

## FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF WOMEN'S IDEAS ABOUT MATERNITY BEFORE AND AFTER CHILDBIRTH: SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FACTORS (BASED ON THE DATA OF UKRAINE)

<sup>a</sup>NADIYA CHEPELIEVA, <sup>b</sup>OLGA CHORNA, <sup>c</sup>IRYNA NECHITAILO, <sup>d</sup>YEVHEN PIDCHASOV, <sup>e</sup>TETIANA YELCHANINOVA, <sup>f</sup>TARAS ZHVANIYA

<sup>a,c</sup>Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs, 27, Lev Landau Ave., 61000, Kharkiv, Ukraine

<sup>b,d,f</sup>H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, 29, Alchevskiyh Str., 61002, Kharkiv, Ukraine

email: <sup>a</sup>chepn@ukr.net, <sup>b</sup>olgachornaya2@gmail.com,

<sup>c</sup>nechit@ukr.net, <sup>d</sup>psyevgeniy@gmail.com,

<sup>e</sup>t.m.elchaninova@gmail.com, <sup>f</sup>taras.zhvaniia@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the study of women's ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child. The general psychological theory of attitude and the dispositional theory were used as a theoretical and methodological basis. The empirical basis of the article is represented by the results of a study (online survey) conducted by the authors (adult women (18 years old and above) who have experience of motherhood were interviewed; n=198). According to results of the study, discrepancies were found in women's ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child, and the study allowed determining the main factors of the formation and transformation of women's ideas about motherhood. It is concluded that in order to avoid significant problems at the stage of realization of motherhood, it is necessary that ideas about motherhood are formed on the basis of an objective situation, as well as objective facts (and not dreams, myths, images, and stereotypes). According to the authors, this will be facilitated by the implementation of a thorough system of social support for motherhood, the development and implementation of a program of psychological measures aimed at preparing a woman for motherhood, with taking into account the specifics of restructuring her life after the birth of a child.

**Keywords:** motherhood; social stereotypes; social attitudes; ideas about motherhood; idealization of ideas about motherhood; transformation of ideas about motherhood, psycho-emotional state of the mother.

### 1 Introduction

Even before the birth of a child and in the process of carrying it, every future mother has certain expectations regarding it (the child's appearance, character traits, etc., as well as how they will interact, communicate, and spend time together. If a woman is expecting a child for the first time, then, as a rule, all her expectations are based mainly on stereotypes existing in society, which distort and simplify the real picture of motherhood. In general, it should be noted that the field of motherhood is one of the most associated with stereotypes. According to O. Strelnyk, doctor of sociological sciences, these stereotypes are spread by modern media and to a large extent idealize the idea of motherhood. She notes: "...The long-standing idealization of motherhood leads to the demonization of motherhood, when mothers themselves begin to say that motherhood is exclusively stressful... The truth is always in the middle. Life experiences are very diverse, they are never purely black or purely white... Such idealization harms women because they are faced with the fact that they are not as perfect mothers as they thought they could be..." [6].

Through mass media and communication, society imposes the opinion that a child and its needs are the most important thing in a woman's life, that children are a priori happiness. However, the realities are such that when a woman gives birth, taking care of the child, she gets very tired, sleeps poorly, is dissatisfied with her appearance and quality of life in general, so she does not feel happy at all. This causes feelings of guilt and frustration. Therefore, a kind of protest is forming among the female part of society, which can manifest itself in significant (dangerous for the health of the woman and her child) postponement of motherhood, conscious refusal of motherhood, etc.

In view of the above, the purpose of this article is to theoretically substantiate and empirically investigate the differences in women's perceptions of motherhood before and after the birth of a child, to determine the main factors of the transformation of these perceptions.

### 2 Materials and Methods

In the theoretical part of the work, general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis are used. As a basis for the theoretical substantiation of differences in the expectations and perceptions of women before and after the birth of a child, the general psychological theory of attitude and the dispositional theory were used, the developers and supporters of which paid special attention to the study of the role of social attitudes, in particular the reproductive attitude. The empirical part of the article presents the results of an online survey conducted by the authors using a Google Forms questionnaire (December 2021 - January 2022). Adult women (over 18 years of age) who have experience of motherhood acted as the research object. The data table obtained as a result of the online survey was adjusted and adapted to the format of computer processing in SPSS, which made it possible to not only to analyze one-dimensional distributions by characteristics, but also to apply the methods of cluster and comparative analysis.

