

## SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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### BADANIE CECH POSTAW REPRODUKCYJNYCH WSPÓŁCZESNEJ MŁODZIEŻY

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### FEATURES OF REPRODUCTIVE ATTITUDES IN MODERN YOUTH

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**Abstract.** The article studies the peculiarities of the reproductive attitudes in modern youth. Based on the analysis of literature sources, the concept and structure of reproductive behavior were revealed. The study claims that reproductive attitudes act as a regulator of individual's reproductive behavior. It is noted that the active formation of reproductive systems

occurs at a young age; the factors influencing the formation of reproductive attitudes were analyzed. The components of the reproductive attitude (cognitive, emotional, behavioral) were also revealed. An empirical study was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire researching reproductive attitudes of young people, research methods of reproductive attitudes “Facts associated with the birth of a child” by V.V. Boiko (modified by O.S. Karimova), a questionnaire to study reproductive attitudes by O.S. Karimova, questionnaire “Analysis of family myth” by A.O. Nesterova. The sample consisted of 60 students from various specialties studying at Vasyl’ Stus Donetsk National University. Analysis of the results showed that most respondents consider themselves unprepared for marriage and childbirth and are focused on creating small families. The conclusions emphasize the need to work with young people to teach them how to lead a healthy lifestyle, form skills of self-preserving behavior, effective reproductive attitudes and adequate reproductive behavior to realize their reproductive potential, which is one of the main indicators of sustainable society development.

**Key words:** reproductive behavior, reproductive motives, reproductive attitudes, need to have children, readiness for marriage, ideas about family, youth.

## ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ОСОБЛИВОСТЕЙ РЕПРОДУКТИВНИХ УСТАНОВОК СУЧАСНОЇ МОЛОДІ

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**Анотація.** У статті представлено дослідження особливостей репродуктивних установок сучасної молоді. На підставі аналізу літературних джерел розкрито поняття та структуру репродуктивної поведінки. Зазначено, що репродуктивні установки виступають регулятором репродуктивної поведінки особистості. Зазначено, що активне формування репродуктивних установок відбувається в молодому віці; проаналізовано чинники, які впливають на формування репродуктивних установок. Розкрито компоненти репродуктивної установки (когнітивний, емоційний, поведінковий). Проведено емпіричне дослідження з використанням спеціально розробленої анкети щодо вивчення репродуктивних установок молоді, методики дослідження репродуктивної установки «Факти, що асоціюються з народженням дитини» В.В. Бойко (модифікація О.С. Каримової), опитувальника вивчення репродуктивних установок О.С. Каримової, опитувальника «Аналіз сімейного міфу» А.О. Нестерової. Вибірку дослідження становили 60 студентів різних спеціальностей Донецького національного університету імені Василя Стуса. Аналіз отриманих результатів показав, що більшість досліджуваних вважають себе не готовими до шлюбу та народження дітей і орієнтовані на малодітність. У висновках наголошено про необхідність роботи з молоддю в напрямі орієнтації на здоровий спосіб життя, формування навичок самозберігаючої поведінки, формування ефективних репродуктивних установок та адекватної репродуктивної поведінки задля реалізації свого репродуктивного потенціалу, що є одним з головних показників стабільного розвитку суспільства.

**Ключові слова:** репродуктивна поведінка, репродуктивні мотиви, репродуктивні установки, потреба в дітях, готовність до шлюбу, уявлення про сім'ю, молодь.

**Introduction.** Currently, the development of adequate reproductive behavior is becoming one of the most pressing problems facing society and attracting attention of experts in various fields – medicine, psychology, demography, sociology, pedagogy, as creating appropriate conditions for the reproductive potential of the population is the key to optimal development, preservation and reproduction of people, nations, and societies. The outlined issue becomes especially significant when working with young people who act as reproductive and demographic potential of society. In addition, individuals tend to develop rapidly at a young age, both at the somatic and mental levels with the formation of all functional body systems, including reproductive, as well as with the development of cognitive, emotional, and motivational spheres, which determines the nature of holistic personality formation. It should be also noted that it is at young age that the active development of the reproductive sphere of personality is observed and the foundations of reproductive behavior are formed. Today, there is a worrying issue of a significant decline in birth rate among the reproductive age population, as well as the drop in the family value in the hierarchy of common values among young people, where values related to personal and professional development are becoming of paramount importance (Batsylieva, Astakhov, Puz, 2019: 101). It is also essential to note the tendency of qualitative transformations of the modern family and the nature of marital and family relations. Thus, the spread

