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**FEATURES OF A COGNITIVE IMAGE OF MOTHERHOOD  
AMONG STUDENT'S YOUTH**

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*Abstract*

Relevance of research is determined by need to create a system of measures of value attitude education to motherhood among modern students and an insufficient research of this phenomenon from psychological point of view. The article presents the results of an empirical research aimed at identifying the structural and content characteristics of cognitive image of motherhood among student's youth. For this purpose, we used a range of complementary methods of research: theoretical and methodological analysis of literature, psycho-diagnostic methods (the method of semantic differential, developed by Ch. Osgood, a projective technique of "Incomplete Sentences", the Questionnaire "Role Expectations and Claims in Marriage" by A. N. Volkova), methods of applied statistics (the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for one sample, correlation analysis). The study involved 1109 students aged 15 to 22 years. It is established that sex influences the content and hierarchical structure of qualities in the cognitive image of ideal mother among young men and women. Student's youth in the ideas of ideal mother focuses on the image of his own mother. Among young women, the features of cognitive image of "I am a future mother" differ from the image of ideal mother. The obtained results actualize the importance and necessity of psychological and pedagogical support of preparation of students for marriage and family relations, formation of readiness for parenthood in the educational environment of university.

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**Keywords:** Parenting, motherhood, student's youth.



## 1. Introduction

Relevance of research of the conditions and factors of formation of the valuable and positive attitudes to motherhood, parental attitude of mother due to lower fertility, small families, weakening the association of the first child's birth with marriage, distribution of phenomena of "delayed parenthood" (late date of the first child's birth), "childfree" (a conscious rejection of motherhood), "social orphanhood", feminization, significant decrease in family stability, poor quality of partnership relations and others. The fertility determinants are grouped within the level at which they operate: 1) the level of individual and/or family couple (micro level); 2) the level of social connections and social networks (meso level); 3) the level of cultural and social institutions (macro level) (Balbo, Billari, & Mills, 2017). Micro level determinants include employment, income, education, gender division of labour, family stricter, preferences and intergenerational transmission of values and behavioural practices. The main meso-level factors are social capital, social networks and place of residence. Macro level factors include economic tendencies, political measures, social security mode, changes in values and attitudes, continuity in history and culture, use of contraception and new reproductive technologies. Zakharova (2013) notes that a serious competition to values of motherhood presents a high self-value, the priority value of self-realization in professional activity and personal communication, hedonistic orientation.

The analysis of approaches to the research of the concept of "motherhood" showed that scientists define it as a system of conscious relationships of women towards themselves as a mother, maternal role, their child, manifested in the maternal position, style of family education and parental responsibility (Ovcharova & Myagkova, 2015); specific need - a motivational sphere (Filippova, 2017); socio – cultural values that should serve as a guide for young people in the real world (Kizilova, & Rashchikulina, 2016), etc. The cognitive image of motherhood is a specifically created image of an ideal and real mother with a set of personal qualities values, attitudes necessary for the upbringing of child.

There is practically no network of educational and social institutions that would help to form psychological readiness of young women to perform the role of mother in Russia today. Readiness for parenthood involves the adoption of a parental role, awareness of the parent, the priority of a parental sphere in the hierarchy of motives and life plans (Zakharova, 2015). The problem of pre-nuptial education of young people in the system of educational institutions becomes urgent in this regard.

## 2. Problem Statement

Karabanova and Molchanov, (2017) analyzed social, family and psychological factors of formation of parental attitudes at the stage of entry into adulthood. It was shown that formation of the value-positive attitude to parenting is influenced by emotional relationships in the parent family. The process of forming relationship to parenthood begins at the earliest stages of childhood with the direct influence of the parent family. The close communication and interaction within the family serve as a source of samples of their own parent behavior (Karabanova, et al., 2017).