### 3 Results and Discussion

Individual and group expectations are closely related to social stereotypes and attitudes. Social stereotypes and attitudes as socio-psychological phenomena were studied by such scientists as R. Abelson, S. Breckler, A. Greenwald, G. Allport, D. Prentice, A. Pretkanis, and others [1; 2; 8]. The works of T. Newcom are also devoted to the study of social attitudes - he believes that social attitudes are based on the consent of the subject to consider certain objects or situations through the prism of social norms and values [21, p. 111]. Ukrainian psychologists V. Bosnyuk, S. Kucherenko, S. Sklyarov, Yu. Yurina, and others paid attention to consideration of attitude as an evaluative relationship to social objects [4; 13; 31].

The study of the reproductive attitude, as a kind of social attitude, is based on the achievements of the schools of D. Uznadze, V. Yadov, and G. Akopov [18; 20]. According to A. Belyaeva and O. Nagula, it is important to develop constructive parental attitudes in young people even before the birth of children. Measures for the development of parental attitudes should be aimed at understanding the structure, properties, and socio-psychological factors of the formation of parental attitudes, developing constructive communication skills, in particular, in the distribution of family and parental responsibilities, optimal resolution of conflict situations in the family, consolidation of effective models of behavior in the family microenvironment [3, p. 15].

As for the topic of preparing a woman for childbirth and raising a child, it is largely represented by medical and medical-psychological aspects of motherhood in the scientific works of such authors as V. Abramchenko, O. Arzhanova, L. Baz, O. Bazhenova, O. Bailyuk, V. Brutman, K. Voronin, N. Danylenko, O. Ishchuk, K. Kimova, Yu. Malyovana, O. Rogachevskiy, M. Radionova, O. Tiunova, G. Filipova, and others. The pre- and postnatal conditions of women were studied by such Ukrainian and foreign scientists as L. Altshuler, V. Barth, J. Zuckerbrough-Miller, M. Mazo, R. Suri, N. Tatarova, V. Ushakova, L. Faerbanks, G. Shamanina, etc. [26; 27; 28].

A significant contribution to the development of scientific ideas about the phenomenon of motherhood was made by the Ukrainian scientist O. Strelnyk. In her scientific works, she demonstrates the variability of motherhood practices in a socio-historical dimension, investigates changes in the socio-demographic characteristics of the modern type of motherhood, outlines the contradictions between these changes and the policy of motherhood support in Ukraine, analyzes the macrostructures of motherhood practices in modern Ukrainian society, represented by state policy, the labor market and sociocultural meanings of motherhood, etc. [25, p. 71].

In view of the problem raised in this article, the study of Danish scientists L. Mortensen, H. Hegaard, A. Andersen, and J. Bentzen deserves attention. They conducted a survey (by questionnaire) of 863 women aged 20 to 40 (Denmark). The questions of the questionnaire were aimed at identifying intentions and attitudes towards creating a family, knowledge about the birth of a child, etc. According to the results of this study, the majority of women indicated that motherhood was definitely important, that they hoped to have two or three children, while about half of the respondents intended to have their last child after age 35. However, they noted the following as the most important prerequisites for creating a family with children: living in a stable relationship; graduation; stable and high financial situation; the presence of a workplace that can be preserved at the birth of a child. In other words, the majority of female respondents noted that they need sufficient social prerequisites and guarantees for the birth of a child [15, p. 470].

The problem is that society is arranged in such a way that the average woman can reach the social status that provides for sufficient social conditions and guarantees at about 38-39 years of age, and, therefore, women either postpone motherhood or decide not to give birth to children at all. The other side of the problem is manifested in the fact that after the birth of a child, certain positive expectations of a woman do not find real confirmation. There is a mismatch of ideas, expectations, and reality, which negatively affects the emotional and mental state of the mother. Under the pressure of social stereotypes and own ideas that are formed, including under the influence of the older generation, the mother feels guilty that she “wrongly” raises, feeds, dresses, cannot calm the child, etc. Along with this, the causes of fatigue and sadness, which are characterized by a moderate decrease in mood, emotional lability, vulnerability, tearfulness, devastation, can be the peculiarities of the course of pregnancy and childbirth, the presence of endocrine disorders, toxicosis of pregnancy, physical immaturity and psychological unpreparedness for pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood in general.

