

## YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER ROLES WITHIN FAMILY

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**ABSTRACT**

Young people are leaders of change in any society; therefore, studying their attitude towards gender roles in the family is of particular interest in predicting changes in their behaviour and identifying the policy measures needed to achieve sustainable progress in gender equality.

The study aimed to research the attitude of youth towards gender roles in the family to determine the influence of the levels of education, gender and other characteristics on gender preferences in relations - traditional or egalitarian. It is based on data from a sociological survey of youth in Chisinau, conducted in 2019 on a representative sample (N = 506).

The theoretical basis of the study was the multiple equilibrium theory (Esping-Andersen et al., 2013). The study results showed that the perception of young people regarding the essential qualities of men and women is still under the pressure of stereotypes and corresponds to the intermediate balance model characteristic of the transition from traditional roles based on the division of labour to modern egalitarian ones. This circumstance implies an equal division of responsibilities and family roles between women and men. On the one hand, youth tend to an egalitarian type of marriage and family relationships, and on the other, they adhere to traditional views of family roles. Although there are some differences in attitudes towards gender roles within the family between natives of Chisinau and young people from other localities, they are still not so pronounced. Youth with higher education are more likely to prefer an egalitarian distribution of gender roles than youth with a lower level of education. Girls more often than boys strive for gender equality in the family. However, in some aspects, such as the responsibility of men for the family's financial support, the importance of the material situation of a partner, they more often express traditional views.

**Keywords:** gender role attitudes, youth, sociological survey

Tinerii sunt lideri ai schimbării în orice societate, prin urmare, studierea atitudinii lor față de rolurile de gen în familie prezintă un interes deosebit din punctul de vedere al prognozării schimbărilor în comportamentul lor, precum și identificării măsurilor politice necesare pentru a obține progrese durabile în domeniul egalității de gen.

Scopul cercetării constă în studierea atitudinilor tinerilor față de rolurile de gen în familie, determinarea influenței nivelului de educație, genului și altor caracteristici asupra preferințelor în relațiile de gen – tip tradițional sau egalitar. Studiul se bazează pe datele dintr-un sondaj sociologic al tinerilor din Chișinău, realizat în 2019 pe un eșantion reprezentativ (N = 506).

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*Baza teoretică a studiului a constituit teoria echilibrului multiplu (Esping-Andersen et al., 2013). Rezultatele studiului au arătat că percepția tinerilor asupra calităților de bază ale bărbaților și femeilor este încă sub presiunea stereotipurilor și corespunde modelului de echilibru intermediar, caracteristic etapei de tranziție de la rolurile tradiționale la cele egalitare moderne, care presupun o împărțire egală a responsabilităților și rolurilor familiale între femei și bărbați. Tinerii, pe de o parte, tind spre un tip egalitar de căsătorie și relații de familie, iar pe de altă parte, ei aderă la viziunile tradiționale ale rolurilor familiale. Deși există unele diferențe în atitudinile față de rolurile de gen în familie între originarii din Chișinău și tinerii din alte localități, aceștia nu sunt pronunțate. Tinerii cu studii superioare mai frecvent preferă o distribuție egalitară a rolurilor de gen comparativ cu tinerii cu un nivel de educație mai scăzut. Fetele mai des decât băieții se pronunță pentru egalitatea de gen în familie, deși, în anumite aspecte, cum ar fi responsabilitatea bărbaților pentru sprijinul financiar al familiei, importanța situației materiale a partener, mai des exprimă viziunile tradiționale.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** atitudini față de rolurile de gen, tineret, studiu sociologic

*Молодые люди являются лидерами изменений в любом обществе, поэтому изучение их отношения к гендерным ролям в семье представляет особый интерес с точки зрения прогнозирования изменений в их поведении, а также определения мер политики, необходимых для достижения устойчивого прогресса в области гендерного равенства.*