The subject of special researches was the question of peculiarities of attitude towards the motherhood of young women during adulthood. These researches (Burmenskaya et al., 2018) confirm the tendency of reducing the subjective importance of motherhood among female students as a special social

group. It is established that the order of birth and sex sibling reveal a certain relationship with the nature of relationship of young women towards the motherhood. Researches show that there is a relationship between the value sphere of personality and the characteristics of relationship to the parental position (Karabanova, et al, 2018a). It is proved that the nature of child-parent relationships (psychological separation from mother and experience of acceptance / rejection) determine the type of relationship to the maternal role of students (Sadovnikova et al., 2018). The problem of formation of attitude towards the motherhood is addressed in the context of research of influence of basic beliefs about the world (an implicit evaluation of surrounding world from the point of view of its benevolence, justice, controllability, etc.) and image I (Karabanova et al, 2018b). Comparative analysis showed that a positive attitude towards the mother's role is formed on the background of the perception of the world as benevolent and fair, with a sense of self-value. The rejection of motherhood and maternal role is closely connected with vision of world as hostile and unjust, low self-esteem and a negative image I.

It was found due to the results of the empirical study of Fedorova and Khakhlova (2017) that conscious parenting is not formed automatically with the birth of child, and depends on motivation, personal resources, one's own experience of parent-child relationships and is manifested in the process of learning parental skills. Aldakimova (2015) analyzes the process of formation of readiness of young women to fulfill a social role of mother and introduces the concept of premarital education of youth in the educational system on the example of introduction of an educational-practical course for students of pedagogical university. We implemented the pedagogical model of development of family self-determination among the students of university (Merzlyakova & Golubeva, 2018) that contributes to the formation of psychological readiness for responsible parenthood in adolescence and early adulthood.

Resolution of contradiction between the need of modern society in the formation of value-positive attitude towards the motherhood among students and the need to identify individual psychological factors of the value of motherhood, the adoption of the maternal role in adolescence and early adulthood determines the problem of research.

### **3. Research Questions**

Today the following issues remain unresolved.

**3.1.** Do the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood coincide among young men and women?

**3.2.** Are there any distinctions in the content and hierarchical structure of the images of ideal mother and "I am a future mother" among young women?

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

The main purpose of this research was to identify the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood among young men and women. We hypothesized that the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood are determined by the gender of the respondent. In accordance with the goal and the proposed hypothesis, we conducted a study aimed at solving the following problems.

**4.1.** To reveal the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood (ideal mother) among young men.

**4.2.** To determine the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood (ideal mother, I am a future mother) among young women.

The research was conducted on the basis of the Astrakhan State University, Astrakhan Branch of Russian Academy of National Economy and State Service under the President of the Russian Federation, Branch of Russian State University for the Humanities in Astrakhan, Astrakhan State Polytechnic College, Astrakhan College of Computing Technology. The research involved 1109 students aged 15 to 22 years. Of these, 420 young men and 689 young women.

## **5. Research Methods**

In order to achieve the objectives and to test the hypothesis we used a set of complementary research methods.

**5.1.** To diagnose the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood, the following psycho diagnostic methods were used: the method of semantic differential developed by Ch. Osgood, the projective technique "Incomplete Sentences", the questionnaire "Role Expectations and Claims in Marriage" A. N. Volkova.

**5.2.** Methods of applied statistics were used for the analytical stage: Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion for one sample, correlation analysis (Spearman rank correlation).

## **6. Findings**

### **6.1. Research of the cognitive image features of motherhood among young men**

In order to identify the features of the cognitive image of ideal mother, we determined the value attitude of respondents towards such concepts as "an ideal mother", as well as the qualities necessary for a potential marriage partner. With the help of a modified version of the method of semantic differential, we studied the value of such qualities as performance of duties, care, personal independence, responsibility, patience, diligence, respect for another person, balance (self-control), success, empathy (empathy, empathy towards another person). The projective technique "Incomplete Sentences" allowed us to determine the attitude of students towards the primacy and responsibility in the family, the rights and duties of spouses. As a result of the use of the questionnaire "Role Expectations and Claims in Marriage" A. N. Volkova we have identified the views of young men and women about the importance of family life sexual relations, the external attractiveness of a marriage partner, household services, parental responsibilities, professional self-realization of each of the spouses, moral and emotional support.

