fig. 1. The results of the psychological readiness of a group of students to marry according to the results of the I. Yund scale for determining readiness for family life

In a quantitative analysis of the results of the study of this method, we concluded that only 13.3% of respondents scored less than 70 points, which indicates a satisfactory level of readiness for marriage. All other respondents scored more than 70 points, which indicates that they are sufficiently prepared for family life. Also, we determined that women have slightly higher total scores on this scale. This may indicate that they are more willing to marry than males. Thus, it can be argued that all surveyed students are ready to perform the following main family functions: to create a positive family background, to maintain friendly relations with relatives. The participants of the study demonstrated their readiness to plan cohabitation and the upbringing of children, the organization of family, and household functioning. Focused on the formation of mutual respect, regulation of sexual life, and the satisfaction of healthy positive relationships. In our opinion, this result may be due to the fact that the vast majority of young people are characterized by superficial and approximate ideas about the responsibilities of each spouse to each other, inflated expectations of marriage, there is a certain level of mythologizing marriage.

To study the ability of young people to constructively resolve conflicts, we used the test "Determining the style of behavior in a conflict situation" by K. Thomas. The predominant type of behavior among young people, according to quantitative analysis, was a compromise - 27%. This method of conflict resolution is characterized by the ability to give up their interests on both sides. The desire to make a decision that satisfies both parties works in situations where those parties have the same power but opposing interests. This type of behavior in a conflict situation is constructive and is conducive to marital and family relationships. People of this type have a strong desire to maintain a relationship with the opposite party. On the other hand, it may indicate the orientation of young people to form a symbiotic relationship with a partner. In a symbiotic couple, as a rule, differences are leveled, there is a fear of recognizing their individuality and the individuality of the partner. And in the future, such a symbiotic relationship may contribute to symbiotic-hostile or symbiotic-dependent relationships. But it will create problems in the transition to another stage of relationship development.

Next in terms of style of behavior in a conflict situation was cooperation and avoidance, these points scored 20% each. People with the first type of behavior are characterized by active participation in resolving the conflict, defending both their own interests and the interests of partners, joint discussion of problems and needs of both parties. This type is also constructive and helps to achieve a balance between

partners. The second type, in contrast to the first, is a destructive solution to controversial issues. A person lacks the desire to cooperate, passivity in defending their rights due to the insignificance of solving the problem, or in hopelessness, shifting responsibility to another.

A combined style is the most effective because in different situations a person can find the best solution to the conflict. Quantitative analysis showed that only 17% of young people have such lability. Therefore, it can be assumed that it will be easier for these respondents to make an effective decision in resolving a conflict situation, and they are ready to constructively resolve conflicts that may arise in the family system.

The least common were rivalries of 10% and adaptations of 6%. Both types of behavior are destructive in family relationships, as the first involves egocentric tendencies, and the second gives preference to the interests of the partner more than their own. This can lead to the loss of one's own identity and the search for one's own "I" through a partner.

Thus, only about 20% of the surveyed students demonstrated the ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts quite constructively. Most of the respondents focused on feelings of love and admiration, denying the differences and problems of the partner's character. Therefore, the low level of development of skills to resolve conflict situations may become a problem in the future, when the relationship from the symbiotic stage, begins to move towards the differentiation of partners and learning.

The ability to empathize was determined by the method of A. Megrabian and N. Epstein. This characteristic, according to researchers of marital and family relationships, is a necessary condition for building harmonious relationships. Because, working with couples in family psychotherapeutic practice, there is a tendency that family members are characterized, as a rule, by a low level of empathy (Levitska, 2009). Therefore, it was important to us how developed in the subjects such a trait as empathy, even before marriage.

We obtained the following results: the average level of empathy was found in 4 subjects. This may indicate that in interpersonal relationships they are more likely to judge others by their actions than to trust their personal impressions. Such subjects, as a rule, have good control over their own emotions, but often cannot predict the development of relationships between people. Very high level of empathy in 10 respondents, which is 17% of respondents. 77% of respondents have a high level of empathy for this

method, which indicates sensitivity and the ability to empathize. Respondents were in an active phase of love, the same can be assumed, they have a high level of hormonal surge at the time of the study. They showed the ability to subtly feel their partner's emotions and experiences. However, it should be borne in mind that they did not live with their partners, they were not burdened with household functions and other significant responsibilities towards each other. It may also indicate the absence of a communicative barrier in their information communication and the perception of specific qualities of the partner is somewhat "distorted".

The next integral criterion of young people's readiness for marriage is personal maturity, which we studied using the method of "Diagnosis of personal maturity" V. Ruzhenkov, V. Ruzhenkov, I. Lukyantsev. This technique assesses personal maturity according to the following criteria: responsibility, tolerance, desire for self-development, positive thinking, and independence. A psychologically mature person is considered to be a person who is able to behave independently of the influence of the microsocial environment, focusing on their own, consciously setting goals, interests, aspirations, experiences (Druzhinin 2008). This technique helped us to identify the following results: high and medium level of maturity was demonstrated by 7% and 4% of respondents. 93% of respondents are characterized by a low level of personal maturity. Which indicates their lack of independence, unwillingness to take responsibility for their lives. Researchers have yet to work on developing positive thinking, tolerance, and awareness, which will increase opportunities for personal development and a strong and harmonious family in the future.