of alternative forms of relationships between partners, postponing marriage and childbirth, changing behavioral attitudes in the field of reproduction associated with the focus on one-child or childlessness at all, as well as reducing the value of parenthood, spreading various forms of deviant motherhood and fatherhood, increasing number of disadvantaged families, causes a number of acute social problems, which, unfortunately, are indicators of the current crisis of modern society (Batsylieva, 2018: 25; Puz, Astakhov, 2020: 209). Therefore, researching the peculiarities of reproductive attitudes among modern youth in today's conditions is crucial because it may identify ways to work with young people in the direction of establishing safe and effective reproductive behavior, adequate reproductive motivation, parental behavior, and popularizing and encouraging healthy lifestyles, which will certainly promote the harmonious development of young individuals.

The aim of the study was to investigate the features of reproductive attitudes of modern youth based on theoretical analysis of literature data and conducting own empirical research.

Main body. The reproductive sphere of personality consists of two major parts: individual's *sexual behavior* aimed at reproducing offspring and establishing harmonious psychosexual relations, as well as *parental behavior*, which ensures conception, carrying of a pregnancy, delivery and upbringing of a child. Notably, these components are physically interconnected, and to some extent psychologically independent, particularly in the subjective perception of each individual, social consciousness, socio-cultural norms and traditions (Batsylieva, 2011: 52).

An important element of individual's reproductive sphere is also *reproductive behavior*, which is considered a system of actions and relationships influencing the decision either to have a child or refuse to do it in marriage or out of wedlock. Individual's reproductive behavior manifests itself not only in external and reproductive actions, but also in changes of internal structures, attitudes and motivations (Batsylieva, 2018: 26).

The concept of «reproductive behavior» is usually used primarily to denote those actions and relationships associated with the implementation of a complete sequential change of reproductive events. Actions and relationships that prevent the onset of each link of the reproductive cycle, are the other side of reproductive behavior and are traditionally referred to as “birth control” or “contraceptive behavior” (Batsylieva, 2011: 53).

One of the critical elements of reproductive behavior is the need to have children. Notably, this is one of individual's social needs determining the peculiarities of reproductive behavior. This need is formed under the influence of social birth rates. In the research of A. I. Antonov, the need to have children is defined as an individual's socio-psychological property manifested in the fact that without having a certain number of children, a person experiences a range of personality issues. According to the researcher, the individual's need for children is determined by the major family functions (reproductive, educational, economic) and characterized by three levels of reproductive motives: economic, social and psychological. Specifically, *economic* reproductive motives are primarily conditioned by individual's desire to improve one's own well-being and welfare of the whole family by giving birth to a certain number of children, as the legislation of many countries provides appropriate financial assistance for each child. *Social* reproductive motives are associated with an individual's desire to maintain or increase their social status or authority in society. *Psychological* reproductive motives imply that parents, regardless of whether they realize it or not, seek to achieve different personal goals; therefore, this group of motives can be divided into three subgroups. The first subgroup includes motives displaying the need to fill one's life with meaning, the need of parents to be loved and respected by children, efforts to reproduce oneself in children, to realize their ambitions, as well as the need to discover hitherto unknown sides of life by communicating with children. The second subgroup illustrates the need to take care of a small child, love it and direct its development, as well as to pass on one's life experiences. The third subgroup conditionally combines all other motives – the desire to avoid loneliness in old age, the couple's wish to strengthen the marriage, etc. (Mokretsov, 2012).

Reproductive motivation means a system of motives determining individual's reproductive behavior, its onset, direction and activity, leading to the achievement of certain goals through the birth of a child, or refusal to give birth. Reproductive motivation represents a range of motives that can be both conscious and unconscious (Ivachevska, 2014: 43).

Thus, reproductive behavior is the behavior of the subject, aimed at biological (physiological), psychological and social reproduction of population. The subject can be an individual, a family, a social group, as well as a whole society.

