

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MOTIVATION OF PARENTHOOD

SVIATLANA RADZEVICH, SVIATLANA ASTAPCHUK
Polotsk State University, Belarus

This article presents a study of the motives of parenthood and gender difference in motivation of parenting. Motives of parenthood cause heated debates among researchers. Today reproductive attitudes and reproductive behavior of the individual are the most analyzed in the psychological literature.

Introduction. Recently, scientific interest in family studying has significantly increased in various fields of knowledge, both in theory and practice. In fact, the family is now a field of multidisciplinary research. The interest is related to the role of the family that it has in the formation and development of an individual and, therefore, the present and the future of society as a whole.

Parenting is a socio-psychological phenomenon, which consists of emotive and estimated knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about oneself as a parent, realized in all the aspects of the behavioral component of parenthood. Parenthood inherently includes both spouses who have decided to start a family and, of course, a child [3].

Maternity and paternity (parenting) is the basic purpose of life, an important condition and a significant social and psychological function of a person. The quality of these manifestations, their socio-psychological and pedagogical implications are of paramount importance. The nature of parenthood affects the quality of the offspring; it provides personal happiness. It can be argued that the future of the society is the current state of parenthood.

The study of what motivates a person to become a parent is undoubtedly engaging. What motives are responsible for decision to become a father and mother? There is no definite scientific answer to this question, but only vague assumptions. More attention is paid to the topic of motherhood and fatherhood separately, but less to parenthood as a whole. There is not much attention to the issue of gender differences in motivation of parenthood.

Since the issue of gender differences in motivation of parenthood is poorly studied, the following hypothesis of our research has been chosen: there are gender differences in the motives of becoming parents.

The problem is particularly acute because of the ambiguity of understanding of this phenomenon in the contemporary psychological literature. Comparative historical data strongly suggest that the modern everyday views on this issue are not universal, therefore, parenthood, as we understand it today, is a product of a long and very controversial historical development.

Main part. The analysis of psychological literature has shown that the system of factors that determine the formation of parenthood, have not been specified yet. As a rule, theoretical and practical aspects of research in the field of family concern certain aspects that do not affect the formation of a person as a parent.

The most described in the literature are causal and functional dependence of reproductive attitudes and reproductive behavior of an individual (A.I. Antonov, 1973; V. Boyko, 1981; V.A. Borisov, 1976; A.I. Kuzmin, 1997; L.I. Savinov, 1996, etc.). And researchers often point out that there is a factor depending on the parental family. They study the similarity of the various dynamic parameters of the functioning of one's own and the parent family, "parental family has a powerful influence on the choice of career and spouse" (N. Peseshkian). E. Byrne notes that decisions involve unconscious attitudes inherited in childhood by parents. R. Skinner and D. Kliiz mentioned the similarities in the choice of a spouse of the family, which operates similarly to one's own and has approximately the same set of problems [1].

In Russian-speaking psychology parenthood is considered from the point of view of a gender perspective. K.N. Belogay studied gender differences in the structure of the parental relationship. She was able to identify differences in the needs and motives, behavioral and functional areas of maternity and paternity. For example, in her study it was found that the main motives for fathers were the motives of self-change and motives of maternity were the motives associated with the development of relations with a partner. In addition, women were significantly more likely than men to see a child as a sense of their lives. There are also differences in parental behavior of mothers and fathers. Mothers spend much more time with their child than fathers. Attitudes on interaction of mothers and fathers significantly differ: mothers increasingly encourage verbal manifestation of the child, and fathers are more focused on the promotion of the activity of their children. The parents are different in the functional purpose of motherhood and fatherhood: mothers are attributed by the function of love and care, while fathers - protection and education [2].

For more detailed research, we studied motivation of parenthood of students of Polotsk State University, 100 (70 females and 30 – males) students of different faculties and specialties participated in the survey. The students were 18–28 years old.

The students were asked to read a list of motives of parenthood, they were asked to choose 5 of the proposed 10 motives, which in their view were the most popular motives for parenthood by the majority of people. Then the students were asked to rank the chosen motives.