Also, the reasons for the motivation of young women regarding the birth/refusal of a child, the issues of forming ideas that would combine the foundations of the mother's role as an essential existential phenomenon which carries a positive sign, with the real situation occurring at birth of the child with all its positive manifestations and problems, are still not sufficiently revealed and researched.

The presence of the above-mentioned “gaps” in scientific knowledge necessitates a more complete theoretical justification and empirical study of the discrepancy between the expectations and perceptions of women before the birth of a child and their real psychological state after the birth of a child, including the transformation of perceptions about motherhood.

Women's psychological readiness for childbirth is determined by the peculiarities of the formation of maternal identity, psycho-emotional perception and course of pregnancy, as well as the intra-role structure of the family. In the subconscious of many women, especially before the birth of their first child, they form their own ideal picture of motherhood, which includes an idea of what her life will be like after the birth of a child, what kind of mother she will be, how she will raise and care for the baby, reflecting rather the desire of the mother than the future reality, which we considered in more detail in our previous work [5, p. 121].

A concept related to the system of ideas about motherhood, but not synonymous with it, is the concept of readiness for motherhood, which is more widely represented in psychological research. In particular, K. Lorenz, R. Shoven, X. Montane, and others devoted their scientific works to the study of the state of the mother's psycho-emotional sphere and psychological readiness for motherhood. Among Ukrainian scientists, V. Vyshniivskiy, O. Ishchuk, L. Loboyko, N. Yaremchuk, and others are investigating similar conditions [9; 14; 29; 30]. If to synthesize the conclusions of the researchers listed above, then psychological readiness for motherhood can be interpreted as a

specific personal formation, the leading component of which is the subject-object orientation in relation to the unborn child. This attitude is projected after the birth of the child into actual maternal behavior and determines its effectiveness.

E. Badinter takes a different position, as noted by the Ukrainian researcher M. Neroba in her scientific article “Motherhood as a psychological phenomenon” [19, p. 92]. The article states that Badinter traced the history of maternal attitudes for four centuries and came to the conclusion that the so-called “maternal instinct” is a myth. The researcher did not find any trends in the behavior of women that would serve as evidence for the presence of a maternal instinct. Moreover, she revealed excessive variability of women's feelings towards children, depending on culture and ambition. As M. Neroba concludes, “...motherly love is a concept that is filled with different meanings in different periods of history. A woman becomes a better or worse mother depending on whether motherhood is valued or devalued in society” [19, p. 93].

The results of various studies devoted to the investigation of the features of ideas about motherhood confirm the value of motherhood as an individual characteristic for a young woman. The desire to become a mother is the most complex need of a woman, which is determined by the reflection of the woman's own conditions and the desire to experience them in the process of interaction with the child. The image of the future child, one's own experience, family and traditional models of motherhood are involved in the development of maternal feelings. The idea of “maternal feeling” sometimes has a tinge of disappointment due to the discrepancy between the real experience and the imaginary one. In any case, dreams, desires, and attitudes significantly affect the overall perception of parenthood and are a strong motivating factor. The image of the mother is a complex mental formation, which is a representation of the projection of value-semantic and qualitative characteristics of maternal behavior in the consciousness, as well as world perception, presented at different levels of a hierarchically defined system of reflection: perceptual, conceptual and amodal [5, p. 123].