Among the factors influencing the formation of individual's reproductive behavior, there are ethnic (national culture, religious beliefs, customs, traditions, ideology); biological (maternal and paternal instincts, physiological conditioning, reproductive health); socio-economic (material conditions, socio-political and socio-economic situations); socio-psychological (social interaction, social expectations, satisfaction of socio-psychological needs) (Ivachevska, 2014: 45).

One of the critical regulators of individual's reproductive behavior are reproductive attitudes, which are a set of ideas and moods of a subject indicating his/her readiness to implement certain types of reproductive behavior. Reproductive attitudes include motives for reproductive behavior associated primarily with individual's desire to obtain certain resources and benefits associated with the realization of reproductive behavior, and refusal to do so.

The three-component structure of the social attitude of M. Smith is often used in researching the peculiarities of reproductive behavior. Therefore, the structure distinguishes the cognitive component (awareness of the object of social attitude), the affective component (emotional evaluation of the object) and the behavioral component associated with the subject's reaction to the object. The proposed structure should be used in the study of reproductive attitudes, as the latter is considered to be individual's social attitude.

Reproductive attitude could be also regarded as a certain psychological state of personality, which also includes three main components:

- 1) cognitive component reflecting the orientation on a certain number of children, intervals between their birth, attitude towards the desired sex of a child, pregnancy and its happy outcome;
- 2) emotional component consists of positive or negative feelings associated with the birth of a particular amount of children;
- 3) behavioral component characterizing the intensity of the urge to give birth, the strength or weakness of the reproductive attitude.

It is the interconnectedness of the above mentioned components that determines the essence of individual's reproductive setting. There are three major types of reproductive settings: large (need to have 5 or more children), medium (3-4 children) and small (1-2) (Mokretsov, 2012).

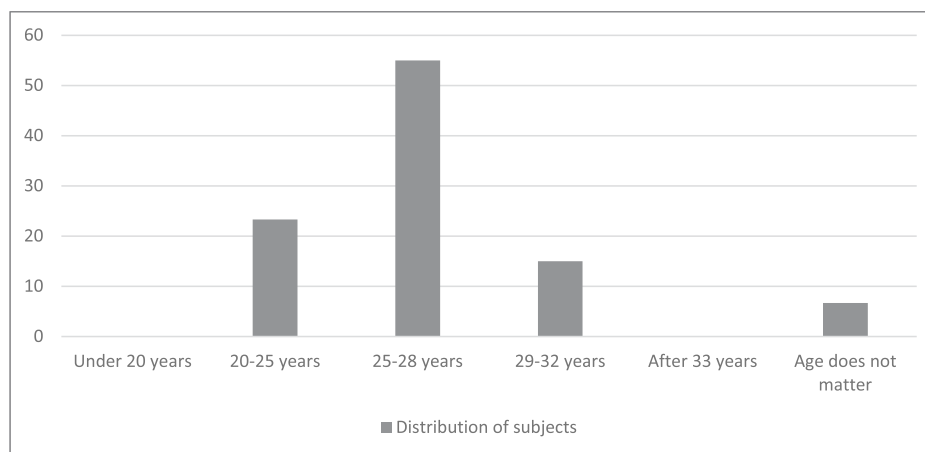
Hence, when there is a need to produce a certain amount of children, an individual forms an appropriate reproductive attitude, which is a special psychological state of awareness of social norms of childbearing, attitude to children and a certain degree of readiness to have a child in a favorable social situation. When assessing reproductive attitudes, researchers most often use indicators such as ideal, desired, expected (planned) and actual number of children. Existing reproductive attitudes of individuals can be divided into two groups. The first includes settings regulating the achievement of the main result of reproductive behavior – childbirth. The second group incorporates all settings that are in one way or another related to contraception, i.e. birth control process.

Reproductive attitudes are actively developing at young age and then almost do not change during human life. The influence of social institutions is one of the important factors conditioning the creation of reproductive attitudes. It broadcasts socio-cultural norms about having children, characteristic for a particular stage of society development. Such aspects as one's material wealth, living conditions, reproductive health, age, strength of marital relations, education, type of professional activity (especially women), stable employment, difficulties in raising already born children, the number of children in the parental families of young couples, challenges with enrolling children in preschool institutions are of great importance for the implementation of individual's reproductive attitudes.