*Цель исследования заключалась в изучении отношении молодежи к гендерным ролям в семье, определении влияния уровня образования, пола и других характеристик на гендерные предпочтения отношений – традиционных или эгалитарных. Исследование основывается на данных социологического опроса молодежи г. Кишинева, проведенного в 2019 г. на репрезентативной выборке (N=506).*

*Теоретической основой исследования послужила теория множественного равновесия (Esping-Andersen et al., 2013). Результаты исследования показали, что восприятие молодыми людьми основных качеств мужчин и женщин все еще находится под давлением стереотипов и соответствует промежуточной модели баланса, характерной для этапа перехода от традиционных ролей, основанных на гендерном разделении труда, к современным эгалитарным, предполагающим равное распределение обязанностей и семейных ролей между женщинами и мужчины. Молодые люди, с одной стороны, стремятся к эгалитарному типу брака и семейных отношений, а с другой – придерживаются традиционных взглядов на семейные роли. Хотя между уроженцами Кишинева и молодежью из других населенных пунктов наблюдаются некоторые различия в отношении к гендерным ролям в семье, они все же не столь ярко выражены. Молодые люди с высшим образованием, чаще отдают предпочтение эгалитарному распределению гендерных ролей, чем молодые люди с более низким уровнем образования. Девушки чаще, чем парни стремятся к гендерному равенству в семье, однако, по некоторым аспектам, таким как ответственность мужчин за финансовое обеспечение семьи, значимость материального положения партнера, чаще выражают традиционные взгляды.*

**Ключевые слова:** гендерно-ролевые установки, молодежь, социологический опрос

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the progress achieved and the increased attention of decision-makers to gender equality, this goal remains largely unfulfilled in the Republic of Moldova, as in other countries of the Eastern European region. It is now widely recognized that gender equality requires more than equal opportunities and equal access to institutions, the adoption of regulations that ensure equal opportunities for women and men. Achieving gender equality requires changing social values and attitudes towards gender roles in both public and private domain.

The transformation of the family, as well as the change in the demographic behavior of the population, are largely determined by the change in the status of women and men in society, representations and attitudes towards gender roles. Currently, family and marriage can no longer be described by a well-defined set of roles, which are negotiated daily, built through the interaction of partners at the micro level and influenced by macro structures in the political and economic sphere. Gender relations, attitudes and related values became more fluid, changing dynamically according to

economic, cultural and institutional transformations. Researches show that for a long time new family patterns and evolving gender roles are interlinked (Goldscheider et al., 2015; Kolpashnikova et al., 2020; Oláh et al., 2021).

Gender roles depend on the attitudes and perceptions that are formed in youth during the socialization period, facilitating the formation of stereotypes that will determine the behaviour of individuals in adult life. Today, many European countries managed to make significant progress in ensuring gender equality in various social areas, including family life. Thus, more and more couples are characterized by a more uniform distribution of family obligations, increasing the participation of fathers in activities related to childcare and education, as well as increasing the participation rate of women in the labour market. Despite regional differences in the decline of traditional gender roles and the rise of egalitarian attitudes, there are important differences between different social groups (people with a higher level of education, less religious people, unmarried people to a greater extent support egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles). At the same time, research shows that differences are larger between societies than between groups within a society.

It would seem that with the increasing level of education of women and their participation in employment, husbands and wives will less and less define the roles of women in the traditional way, but more research shows that traditional gender roles persist in both spheres: professional and family (Ashwin & Isupova, 2018; Kalabikhina, 2017). Women's experiences reflect the gender contract that prescribes the specific roles and obligations of women and men. In this context, we notice the existence of a double perspective conflict. On the one hand, men recognize women's rights and abilities of self-fulfilment, including in their families, but on the other hand, they do not want to take on some of the roles of serving family members and educating children, traditionally considered a prerogative of women. As a result, gender relations within the family have not undergone major changes, causing inconsistencies between levels of gender equity in the public and private spheres, this phenomenon being designated as an "incomplete gender revolution" (Gerson & Esping-Andersen, 2010). However, researchers emphasize that the family is a dynamic entity, characterized by increasing complexity in terms of decision-making processes and the organization of family life, which are under the influence of macro structures in the political and economic spheres. The new role of women is increasingly incorporated into more dimensions of economic independence and supportive responsibilities that until recently belonged to men (Oláh et al., 2018)

Young people are the leaders of change in any society, so studying, but especially monitoring, their attitudes towards gender roles in the family is of particular interest in terms of predicting changes in their behaviours, as well as policy measures needed to achieve sustainable progress in the field of gender equality. Based on these, the purpose of the research was the analysis of young people's representations of gender roles in the family and their determinants factors.