The most important characteristics of responsibility are accuracy, obligation, honesty, punctuality, fairness, willingness to be responsible for the consequences of their own actions, principled news. In the emotional sphere, the formation of responsibility is facilitated by the ability to empathize, sensitive to other people's pain and joy (Radchuk, 2012). According to the survey, most young people are not yet ready to take full responsibility for their lives, and even more so for the life of a partner (or future offspring). But if possible, try to transfer the decision to someone else (Hrytsiuk, 2021).

We also determined the level of tolerance, which consists of the ability to indulge in other people's habits, customs, views, and so on. This quality is an important component for marriage, as it allows you to refrain from quick, overly emotional actions and affects the ability to deal with relationship problems, build relationships with other family members and children. And only in 2% of respondents, we find a high level

of expression of this trait, in all other respondents, and 98% - the average level. The development of this quality significantly affects the effectiveness of communication in general, including communication between partners, as well as the effectiveness of the process of interpersonal cognition. Underdevelopment of tolerance, as a personality trait, leads to the inability of a person to take the position of the interlocutor, to be impartial to other opinions, and so on. Tolerance is important in resolving interpersonal conflicts and educating the younger generation. The results on the scale of self-development are presented in Fig. 2. Having explored the features of self-actualization of youth, which is one of the main components of the same mature personality. We found that in most respondents the average level of self-actualization. This testifies to the understanding of young people that it is necessary to improve themselves, to strive for self-realization. But the life of the family also involves providing other members with such opportunities. It is difficult for us to predict at this stage of the research how they will react to the partner's desire to be realized in society, or whether they will accept the partner as an independent and self-sufficient person.



Fig. 2. Levels of desire for self-development of respondents "Methods of diagnosis of personal maturity"

Exploring the development of positive thinking, which is an effective tool for success, including in family interaction, helps to achieve goals by removing barriers in consciousness. Positive thinking gives you confidence in yourself and your strengths; helps to believe in your abilities, and therefore - to realize them, helps to perceive yourself and your partner as good. According to the results of the methodology, only

four students (6.5%) have a low level of positive thinking. Such people find it difficult to cope with the troubles of life. Every failure undermines faith in one's own strength and discourages the desire to try again. But the high level of development of positive thinking is found in only 6.5% of young people. 87% of respondents have an average level of positive thinking. This is a good result, because, in general, students think positively, which means it will be easier for them to overcome difficulties, crisis periods in family life.

Regarding the independence of young people, it should be noted that only 7% of respondents have a high level of independence, which means a high level of ability to achieve goals, solve problems, overcome difficulties. The two main aspects of independence are freedom of choice and the ability to pay for one's freedom. 93% of respondents had an average level they consider themselves quite independent. This may also indicate that they will be proactive, will be actively involved in building relationships, able to take over the functions of the family, but it will be in the future. At this stage, they are financially dependent on their parents, do not have their own housing, do not make important decisions. But a low level of responsibility and a medium level of independence can make it difficult for a couple to function properly. Due to the loss of illusions, expectations about the partner, incomplete relationship with the parental family, married partners will experience emotional discomfort, problems with differentiation of their own "I" and a significant level of tension. Such characteristics will contribute to dysfunction in the family and contribute to a large number of conflicts.

One of the important components of readiness for marriage is also the value component, which is a person's awareness of the importance of the family and the ability to take responsibility for it (Sidorenko, 2013). To explore the value-motivational sphere of young people, we used the method of "Value Orientation" by M. Rokych. This technique allowed us to understand what is important for today's youth and what are the priorities in their lives. The results of the method are shown in the form of a pie chart in Fig. 3.

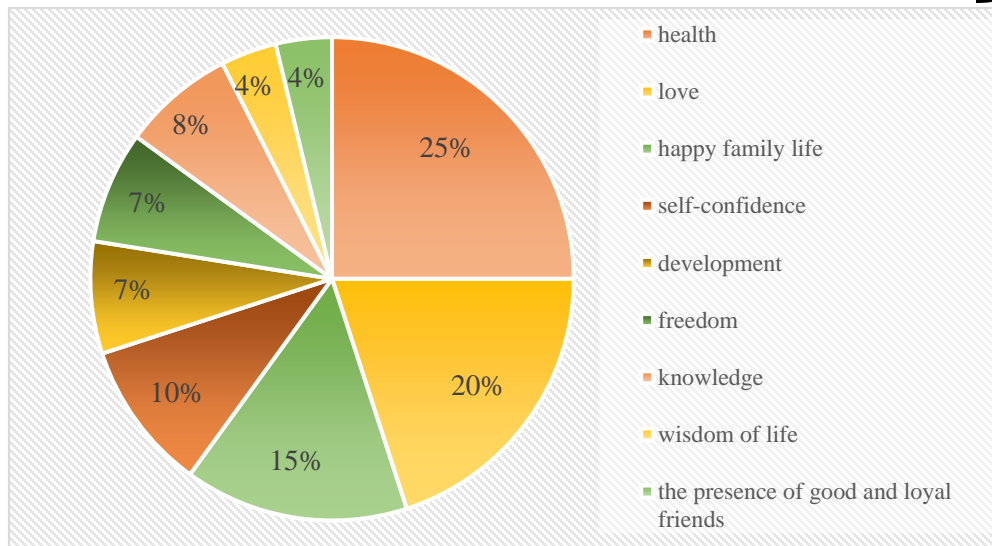


Fig. 3. Value orientations of young people according to the results of the method "Value orientations" of M. Rokych