Students who participated in the study did not have their own children, which allowed measuring their potential concepts of parenthood. The statements in the questionnaire were formulated in a special way. They were presented in a disguised form; it was used to avoid socially desirable responses in order to prevent falsification of the results.

We created the questionnaire for our research on the basis of the materials presented in the books of N.N. Posysoev and R.V. Ovcharova [4, 5]. In our opinion, the above mentioned authors had the most complete information about the motives of parenthood.

We chose the following motives of parenthood: "a child from a loved partner", "procreation", "a public approval", "a protest", "desire to have a change in one's life", "to save the relationship with a loved partner", "self affirmation", "a conscious desire to have a child", "to preserve one's health", "a rejection of a past life".

We used U-Mann-Whitney criterion for the processing of the empirical data. We found that a correlation coefficient was significant ($p < 0.05$) for two motives: "procreation" and "an public approval" as for the remaining eight motives: "a child from a loved partner", "procreation", "a public approval", "a protest", "desire to have a change in one's life", "to save the relationship with a loved partner", "self affirmation", "a conscious desire to have a child", "to preserve one's health", "a rejection of a past life" the correlation coefficient was not significant.

The highest correlation significance ($p < 0.05$) was found in the motive of procreation. This motive is a human desire to leave behind a legacy, to pass to someone his life's work, and the idea that the child will be able to fulfill the case that the parent does not have time to do. This motive was more characteristic for females; this could indicate a stronger need of women in procreation than men. The findings were non-typical, and, somehow, contrary to common sense. So, we can assume that these findings contradict an existing stereotype that there is an obsessive desire of men to continue their family name, it turns out that women are not just interested in it, but also need it more than men.

The second important significant correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) is the motive of public approval. Parents use this motive when they want to have a baby for the sake of conformity to social expectations; they believe that marriage "is necessary to have children." This motive is also most frequent in women, suggesting that women compared to men need more social approval. We can assume that men give less importance to the issue of social evaluation.

The fact that the remaining motives of parenthood do not have correlation significance ($p > 0.05$), is also an important result in the study. This suggests that women and men equally apply to such motives as "a child from a loved partner", "procreation", "a public approval", "a protest", "desire to have a change in one's life", "to save the relationship with a loved partner", "self affirmation", "a conscious desire to have a child", "to preserve one's health", "a rejection of a past life".

Conclusion. However, many challenges remain. For example, the question arises, what sources are of gender differences concerning the described motives. Perhaps it was formed under the influence of any external conditions or the result of external influences.

These issues require further research of parenthood motives. It again confirms the diversity of this problem.

The transition to parenthood begins with a desire to have children. In order to manifest this desire a parent's position should be formed. A parent position is considered to be a function of two variables - a social role and self-consciousness [5]. Its formation is influenced by naive, but clearly perceived notions about the role of the parent due to changes in the consciousness of the individual. In many ways the content of such representations is influenced by patterns of parent-child and family relationships. A mature parental position is composed of a number of components: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. A parental position is mature when there are all components in it.

An important criterion for the formation of the productivity of the parent position is the presence of a mature motivation of a child's birth. Therefore it is extremely important to pay more attention to the formation of the parent position of young people, the potential parents.

REFERENCES

1. Андреева, Т.В. Семейная психология / Т.В. Андреева. – СПб. : Речь, 2004. – 244 с.
2. Белогай, К.Н. Психология беременности и развития ребенка в раннем возрасте / К.Н. Белогай. – М. : Изд-во КемГУ, 2000. – 120 с.
3. Дружинин, В.Н. Психология семьи / В.Н. Дружинин. – 3-е изд. – Екатеринбург : У-Фактория, 2000. – 347 с.
4. Овчарова, Р.В. Психологическое сопровождение родительства / Р.В. Овчарова. – М. : Изд-во Ин-та Психотерапии, 2003. – 135 с.
5. Посысов, Н.Н. Основы психологии семьи и семейного консультирования / Н.Н. Посысов – М. : Владос-Пресс, 2004. – 423 с.