Given the importance of gender representations for demographic dynamics, marital behaviour, family formation and childbearing, the research focused on issues related to marriage and family. We focused on the main family roles that are traditionally assigned to men and women: decision-making, material family maintenance, household chores, and childcare. The attitudes of young people regarding the most important qualities attributed to men and women, as well as regarding the takeover of the husband's name after marriage by women were also studied.

Questions about gender roles were asked both from the perspective of traditional representations (e.g., "the husband must work and provide material for the family, and the wife should take care of the household and children") and others as egalitarian (e.g., "Both spouses must work and share their family responsibilities equally").

## RESEARCH DATA AND METHODS

The current study is based on the "Attitude of young people towards family and marriage" sociological research conducted in 2019 by the Centre for Demographic Research in Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova. The sample volume constituted 506 respondents, being representative according to sex and age, the confidence interval being 95%. Youth aged between 20 and 35, who had never been married, were the ones interviewed.

Chisinau was selected for research, considering that about 25% of the total population of the country is concentrated here, especially the youth population, including youth from different localities of the Republic of Moldova, settled in the capital to pursue professional studies or find a job, or for a permanent residence. In the sample, those originating from the Chisinau municipality represented 42%, while youth from other localities represent 58%.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

"Gender roles are the behaviors men and women exhibit in the private and public realm. They are the sociocultural expectations that apply to individuals on the basis of their assignment to a sex category (male or female)", (Tong, 2012). Attitudes toward gender roles have been identified as predictors of individuals' behaviour and decisions (Davis & Greenstein, 2009), that is, people use their gender identity as a personal standard to assess and guide their behaviour. Gender roles create behavioural sexual differences, given that people react to the expectations of others and act on their own gender identities that involve hormonal and neural mechanisms (Wood & Eagly, 2012).

Attitudes towards gender roles are multidimensional, involving the balance of power in the private and public spheres (Constantin & Voicu, 2015). A distinction is made between the cultural incompatibility of role that refers to general culture, norms and values regarding the role of women in society and the structural incompatibility that characterizes real possibilities available to women, as well as the constraints they face when trying to seize these opportunities. The structural factors of the gender relations system determine institutional opportunities within which the reproduction of role behaviour takes place. Social differentiation in different spheres of social life is perceived as a set of objective prescriptions and is implemented in mechanisms of interaction and socialization through institutions such as family, school, immediate environment, media and employment, politics, etc. (Темкина & Здравомыслова, 2000).

According to traditional perceptions of gender roles, women are assigned a role of housewife and main educator of children, probably due to their reproductive role and/or position in the family, this role also finding expression in the public sphere by the fact that in many countries, women work in the fields of care and education. At the same time men are assigned the role of head of the household and the main breadwinner of the family, while in the public sphere they have more opportunities for career advancement and function.

Gender stereotypes about family roles and professional roles are the most common stereotypes that prescribe the behaviour of men and women. Most often, for women, the main social roles are family roles (mother, wife), for men - professional roles (worker, family supporter). Men are usually judged by their professional success, and women by the presence and state of family and children. Modern perceptions of gender roles suggest an alternative perspective, emphasizing that individuals' behaviour should not be determined solely by their gender, and that there should be more equal relationships between men and women.