After analyzing the results of the survey are presented in Fig. 3. it can be concluded that the highest priorities for young people are health (25%), love (20%), and happy family life (15%). This indicates the importance for the respondents to build a harmonious relationship with the opposite sex and an urgent need for good physical and mental conditions. That is, young people have a social component of readiness for marriage.

To establish a correlation between the readiness of young people for marriage and the level of development of such personal characteristics as empathy, personal maturity, responsibility, tolerance, desire for self-development, positive thinking, and independence; we used the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Correlation analysis revealed only one statistically significant association. Willingness to marry is positively correlated with the positive thinking of the surveyed students ($r = 0,466$; $p \leq 0.01$). Corresponds to the level of statistical significance of the correlation between readiness for marriage and personal maturity ($r = 0,418$; $p \leq 0.05$), readiness for marriage and responsibility ($r = 0,39$; $p \leq 0.05$), readiness for marriage and tolerance ($r = 0.385$; $p \leq 0.05$).

Table 1

Calculations of r-Pearson correlation between marriage readiness and important personality characteristics

	Empathy	Personal maturity	Responsibility	Tolerance	Striving for self-development	Positive thinking	Independence
Readiness for marriage	-0.024	0.418*	0.39*	0.385*	0.101	0.466**	0.139
Legend: ** - level of reliability $p \leq 0.01$; * - level of reliability - $p \leq 0.05$							

Conclusions.

Thus, analyzing the results of correlation analysis, we can conclude that the willingness to perform family functions is not associated with independence ($r = 0.139$), the desire for self-development ($r = 0.101$), and empathy of the subjects ($r = -0.024$). Willingness to marry is positively correlated with positivity of thinking ($r = 0.466$), personal maturity ($r = 0.418$), ability to take responsibility for oneself and others ($r = 0.39$) and tolerance ($r = 0.385$).

The study of personality characteristics necessary to create a strong family and the willingness of young people to perform family functions has established the following. The level of readiness of the surveyed students to perform family functions is quite high. They are positive (86.7%) of their family's prospects. A study of value orientations found that the three most important things, according to respondents, are: health, love, and happy family life. Which once again confirms the focus on building a strong family. However, quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed that a high level of respondents tends to use destructive methods of conflict resolution (avoidance, rivalry, compromise, and adaptation), which can be an obstacle to building a strong and warm relationship with a partner. Insignificant indicators of personal maturity, insufficient level of responsibility, and independence of respondents may call into question the

possibility of family relationships at an early age. All respondents were at the stage of either choosing a partner or at the stage of a romantic relationship. At these stages, lovers are in a symbiotic relationship, perceive in the figure of a partner only virtues, there is no real perception of themselves and others in the marriage. And, if they decide to get married at such a young age, the motivation to get married can be very unstable, and the traits of the partner, which are not noticed at first, may later be perceived as hypertrophic.

Since the correlation analysis showed that the willingness to perform family functions in young people at this stage is not associated with independence ($r = 0.139$), the desire for self-development ($r = 0.101$) and human empathy ($r = -0.024$), indicates a low level of understanding of marital interactions. Readiness for marriage is positively correlated with positivity of thinking ($r = 0.466$), personal maturity ($r = 0.418$), ability to take responsibility for oneself and others ($r = 0.39$) and tolerance ($r = 0.385$) of the surveyed students. Subjectively, young people see a high level of readiness for marriage, and objective indicators, however, say that it is worth working on the development of their own identity, to develop responsibility, independence, personal maturity. And this can be the key to building a strong family in the future.

We see the prospect of our study in the further in-depth study of the theoretical foundations of the formation of readiness for marriage. Exploring possible factors that would help build the readiness of young people to start a family. As well as in the development of a family literacy program for high school and university students, which will include increasing the responsibility of marriage partners to each other and to parenthood; formation of a positive attitude to a healthy lifestyle as a guarantee of long life and successful parenting; development of psychological competencies for establishing relationships; coverage of socio-economic issues (especially the formation of the family budget, farming).

Theoretical research has shown that the following factors must be considered to assess the psychological readiness of young people for marriage: general readiness for marriage, personal maturity, desire for self-development, positive thinking, tolerance, responsibility, independence, empathy, ability to constructively resolve conflict situations and family importance her.

The modern family is going through a difficult stage of evolution - the transition from a traditional model to a new one. Types of family relations are changing, the system of power and subordination in family life,

the role and functional dependence of spouses, the position of children are becoming different. Therefore, only educational activities, the creation of programs, and pieces of training will help to create the preconditions for the creation of strong partnerships.

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