Materials and methods of research. Based on the theoretical analysis of the issue of reproductive behavior and features of reproductive settings, we selected a set of psychodiagnostic methods and techniques, in particular the research method of reproductive attitude "Facts associated with the birth of a child" V.V. Boiko (modified by O.S. Karimova), questionnaire study of reproductive attitudes by O. S. Karimova, questionnaire "Analysis of family myth" by A.O. Nesterova (Vasylchenko, 2012: 25–33). We have also developed a special questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions related to the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of youth reproductive attitudes.

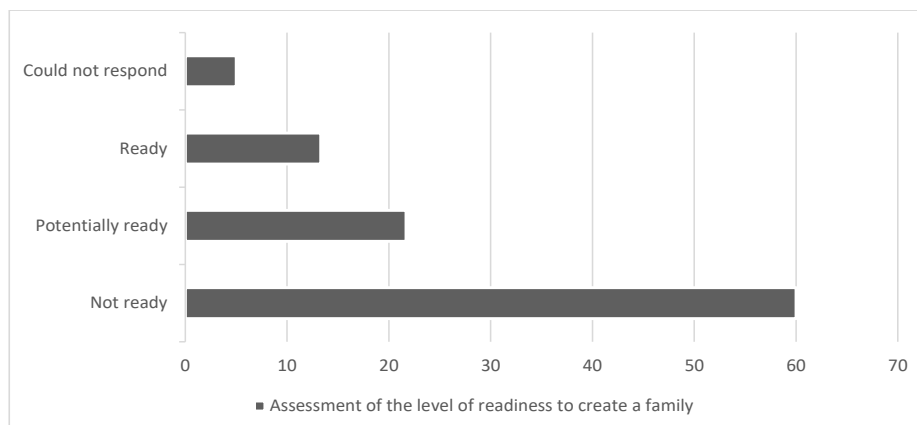
The empirical study was conducted at Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University. The sample consisted of 60 undergraduate students in various specialties. The mean age of the subjects was  $20.2 \pm 1.3$  years. The sample was heterogeneous, 18 people – male, 42 people – female. All participants were informed about the study's purpose and agreed to participate in it.

Results and discussion. The first step of the study was to conduct a survey. The analysis of the obtained information enabled to draw the following conclusions about the subjective perceptions of the subjects about their own reproductive attitudes. The marital status analysis of the study participants showed that 86.7% of the respondents were not officially married, only 13.3% of the participants were espoused. Finding the optimal age for marriage showed that 55.0% of participants believe that the optimal age for starting a family is between 25 and 28 years; 23.3% of participants note the age from 20 to 25 years; 15.0% of participants indicate age from 29 to 32 years; 6.7% of participants state that age does not matter in this case (fig. 1). Notably, none of the participants noted age under 20 years and age over 33 years, which indicates that young people realize the importance of age.



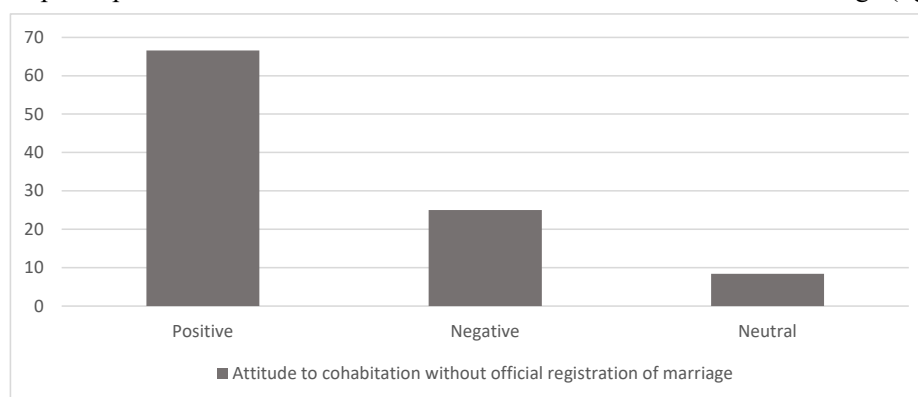
**Fig. 1. Estimation of the optimal age of marriage and family formation among the subjects, in %**

Assessment of the level of subjective readiness of the subjects to start a family showed that 60.0% of the respondents do not feel ready to start a family, 21.7% note that they may be ready for marriage, 13.3% consider themselves fully prepared for creating families (these participants are officially married), 5.0% of respondents were uncertain about how to respond to this question (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2. Subjective assessment of the level of readiness of the subjects to start a family, in %**

Analysis of attitudes towards cohabitation without official registration of marriage showed that 66.6% of study participants are positive about this idea, considering it an opportunity to check how compatible they are with their partner in matters of cohabitation; 25.0% of participants note a negative attitude towards living together without marriage; 8.4% of participants have a neutral attitude to cohabitation without formal marriage (fig. 3).