While researching youth attitudes on gender roles in the family we based our study on the theoretical concept of the *multiple equilibrium* (Esping-Andersen et al., 2013) aimed at transforming gender roles and their impact on the family, through the interaction between family-related behaviour and changes in the social roles of women and men reflected in their gender responsibilities for economic security and family care. There are three types of balance: *traditional*, *egalitarian* and *"unstable"*. The theory holds that stable balances are based on strong regulatory compliance and produce more equitable results. In contrast, unstable equilibria are likely to exhibit unfair behaviour. Equal balance is characterized by homogeneity and gender equity in the division of labour. The erosion of traditional specialization and the spread of egalitarian values is associated with the prevalence of "unstable equilibrium" behaviour, due to structural factors that prevent the achievement of definitive progress in this field (the transition from the traditional to the egalitarian model).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers conclude that the attitudes of the younger generation change faster than those of older generations, they more often argue that it is beneficial for both sexes to achieve higher qualifications and good careers and that childcare should be a common responsibility of men and women. However, they often still choose the educational and occupational path typical of the gender, as a result, their behaviour has a traditional connotation (Tinklin et al., 2005).

A study based on data from 36 countries shows that young people show a higher level of equal attitudes in countries with higher levels of gender equality, but young women in all countries have more equal attitudes towards gender roles than young men (Dotti Sani & Quaranta, 2017).

“Gender role changes are closely intertwined with the de-standardization of family biographies leading to a growing diversity of relationships over the life course as well as increasingly complex family compositions and household structures” (Oláh et al., 2021). Each stage in the course of family life shapes gender roles, and diverse political and cultural contexts facilitate or hinder family and gender role transitions (Oláh et al., 2021).

Gender differences in attitudes towards gender roles are smaller in more traditional societies, where both women and men accept more traditional roles because economic development is slower, while the lower diffusion of materialistic values places gender equality on a secondary plan. In contrast, in social contexts where gender equality is more advanced, differences in attitudes are more pronounced since women, especially the young ones, are more likely to act in their own interests and have gender equality attitudes (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), and the more egalitarian a society becomes, the weaker gender roles are (Tong, 2012).

The study on changes in the sexual behaviour between 2000 and 2017 of students in Italy, one of the European countries where traditional norms have a significant impact on the family sphere, showed important changes in women's premarital and family behaviour, becoming much more liberal, and double standards on sexual behaviour between women and men have decreased significantly (Minello et al., 2020).

The highest level of gender equality has been achieved in northern European countries, both in the public and private spheres. On the other hand, traditionalist attitudes and practices are considered a specific phenomenon for Eastern European countries. Russian researchers, have, based on data from sociological research for the past three decades, concluded that for women career development and high-level education are seen as secondary priorities, while those related to family creation and the birth of normative children take the lead. During this period, the situation has not changed for the better, on the contrary, it has worsened, supporting discriminatory practices on the labour market and undermining the economic situation of women (Кочергина, 2018).

Research in Hungary has shown that the attitudes of higher education students towards gender roles are not necessarily modern. They are more pronounced at the declarative level, but not behaviourally (Fényes, 2014).

In Romania, existing studies demonstrate the rooting and persistence of traditional attitudes towards gender roles (Gökçel et al., 2014), “gender discrimination is perceived both in the economic field (in terms of employment and pay conditions), but also in the political and social ones” (Tudorel et al., 2006). Women in urban areas more frequently report discrimination. An accomplished woman in life is considered the one who successfully fulfils all the roles associated with her status: mother, housewife and professional. A man's achievements in life are not as much about family as they are about professional success and the level of income he can reach (*Roluri de gen și statusuri în viața de familie și în muncă*, 2013).

National studies show that traditional cultural standards regarding femininity and masculinity are becoming an objective obstacle in the effective socialization of the young generation (Bodrug-Lungu, 2007). The prevalence of traditional patriarchal norms characterizes the cultural context of gender relations. Such representations that the roles of men in society are mainly related to professional self-affirmation and that of women with family and children are widespread. Contemporary stereotypes of gender roles within the family are inconsistent and contradictory, presenting a conglomeration of traditional and egalitarian perceptions (Gagauz, 2012).