Using Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion for one sample we checked the normality of the distribution of quantitative variables in the group of young men. As a result of the calculation of Spearman's rank correlation, we revealed the structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of motherhood among young men (see table. 1).

**Table 01.** The Structural and Content Characteristics of the Cognitive Image of Motherhood among Young Men

Image	Qualities	Correlation Coefficient	Levels of Significance	Rank
Ideal mother	Performance of duties	0.329	0.000	6
	Diligence	0.510	0.000	1
	Personal independence	0.416	0.000	3
	Responsibility	0.254	0.000	8
	Patience	0.230	0.000	9
	Industry	0.404	0.000	4
	Respect for other people	0.422	0.000	2
	Balance	0.319	0.000	7
	Successfulness	0.335	0.000	5
	Empathy	0.211	0.000	10
	Primacy and responsibility in the family	0.024	0.710	
	Rights and obligations of spouses	0.137	0.033	11
	Intimately – sexual scale	0.069	0.733	
	Household sphere (expectations)	0.151	0.452	
	Parental and educational (expectations)	0.337	0.086	
	Social activity (expectations)	-0.066	0.744	
	Emotional-psychotherapeutic (expectations)	0.066	0.744	
	External attractiveness (expectations)	-0.081	0.690	
My mother	0.511	0.000		

The cognitive image of an ideal mother has the following hierarchical structure among young men: 1) care, 2) respect for other people, 3) personal independence, 4) hard work, 5) success, 6) performance of duties, 7) balance, 8) responsibility, 9) patience, 10) empathy, 11) positive attitude towards the rights and duties of spouses. The image of their mother among young men contributes to the formation of ideas about an ideal mother, which indicates a positive correlation coefficient at the level of statistical significance.

## 6.2. The research of features of the cognitive image of motherhood among young women

The results of table 2 present us the features of the images of "an ideal mother", "I am a future mother" among young women. The young women have the following hierarchy of qualities in the image of an ideal mother: 1) care, 2) respect others, 3) personal independence, 4) diligence, 5) success 6) balance, 7) responsibilities 8) patience, 9) setting the importance of external social activity (professional, public), 10) plant on the significance of the external appearance, its conformity with the standards of modern fashion, 11) responsibility 12) empathy 13) a positive attitude towards the rights and responsibilities of spouses.

The content-structural characteristics of the image of "I am a future mother" differ from the image of an ideal mother. The cognitive image of "I am a future mother" has the following hierarchical structure: 1) care, 2) respect for other people, 3) diligence, 4) responsibility, 5) balance, 6) performance of duties, 7) personal independence, 8) focus on their own responsibilities in the parental and educational sphere, 9) success, 10) installation on their own active participation in the economic and household sphere, 11) patience, 12) the desire to form a psychological climate in the family, to provide moral and emotional

support, 13) empathy, 14) positive attitude towards the rights and duties of spouses. The role of responsibility increases among young women in the image of “I am a future mother”, reduces the importance of qualities such as personal independence, patience, success. If the image of an ideal mother contains the expression of their own professional needs of women, the installation of their own attractiveness, in the image of “I am a future mother” instead of these qualities appear the importance of the parent-educational sphere, active participation in the household, the desire to be a family "therapist". It should be noted that young women’s image of the mother is closely linked with the images of an ideal mother and “I am a future mother”.