**Fig. 3. The attitude of subjects to cohabitation without official marriage registration, in %**

Identifying the optimal age for conceiving the first child showed that 48.3% of respondents plan to have a child aged 25 to 28 years; 26.7% of respondents – aged 29 to 32 years; 15.0% of subjects were uncertain about age of conceiving a child; 10.0% of respondents displayed that they do not plan to have children at all (fig. 4). Importantly, none of the participants noted age under 25 years and age over 33 years, which indicates that young people are aware of the importance of age for the implementation of the leading functions of the family.

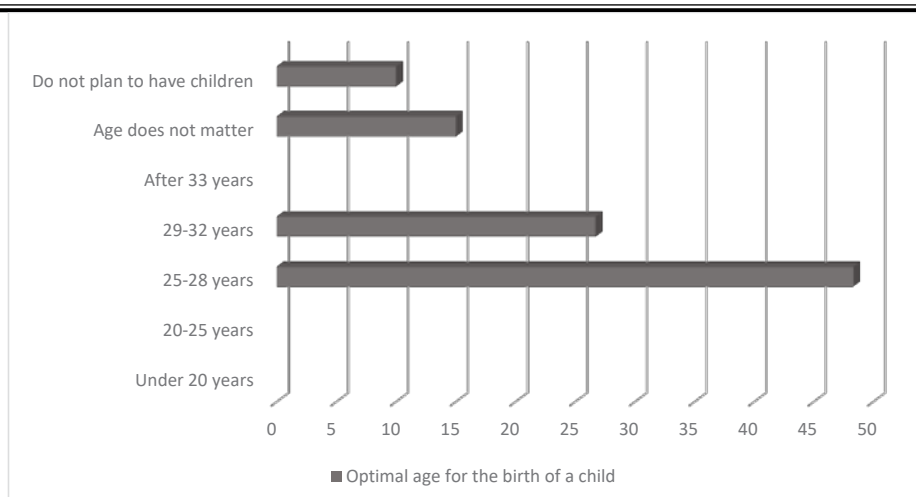
Examining the desired number of children, we found that 41.7% of respondents want to have 1 child; 36.7% of subjects – 2 children; 11.6% of subjects – 3 children; 10.0% of respondents noted that they do not plan to have any children in the future (fig. 5).

According to 63.4% of respondents, the financial condition of a person (family) affects the willingness to have a child, 23.3% of respondents believe that the material factor does not have a significant impact on a person's intention to have children, 13.3% of respondents were unable to answer this question unambiguously.

The analysis of the factors preventing the subjects from conceiving children for this period showed that for 36.7% of the respondents it is lack of time due to working or studying; for 26.7% – the desire to live for their own pleasure; for 20.0% – material and accommodation difficulties; for 8.3% – uncertainty in their future; for 5.0% – desire to spend their leisure time with fun; for 3.3% – taking responsibility for the child's life.

Identifying the attitude of the studied youth to the termination of pregnancy (abortion) showed that 48.3% of the subjects are neutral to this means of birth control, explaining that it is everyone's own business; 21.7% of respondents refer to abortion as one of the possible options for birth control; 30.0% of respondents have a negative attitude towards abortion.