The high prevalence of stereotypes, perceptions, norms and traditional gender roles contributes to the persistence of gender discrimination. Traditional gender roles are usually assigned to women and girls in the private and unpaid domestic sphere, while men and boys are paid to work in the public sphere. A total of 90.5% among men and 81.5% among women consider that for a woman the most important thing is to take care of the house and cook for the family (Cheianu-Andrei et al., 2015). Almost 58.3% of respondents support at least one gender stereotype (either they agree that men are mainly responsible for making money or that decisions should be made mainly by one sex, i.e. men), and 21.2% of respondents support both gender stereotypes. A comparison of surveys from 2006 and 2016 shows no significant changes in perceptions of gender roles over the past ten years (*Gender Barometer*, f.a.).

Based on the analysis of literature, the following hypotheses were formulated: 1) it was assumed that young people from Chisinau will have more egalitarian attitudes regarding gender roles in the family, than young people from other localities of the country; 2) young people with higher education identify more frequently with modern gender roles, than young people with a lower level of education; 3) young women more often than men will have more modern egalitarian attitudes about gender roles.

### MAIN RESULTS

According to the research results, both young girls and boys have symmetrical representations on the importance of certain qualities for women and men. Thus, in men, study participants respect such qualities as intellect, responsibility, ability to earn money, desire to succeed, the capacity to "cope with difficulties and resourcefulness". More than two-thirds of the respondents mentioned these qualities. In women, the most important qualities are considered intellect, fidelity, responsibility and resourcefulness, being an attentive and caring housewife. It is observed that for both women and men there are similar qualities as being resourceful and able to cope with difficulties, this fact being determined by multiple economic difficulties faced by the population of the Republic of Moldova and the need to overcome various crises such as low income or job loss, self-employment, etc., respectively, the ability of individuals/couples to cope with these challenges. It should be noted that respondents mentioned these qualities for both sexes with a different level of education, which signals the awareness of young people of the challenges of modern changing society and the importance of having skills to combat the negative impact of the external environment, stress, various crises and life difficulties.

Women with higher education want to see such qualities in men as intellect, responsibility and ability to cope with difficulties, while those with a lower level of education appreciate a more caring attitude, loyalty and the ability to manage. Men with higher education consider intellect, easy-going character and fidelity as the most important qualities in women.

It was found that young people pay more attention to physical attractiveness. Both women and men consider this characteristic "*very important*" for women, both in the opinion of men (63.7%), but especially in the opinion of women (69.8%). Such attitudes are explained by the fact that women are to a greater extent under the influence of sociocultural representations that idealize female attractiveness; moreover, physical attractiveness has a higher value in the mass consciousness of women than men (Варлашкина & Козубенко, 2010), and the wide promotion of beauty and youth in the media, fuels these representations.

The physical attractiveness of men and its significance is also a trait appreciated by both sexes. About a third (32.8%) of the girls and 36.9% of men interviewed consider the physical attractiveness of men "very important", especially an athletic physique, to be an expression of masculinity. Studies in the field show that masculinity in the representations of women is perceived as the power and ability to defend a woman, and in those of men - as a quality that attracts the attention of women (Варлашкина & Козубенко, 2010).

A discrepancy in the respondents' opinions is observed in attributing the importance of qualities such as fidelity. If for women this characteristic is supposed to be important in the opinion of 86% of the interviewed girls and 86.9% of the interviewed boys, then the fidelity of the men is viewed differently. A good part of the interviewed girls (91.8%) consider that being faithful is very important for a man, while only 68.1% of the interviewed young men mentioned this quality. Thus, young men show a more liberal attitude towards men's sexual behaviour, reflecting social attitudes, which are harsher on women's

infidelity and more tolerant of men's infidelity. According to other research, young people and men often appreciate their own infidelity positively, being intolerant of female infidelity (Кочеткова, 2017). However, recent studies show an increasing importance of sexual fidelity in the context of the transformation of the marital compartment and the spread of cohabitation among young people. The idea that would reflect a dual regime is becoming more widespread - "when someone is alone, they are allowed to have more than one partner, but when they are in an emotional relationship, sexual fidelity is a social norm" (Minello et al., 2020).