**Table 02.** The Structural and Content Characteristics of the Cognitive Image of Motherhood among Young Women

Image	Qualities	Correlation Coefficient	Levels of Significance	Rank
Ideal mother	<i>Performance of duties</i>	0.288	0.000	7
	<i>Diligence</i>	0.592	0.000	1
	<i>Personal independence</i>	0.427	0.000	3
	<i>Responsibility</i>	0.228	0.000	11
	<i>Patience</i>	0.262	0.000	8
	<i>Industry</i>	0.362	0.000	4
	<i>Respect for other people</i>	0.448	0.000	2
	<i>Balance</i>	0.292	0.000	6
	<i>Successfulness</i>	0.318	0.000	5
	<i>Empathy</i>	0.217	0.000	12
	Primacy and responsibility in the family	0,011	0.825	
	<i>Rights and obligations of spouses</i>	0.107	0.026	13
	Intimately – sexual scale	-0.137	0.188	
	Economic and household sphere (claims)	0.053	0.610	
	Parental and educational (claims)	-0.122	0.243	
	<i>Social activity (claims)</i>	0.247	0.017	9
	Emotional-psychotherapeutic (claims)	0.025	0.808	
<i>Visual appeal (claims)</i>	0.242	0.019	10	
My mother	0.497	0.000		
I am a future mother	<i>Performance of duties</i>	0.363	0.000	6
	<i>Diligence</i>	0.509	0.000	1
	<i>Personal independence</i>	0.327	0.000	7
	<i>Responsibility</i>	0.371	0.000	4
	<i>Patience</i>	0.281	0.000	11
	<i>Industry</i>	0.378	0.000	3
	<i>Respect for other people</i>	0.470	0.000	2
	<i>Balance</i>	0.370	0.000	5
	<i>Successfulness</i>	0.296	0.000	9
	<i>Empathy</i>	0.241	0.000	13
	Primacy and responsibility in the family	0.051	0.287	
	<i>Rights and obligations of spouses</i>	0.129	0.007	14
	Intimately – sexual scale	-0.024	0.820	
	<i>Economic and household sphere (claims)</i>	0.288	0.005	10
	<i>Parental and educational (claims)</i>	0.307	0.003	8
	Social activity (claims)	-0.042	0.685	
	<i>Emotional-psychotherapeutic (claims)</i>	0.255	0.013	12
Visual appeal (claims)	0.196	0.058		
My mother	0.463	0.000		

## 7. Conclusion

This research aimed at identifying the features of the cognitive image of motherhood among young men and women, allows us to draw the following conclusions.

The structural and content characteristics of the cognitive image of an ideal mother among young men and women are different. The common thing is that in the image of an ideal mother, the most valuable qualities are care, respect for others, personal independence, hard work, success. Student's youth in the formation of ideas about an ideal mother focuses on their mother. For young men, more important qualities are responsibility, empathy, positive attitude towards the rights and duties of spouses. Such characteristics as orientation to the importance of external social activity (professional, social), installation on the importance of appearance, its compliance with the standards of modern fashion are actualized among young women.

Among young women, the features of the cognitive image of "I am a future mother" differ from the image of an ideal mother. So, the role of responsibility in the image of "I am a future mother" increases, the importance of such qualities as personal independence, patience, success decreases. If the image of an ideal mother contains the expression of their own professional needs of young women, the installation of external attractiveness, so instead of these qualities the importance of the parent-educational sphere, active participation in the conduct of the household, the desire to form a psychological climate in the family, to provide moral and emotional support appear in the image of "I am a future mother". The image of mother is closely linked with the image of "I am a future mother" among young women.

The discrepancy between the content-structural characteristics in the cognitive image of an ideal mother among young men and women may become an obstacle to the creation of an effective family system that will be able to realize the basic functions of a young family and provide opportunities for self-actualization for both spouses. In this regard, when creating a model of psychological and pedagogical support of family self-determination of students, it is necessary to develop a program to optimize the views about parenthood among young men and women, which will identify the features of the cognitive image of motherhood, to analyze their compliance with expectations and prospects for a future family life, to form some adequate representations, differed by consistency and realism.

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