Analysis of the life priorities of the subjects showed that for 21.7% of the respondents education is of paramount importance; for 26.7% – love; for 15.0% – family; for 23.3% – work, career; for 13.3% – leisure. It should be noted



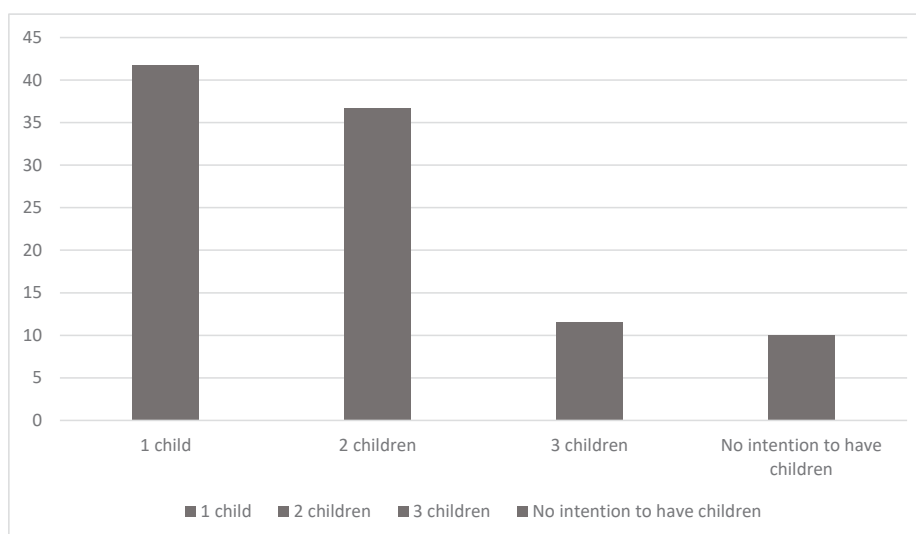
**Fig. 4. Estimation of the optimal age for childbirth, in %**

that health as a value was not marked as an important factor by any of the participants in the study, which in our opinion is a worrying trend, because it is well known that health itself ensures harmonious development and effective functioning of individuals.

Thus, summarizing the results of the survey, we found that most of the respondents are not married; state that the optimal age for starting a family is 25 to 28 years, and this period, according to the majority, is optimal for the birth of the first child. Most of the respondents indicated their positive attitude to cohabitation without official registration of marriage, they are not ready to create a family, and that they plan to have no more than two children, which showcases their focus on small families. According to most respondents, the number of children born directly depends on family's financial condition. Most of the respondents noted that studying and working, as well as financial and housing difficulties are the main factors hindering their plans of conceiving a child. Also, the vast majority of subjects are neutral to abortion. The most important life values for most of the respondents are career and love.

The next step in our study was to identify the content of young people's reproductive setting and their mythological ideas about family.

The analysis of the obtained results according to the research of reproductive attitude "Facts associated with the birth of a child" by V.V. Boiko (modified by O.S. Karimova) showed that the attitude of the subjects to the issue of childbirth has its own characteristic differences. Thus, 41.7% of respondents note that the fact of childbirth has positive consequences for an individual, which is manifested in the fact that the birth of a child is, above all, joy at home and in the family, gives meaning to life, pride of parents. 38.3% of respondents emphasize that the fact of childbirth is accompanied by certain objective factors, in particular it may cause certain financial difficulties, it is hard to provide a child with a good education and profession, but at the same time, the child is the object of parents' efforts and support in old age. The negative consequences of childbirth are noted by 20.0% of respondents, who believe that giving birth to a child could be a risk to woman's health, create issues in the relationship between spouses, complicate the professional development of an individual.



**Fig. 5. Estimation of the potentially desired number of children, in %**

Accordingly, the vast majority of subjects associate the fact of childbirth with positive and objective factors, which, in our opinion, is favorable for the further formation of adequate reproductive settings.

The research of the peculiarities of reproductive attitudes in young people according to the questionnaire of O.S. Karimova showed that the affective component of the reproductive attitude is most pronounced in 85.0% of participants. Notably, this component reflects a positive attitude towards children and interaction with them in general. Negative attitude to children, to care for them was identified in only 15.0% of respondents. A pronounced cognitive component of the reproductive attitude, which indicates the existing knowledge about the child's development, understanding its needs, the importance of raising a child in a full-fledged family was established in 38.3% of subjects. Lack of knowledge about the child characteristics and its behavior was found in 61.7% of respondents. A pronounced behavioral (conative) component of the reproductive attitude, associated with a willingness to actively interact with children, a willingness to neglect one's own needs and interests for the sake of the child, do everything for the sake of the child was identified in 43.3% of subjects. Unwillingness to change their needs and life in general for the sake of the child, the severity of egocentric tendencies was found in 56.7% of respondents.