Gender symmetry about some important qualities persists when it comes to the economic skills of men and women, and the sharing of responsibilities for the material security of families. Thus, women's ability to earn money is not appreciated, which is associated with maintaining the man's traditional role as the main breadwinner, which involves the regular and full employment of men in the labour market and the irregular or flexible employment of women. This fact confirms the specificity of traditional representations on gender roles, according to which not only men (76.3%) consider that the material insurance of the family is their duty, but also women expect this role to be fulfilled by men (73.2%). Opinions of respondents do not differ significantly depending on the environment of origin, being specific for the natives from other localities and the natives from Chisinau. About two-thirds of respondents (both men and women) believe (agree or partially agree) that "the husband's job is to make money, and the wife's job is to run the household and take care of the family." which demonstrates the persistence of stereotypes about the traditional division of family roles.

However, many respondents consider that "both spouses must work and share their family responsibilities equally". 63.4% of the interviewed men and 70.3% of the women "agreeing" with this statement, while 31.1% of the men and 27.5% of the women "partially agree". A large part of the young interviewees supports the opinion that "spouses must agree on the order and role that everyone has in the family": 66.5% of men and 73.6% of women agreed with this statement, 30,2% of men and 22.8% of women having "partially agreed" (and the rest refraining from answers).

The analysis of the agreement scale averages with statements/attitudes regarding the main responsibilities within the family shows that both men and women share modern role attitudes, the median for three statements out of the four being higher than 2.5 (Table 1). Gender differences are small, women showing their modern attitudes to a greater extent. However, young people, especially men, also partially agree with traditional attitudes towards gender roles in the family. The highest degree of persistence of the traditional role is found concerning the responsibility of the husband to ensure financial cover to the family, the average scale showing that young people, both men and women, agree with this statement.

Table 1

**Attitudes towards gender roles in the family, average scale of agreement (3- agree, 2 - partially agree, 1 - disagree)**

	Men	Women
<b>Traditional attitudes</b>		
In marriage, all decisions must be made by the spouses together	2.84	2.88
Spouses need to agree on the order and roles they each have in the family	2.65	2.71
Both spouses must work and share their family responsibilities equally	2.61	2.68
The modern woman should work and make a career	2.28	2.46
<b>Modern attitudes</b>		
The husband must work and provide material wealth for the family, and the wife must take care of the household and the children.	2.2	1.75
For women, family responsibilities should be at the forefront	2.45	2.16
Caring for children is the main task of women	2.51	2.23
Providing for the family financially is the main task of men	2.85	2.74

Concluding the ideas set out above, we note that, on the one hand, men are given a higher priority in terms of liability for the material security of the family, which is contradictory at first sight if we consider the high degree of participation of women in economic activity, but also absolutely explicable if we refer to the difference between the salaries of women and men. The pay gap, discriminatory labour market practices, and reduced opportunities to combine professional and family roles determine that men continue to be the main breadwinners of the family (Gagauz, 2021).

Application of the logistics model (*Table 2*) for the analysis of role attitudes within the family demonstrates that they depend, to some extent, on the respondents' level of education. Both men and women with higher education rarely support the idea that "the husband should work and the wife should take care of the family, household and children", but as they get older, young people show more conservatism, more often supporting a strict distribution of family roles. Girls support the view that "modern women should work and pursue a career" to a greater extent than boys. But as young adults, their preferences also change and they are more likely to agree that "for a woman, family responsibilities should come first".

**Table 2**

**The influence of the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics on gender role attitudes (N=506)**

Statement	Sex	Age	Education levels	Originally from Chisinau municipality
	B (Std. error)	B (Std. error)	B (Std. error)	B (Std. error)
The husband must work and the wife must take care of the household and children	.441*** (.06)	-.115** (.04)	.313*** (.07)	-.020 (.06)
A modern woman has to work and make a career	-.155*** (.05)	.070* (.04)	.012 (.06)	.045 (.05)
For a woman, family responsibilities should come first	.280*** (.05)	.014 (.04)	.225*** (.07)	.073 (.06)

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; (two-tailed).

