

## The Youth's Attitude to Marriage and Family in Modern Russian Society

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**Abstract:** The study presents the results of the survey, conducted in 2010 in Saratov region in order to study the attitudes of young people aged 17-30 (N = 241) towards marriage, family, cohabiting and the number of children in the family. Studies demonstrate the existence of global trends in the contemporary institution of marriage and the family from the standpoint of Russian youth: increasing the share of cohabitation, more loyal attitude of young people to have children born out of wedlock, leaving the birth of children in relation to education and employment, reducing the value of the family in general hierarchy of values of young people. The study contains the analyses of the research data, conducted in the USA, European countries, Russia and Nepal in the time period 2009-2012 as well.

**Key words:** Youth, marriage, family, sociological research, Russian

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### INTRODUCTION

Current world population is >7,304,500,535 people. The top 10 countries with the largest population are China, India, the USA, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Russia and Japan. According to the statistics provided by the UN Population Fund in 2014 the global population of young people between the ages of 10 and 24 has hit 1.8 billion (Kedney, 2015). In this connection, in the near future in the context of globalization, mass migration, a high level of information technology development, the society will face some significant changes which will be based on the youth's attitudes towards education, employment, family, marriage and children. These new standards of behavior, values, lifestyle will have a great influence on the society as a whole.

Currently in many countries there are significant changes in the social institutions of marriage and family. For example, according to statistics, more than half of Nepalese women are married before 18 years, despite the official marriage age is 18 years old with parental consent and 20 years without it. According to the law of Nepal, forcing a child to marry until he/she reaches adulthood is punished with imprisonment up to 3 years and a fine of 10,000 Nepalese Rupees. However, this study of the law is rarely used de-facto.

To identify adolescents and youth's attitudes toward premarital sexual relations, marriage and family size, a cross-cultural survey was conducted among students of 9, 11, 12 classes (N = 400) from 8 public and 8 private schools in 2006 in one of the provinces of Nepal. In the survey 57-5% of boys and 42-5% of girls aged

15-18 years were attended. The survey showed that 41% of respondents considered premarital sex acceptable; regarding the size of the family, 97% of respondents agreed with the statement that the family should not have >2 children and 85% would prefer to have a son. Among the respondents, 62% were in favor of an arranged marriage and 4/5 for marriage within their own caste (Sah *et al.*, 2012).

In contrast, youth's attitudes toward family and marriage in Europe or in the United States have a notable difference. According to statistics and scientific research over the past 50 years, the value of marriage and family in American society is gradually decreased which led to an increase in single-parent families, births out of wedlock, poverty and cohabitation. According to a national survey conducted in 2010 by the University of Virginia and the Institute for American Values, four out of ten Americans believe that marriage is a relic of the past (Donovan, 2011). One reason for the growth of single-parent families in the United States is the widespread practice of cohabitation which has been increasing dramatically since 1% in 1960 to 10% of all couples now a days. The research, conducted in Saratov region (Russia) in 2008 indicated that more than 30% of Russian youth supported cohabitation as a legitimate form of family partnership as well (Besschetnova, 2008).

In addition, 60% of respondents who were in the first marriage, claimed that they had been living together before the official registration of their relationships. The rapid growth of cohabitation, almost 74% since the 2000s, has a negative impact on the development and welfare of children due to more frequent family breakdown, low incomes and a higher level of domestic

violence (Volkova and Besschetnova, 2013). The most of cohabiting couples were childless while 40% had children. In 2009, 41% of children in the country were born out of wedlock, compared with 7-7% in 1965, thus from 1983-2008 the number of children out wedlock was doubled.

In the European Union in 2009, the number of illegitimate births ranged from 35-1% in Austria and Hungary, 55% in Norway, Sweden and France and 64-66% in Iceland and Estonia (Haub, 2013). Studies in the UK showed that half of the cohabiting couples, who had children, broke up within 5 years by contrast to one of twelve married couples. Studies of Norwegian scientists have found that cohabitation break 2-5 times more likely than those who have been officially marriage (Donovan, 2011).

However, recent studies of European scientists have revealed the presence of double standards with regard to the implementation of intra roles of men and women inside the family. Respondents less favored women who continued to work after the birth of a child and viewed them as more selfish as the employed fathers as well as stay-at-home fathers, who were viewed less competence, performing household chores and childbearing (Coleman and Franiuk, 2011). However, studies conducted by British scientists showed that the inclusion of women in the upbringing of children reduced the risk of family break ups (Sigle-Rushton, 2010) as well as increasing the likelihood of having a second child.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The empirical studies were carried out in 2010. The purpose of the study was to explore the youth's attitudes towards marriage, family and cohabiting unions in Saratov region. The research included the urban and the rural youth as well as the youth from diverse social, cultural and financial background. The university students of different specialties were asked to complete questionnaires which were presented by faculties of the department of social work and were completed by respondents in the classrooms. The respondents were chosen from the main seven universities (Saratov State University, Saratov State Social Economic University, Saratov State Technical University, Saratov State Law Academy, Balashov Branch of Saratov State University, Volga Cooperative Institute, Saratov State Agrarian University) which located in three main cities Saratov, Engels and Balashov. The survey was completed by 241 students (80, 3% of the original 300), aged 17-30. About 78.4% participants were girls, 21.6% were boys. Of

the participants, 22.4% had high school diploma, 13.6% had some college education and 64% had been studying at university. The majority of participants were unmarried 77.6%; were married 13.2%; were divorced 1.2%. At the time of the survey, 5.4% had children; 33.2% had no children; 4.1% were expecting a baby; 81% were undecided. 3.3% of families had only one child, 2.1% had two children. Participants received a brief overview before the questionnaire. Participating in research was voluntary.