Hence, the analysis of the reproductive attitude components shows that in the vast majority of subjects the most developed is the affective component, while the cognitive and behavioral components require appropriate corrective actions.

Evaluation of the obtained results according to the "Analysis of the family myth" by A.O. Nesterova, shows that in 45.0% of respondents the most pronounced is the myth of eternal love between family members, the essence of which is the idea that love between husband and wife does not fade with age, that feelings should be as bright and saturated, as at the beginning of married life. Characteristic for 38.3% of respondents is the myth of the magical power of love, which implies that love between people, the love of parents for children can solve all issues, allows one to overcome any type of hardship. Also, among the most pronounced family myths was the one of the permanence of family well-being (16.7% of respondents), which is manifested in the notion that all family members should always remain positive, do only good deeds, because this is what family happiness depends on.

The least represented family myth identified in the majority of respondents (63.3%) was the one about the need to make sacrifice for the sake of the family, according to which each family member must sacrifice something, give up one's interests, feelings and desires for the sake of family, children, husband or wife. In 36.7% of those surveyed, the least represented was the myth of evil forces attacking the family, the essence of which is that any issues that may arise in the family are caused by negative external circumstances that affect all family members.

Thus, the evaluation of mythological ideas about the family demonstrates that majority of the subjects note the leading role of love in family relationships. Such indicators are quite natural, because the period of youth is characterized by romanticism and idealization of relations between partners. However, there are some selfish tendencies among the respondents, which are manifested in the unwillingness to sacrifice their own needs and interests, reflected in the lack of mythological ideas about the family myth of the need to make sacrifices for the sake of partner and children.

**Conclusions.** The issue of preserving the reproductive health of young people, formation of adequate reproductive behavior and appropriate reproductive settings is extremely important and socially significant for modern society. The conducted theoretical analysis indicated that reproductive attitudes are multifaceted formations determining the direction of individual's reproductive behavior. The results of empirical research indicate that most students have a clear idea of reproductive attitudes, seek to realize their reproductive potential after obtaining a degree and the ability to provide for themselves, as evidenced by their subjective assessment of their unwillingness to start a family and conceive children. It was found that most of the subjects focused on the birth of no more than two children at the age from 25 to 28 years and have a positive attitude to premarital cohabitation with a partner. It was also established that most of the subjects have insufficient development of cognitive and behavioral components of reproductive attitudes. In this regard, it is crucial to organize a comprehensive systemic approach to working with young people involving a wide range of different specialists, which will not only timely prevent the emergence of various reproductive disorders, but also create favorable conditions for harmonious development of young people. In this aspect, when working with young people, the focus should be placed on a healthy lifestyle, the formation of skills of self-preserving behavior, developing readiness for marriage and future parenthood. In our opinion, such special courses as "Family Psychology", "Psychology of Sexuality", "Psychology of Child-Parent Relationships" are necessary to actively introduce into the educational process for all specialties, during the teaching of which not only theoretical, but also practical aspects of key issues in these areas should be presented. This approach will certainly help young people acquire relevant knowledge and necessary competencies in order to create effective reproductive systems, and realize their reproductive potential, which is one of the main indicators of sustainable development of society.

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## TEORETYCZNA ANALIZA STANU BADAŃ NAD PROBLEMEM ZASOBÓW RADZENIA SOBIE OSOBOWOŚCI W PSYCHOLOGII

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**Adnotacja.** Artykuł poświęcony jest rozważeniu pojęcia zasobów radzenia sobie osobowości, które są niezbędnym składnikiem, aby zapewnić udaną konfrontację z trudnymi sytuacjami życiowymi, zmniejszyć negatywny wpływ stresu i stworzyć pozytywne warunki dla osobistego rozwoju i samowzrostu. Skuteczność radzenia sobie ze stresującą (ekstremalną) sytuacją zależy bezpośrednio od zawartości dostępnych zasobów radzenia sobie. To obecność zasobów radzenia sobie osobowości, możliwość ich terminowego i prawidłowego wykorzystania determinują zdolność radzenia sobie ze złożonymi, ekstremalnymi sytuacjami przy minimalizacji negatywnego wpływu na stan psychofizjologiczny podmiotu aktywności zawodowej.