Young people support the maintenance of traditional gender roles, with similar reasoning. Thus, girls and boys consider that it is more natural for women to take care of the household and children, given the fact that they are more able to take responsibility for the house and children than men. The reasoning about the role of men as primary caregivers was mainly based on conventional social reasoning like the fact that men can get better jobs and earn more than women, and this role is a responsibility of men. Thus, in their representations on gender roles, young people rely on social stereotypes about the "natural roles" of women and men, as well as on some reasoning about social barriers that women face on the labour market. All this allows us to conclude that a lasting justification for maintaining the traditional division of roles persists, at least in the current socio-economic conditions.

An important question is the distribution of power in the family and leadership. Among young people, there are different ideas on this subject - both traditionalist, patriarchal and more modern ones, involving equality of partners. A considerable part of the respondents (38.2%) consider that the man should be head of the family, and the proportion of those who gave preference to women is insignificant (up to 6%). At the same time, over half of the respondents selected the "both (husband and wife) equally" answer option. The patriarchal idea that a family needs a leader and it should be the husband is much more popular among men (48.7%) than among women (29%). Women are more likely to support the idea that "both are equal" than men, thus demonstrating the longing to have equalitarian relationships in the family.

Traditional representations of the husband as the head of the family are more specific to those from rural areas - 47.2% against 29.3% of the total number of respondents from Chisinau, as well as young people with a low level of education (52.3%). Among young people with higher education, the

share of those who believe that power in the family should belong to "both spouses equally" is higher - 57.8% of men and 63.8% of women.

However, despite the frequent identification of young people with traditional representations regarding the distribution of power in the family, most of the young people interviewed believe that "in marriage, all decisions must be made by spouses together" 84.7% of men and 88.5% of women agreeing with this statement, with 14% of men and 10.8% of women having partially agreed.

An aspect of patriarchal origin preserved and of high significance is the tradition that women should take the surname of the husband when they marry, this being a symbol of family and marriage even in countries with a high level of gender equality, despite the fact that it comes from the times, when women had few legal rights and were perceived as the property of their husbands. The religious origin of this custom signifies the spiritual unity of the family, the secular one - the legal unity, given the fact that married women could not own property, which after marriage passed to husbands. At the same time, this habit also reflected the position of the woman in society as well as the superior position of the husband/man.

Recent studies demonstrate the links between the common traditions of marriage and the dynamics of gender power. It has been found that not only women face stereotypes when they break the tradition, keeping their own names after marriage, but also men whose wives break the family name tradition, as they are considered less powerful (Robnett et al., 2018).

As in most countries, the Family Code of the Republic of Moldova stipulates that "at the conclusion of the marriage, the spouses, may, of their own will, choose the surname of one of them or a compound formed by connecting the names of both as a common family name or each of them keeps their name. of the family she wore until marriage or connects the family name of the other spouse to her own family name". Despite this fact, nowadays, in most cases, women take their husband's name after marriage. The attitudes of young people on this subject are asymmetric in terms of gender. Men interviewed (63.6%) believe that "the wife should take the name of the husband" and only 30% of girls support this idea. A relatively high proportion of respondents consider that this is optional, "depending on the circumstances and according to the desire of the partners" - 29.7% of men and 58.7% of women. Respondents who claim that the husband is the head of the family more often consider the need for the woman to change her name in marriage. Thus, for a significant part of the young interviewees, the takeover by the wife of the husband's name is a symbol of male leadership in the family.

The transformation of gender representations bears, to a large extent, the imprint of socio-economic conditions and opportunities for women to achieve economic independence. In the Republic of Moldova, the last decades have been marked by numerous socio-economic crises, poverty, and low living standards, which are still a problem for many families. At the same time, in young people, it motivates the postponement of marriage and family formation after graduation and gaining an acceptable lifestyle level.