**Main part:** Youth who participated in the survey said that the average Russian family has one or two children. From the perspective of the respondents to preserve the country's population every Russian family must have one child 11.2%; two children 58.1%; three children 17%. In order to identify the priorities of the respondents 'attitudes towards the size of the family and the number of children for the next five years, we have received the following answers: 17.4% of youth said, that they are not going to have children during the next 5 years; 17.8% of them are going to have one child, 37.3% 2 children; 4.6% 3 children and 4.1% of respondents are going to have 4 children. Hypothetically, if they have all necessary conditions (a house of their own, a high level of income, some help from their parents or other relatives, social support from the state) 51.9% of respondents are likely to have two children; 19% three children, 16.1% one-child and 12.8% were undecided.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The researchers 'study revealed that from the majority of respondents' point of view, their material well-being is not satisfied. Only 7% they were happy with it and 2.9% answered "quite satisfied". Thus, 65.2% of respondents indicate a mismatch of their income to their needs. Regarding the plans for the next couple of years, more than a half of young people 54% were ready to continue their education; 34.9% were going to get a job and make a career; 4.1% wanted to get married and only 7% to devote themselves to the family, childbearing and parenting. It is interesting to find that de-facto within the next year period 12.4% wanted to have a baby; in a year 19.5%; in 2 years 15.3%; in 3 years 17.8%; in 4-5 years 22% and 12.9% were undecided. According to respondents, the best age for a child's birth is a period of 21-25 years 69.7%; 26-30 years 14%; 18-20 years 5%; over 35 years 3.7%.

These responses suggest a steady trend among Russian young people to postpone the birth of their first

child in the long term, according to the Western family model: first of all to get the education, make a career, then get married and have children. If, we take into account the fact that the vast majority of participating in a survey of young people (61%) are aged 17-20, about 40% of them are going to have their first child at the age of 20-22 years to 23-25 years.

On the one hand, the priority of financial stability and achieve a high social and professional status indicates the responsible attitude of young people towards the procreation and parenthood and of course will contribute to low performance by the number of abandoned children in the society. On the other hand, this fact hypothetically reduces a woman's fertility and adversely affects the demographic indicators.

Democratization processes, empowerment of educational and professional activities, increase of legal literacy, the growth of women's organizations led to a rethinking of the gender roles, the place of marriage, children in the value system of modern Russian youth.

According to the survey in the case of high family income 27.4% of respondents would not work and pay their attention to childbearing and household chores; 42% expressed a desire to work outside the house; 14% were likely to make a career; 10.4% would prefer to combine career and family duties and 6.2% were undecided.

Analysis of young people's attitudes towards cohabitation (unions without official registration of marital relationship) revealed the following: 34% of respondents believe cohabiting as a norm of the modern Russian family; 45.2% had a neutral opinion; 12.9% find it unacceptable, although quite common social phenomenon and only 3.7% strongly judged it.

Additional evident can be taken from the National Survey that was conducted in 2012 by the Levada Center which included 1.559 people aged 18 years and older from 45 regions of the country. During the survey, it was found that more than half of respondents (55%) had positive attitudes toward cohabitation (youth 77%, retired people 30%). Half of the respondents, taken part in the National Survey, considered the birth of children born out of wedlock as a negative trend of modern Russian family (Anonymous, 2014).

High degree of tolerance to cohabitation units from the youth's point of view shows the alarming trends. According the national legislation in the case of childbirth, a woman cannot legally claim to the common property, material support from the partner (alimony) which automatically puts her and the baby at risk due to low-income, inability to continue their education and professional activities. In another case, the mother will face with a choice: to raise a child or to support a family,

forcing her to neglect their parental responsibilities, entrust the upbringing of the child to her parents, neighbors, friends, babysitters or just leave a child unattended that generates neglect and hidden social orphanhood. The study results reflect a fairly typical pattern of social development: the low status in the hierarchy of family life values of today's youth where priority places are occupied by the financial well-being and the career.

In addition, according to a study of national identity, conducted in the framework of international programs for Social Research ("International Society Survey program"), 88% of respondents noted the importance of family (Anonymous, 2014). For most, it is more valuable than the work.

## CONCLUSION

Analysis of statistical data and research of many scientists say about the changes in size, structure and family forms, the emergence of new types of marriage, both in developed and developing countries.

If in Africa and Asia, there are strong tendency towards early marriages under 18 due to poverty, low social status of families, poor access to public resources and low legal protections for citizens, cultural and religious traditions, in contrast in Europe, the USA and Russia there is a clear downward trend in decreasing of traditional family values, formal marriage, increasing of cohabiting, births outside marriage, tolerance to non-traditional family values and unions.

More and more young people in developed countries prefer career to official marriage, egalitarian relationships to traditional that results in a change (and sometimes reverse) gender roles in the family structure, a greater involvement of men in family life and child-rearing.

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