The distribution of power in the family depends on the income of the spouses and the contribution of each in the common family budget. Young people support the idea that the formation of the family budget is a responsibility of both spouses, with over 88% of respondents agreeing with this statement (over 86% of men and 90% of women). This confirms the orientation of young people towards the family model with both spouses employed, which allows ensuring a decent standard of living for the family and children and the high orientations of women for participation in the labour market.

Given that the study was conducted among young people who were married, they were asked if the material situation of the partner is important to them. The obtained results show that this aspect has a certain impact in choosing the life partner. Thus, 23.8% of the men and 39.5% of the women interviewed said that for them the material situation of the partner is "very important" and "important", about 48% of the respondents of both sexes consider that it is "not the most important thing" and only 19.6% of men and 9.7% of women answered, "not at all important" (the rest of the respondents had a hard time answering this question). These results reflect, to some extent, that some young people, especially women, support the stereotypes of old, when the older husband, accumulating property and human capital, already had income to support the family, thus being able to and allows her to get married. For a woman, usually of a younger age, youth and health were considered her most valued capital, her fate related to household chores and childbirth. At the same time, these

representations correlate with young people's responses to men's higher responsibility for the family's financial well-being. Official statistics show that after the birth of a child, men remain the main breadwinners of the family, while a high percentage of women unemployed women unemployed before childcare leave receive a minimal allowance, which does not meet the needs of the mother and child. Thus, young women being insecure in their financial stability in connection with a child's birth want to see material support in the future husband. Respectively, for young girls the financial well-being of the partner may be more important than for young men.

The study showed that young people face several problems in achieving financial independence due to unemployment, reduced employment opportunities and low wages, only 16.5% of respondents stating that they are "fully financially insured", while 42.9% "do not always meet the necessary expenses" and 35.4% "depend on their parents". Even among youth aged 30-34, about 22% "could not cope without the help of parents." Women more often than men have stated that they are materially dependent on either their parents or their partner.

Table 3

#### Self-assessment by youth of their financial situation

	I am financially insured, I have enough for everything I need	I do what I have to do, even though I can't always afford it	Without the help of my parents, I wouldn't be able to do it	My partner supports me	Other situation	Total
Men	17.2	48.1	32.6	1.7	0.4	100
Women	16.0	38.7	37.5	6.3	1.5	100
Total	16.5	43	35.3	4.2	1	100

#### CONCLUSIONS

Research results show that young people's perceptions of the basic qualities of men and women are still under the pressure of stereotypes, constituting an intermediate model of transition from traditional roles, based on the division of labour, to modern egalitarian ones, which involve equal sharing of women family responsibilities and roles.

Although gender stereotypes persist in the family, they are not already prevalent, with both sexes likely to share material family and household responsibilities, especially those related to raising and caring for children. To the extent that women will enjoy more opportunities for self-affirmation in the professional sphere and the conditions that will allow both parents to combine successfully professional and family roles, these differences will diminish.

Although there were some differences between young people from Chisinau and those from other localities in attitudes about gender roles in the family, they are not so pronounced, given that young people from other localities become rapidly integrated into the urban environment during their studies and employment, assimilating the way of life, values and representations of urban youth.

Young people with higher education more often give preference to the equal distribution of gender roles in the family compared to young people with a lower level of education. Girls more often than boys advocate for a fair relationship, although in some respects, such as the responsibility of men for the financial support of the family, the importance of the material situation of the partner, expresses rather traditional views.

Given the high degree of aspirations of young women for professional activity and career advancement and reduced opportunities to combine professional and family roles we can predict that this discrepancy will continue to be a barrier to achieving this goal, helping to preserve the traditional gender relations.

The study's conclusions fall within the theory of multiple equilibrium (Esping-Andersen et al., 2013), especially the intermediate type, specific for countries in transition from the traditional type of gender relations to the modern one. The question is how long this transition will last, given that

structural and institutional factors are changing slowly, being a barrier to real progress in the field of gender equality in the economic and social sphere.

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