In her research, V. Kramchenkova comes to the conclusion that women are guided by values that are traditionally considered “typically feminine” and ensure compliance with socially stereotyped requirements for women. So, an ideal woman should be soft, tolerant, obedient, guided by the principles of a man [11, p. 41; 12, p. 330]. O. Kocharyan and Yu. Svyrenko in their article emphasize the psychological aspects of the concept of reproductive attitude and its understanding [10, p. 125]. Psychologist N. Romanenko singles out five main stages of the formation of maternal feelings, noting that this is a complex process, the course of which depends on many factors: genetic; biological; family environment; social sphere. She also notes that motherhood includes evolutionary aspects, has cultural characteristics and individual ontogenesis. According to N. Romanenko, the first stage of the formation of maternal feeling is the “lessons” that a girl learns from her mother, even in the prenatal period. The second stage is related to the play period in the girl's life. The third stage – “nursing” - begins at about 4.5-5 years and ends at the beginning of puberty. The fourth stage - the differentiation of the maternal and sexual spheres - coincides with the period of puberty. The fifth stage is interaction with own child, when own children appeared. The girl grew up, she had her own children. This period begins even before significant changes begin in the body of the expectant mother and continues until the end of life [22]. At the same time, E. Shcherban proves that there is a strong idealization of expectations regarding motherhood, deprivation term of everyday element and saturation with remnants of professional knowledge. The absence of a domestic element in the image of motherhood can be explained, among other things, by the general tendency of women to leave the household to ensure professional and personal fulfillment, which is very powerful in modern society [23]. This conclusion resonates with our opinion on the idealization of women's ideas and expectations about motherhood, and also finds confirmation in the scientific works of L.L. Mortensen, H.K. Hegaard, A.N. Andersen, J.G. Bentzen, in which it is noted that women who are

focused on professional development and careers are aware of the incompatibility between professional employment and responsibilities for raising children [15, p. 480].

After the birth of a child, many factors affect the mother's psychological state (state of health, course of childbirth, support of loved ones, material condition, peculiarities of the child's health), including the formed system of ideas about motherhood. Postpartum mood disorders cover the period of childbirth and the first months after it. It is believed that they affect 70% to 80% of women. More than 50% of women have violations of the mother-child relationship. And to a large extent, the reason for this is the inconsistency of the formed model of ideas with reality [7].

Thus, it can be concluded that the following remain understudied: psychological factors of a woman's readiness to give birth to a child and care for it; the ratio of ideas about motherhood formed before childbirth and postpartum reality; peculiarities of a woman's psychological adaptation to new conditions associated with motherhood; transformation of ideas about motherhood.

In view of the above, we conducted our own empirical research aimed at identifying differences in women's perceptions of motherhood before and after the birth of a child, as well as attitudes toward motherhood in general (vision of the meaning of motherhood, perspectives of own motherhood, etc.). The research was conducted using an online survey with a questionnaire created in Google Forms. Adult women (over 18 years of age) who have experience of motherhood acted as the research object. Data collection took place between December 15, 2021 and January 15, 2022. In total, we managed to interview 198 women aged 20 to 68. The sample is random, non-representative. The announcement about conducting the research was posted on social networks, every woman over 18 could answer the questions of the questionnaire. Undoubtedly, the specified sample size is insufficient for the general population represented by all adult women of Ukraine. Let us note that our research was of a pilot nature, it involved approbation of the tools, as well as the identification of important trends, which can serve as a basis for conducting a further larger representative survey.

The main block of the questionnaire was represented by questions about the respondents' ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child. The questionnaire provided an opportunity to explore changes in these perceptions. The questionnaire included questions aimed at finding out: the level of readiness and attitude towards motherhood before the appearance of the first child; factors in the formation of ideas about motherhood; influence of others' opinions on decision-making about motherhood; the level of coincidence of formed ideas about motherhood with the realities of life after the birth of a child; the biggest difficulties that a young mother had to face after the birth of a child, which she did not imagine before the birth of the child; to whom a woman could turn for help in difficult situations related to the birth and upbringing of a child; the most difficult period of motherhood; differences when expecting the first and subsequent children; the meaning of motherhood; social roles that a woman considers most important for herself. In addition, we specified women's number of children, marital status (whether they are married), professional employment, and some other socio-demographic characteristics.

Regarding the number of children among our respondents, 67.6% of respondents have one child, while all others have more than one child (age of children is 3 months and older). About 70% are married. Regarding professional employment, 50.2% are women who work as hired workers, 11.7% are self-employed, and 38.1% are on parental leave.

The results of the online survey make it possible to determine the main trends in the perceptions and expectations of women regarding motherhood and to draw the following conclusions.

Analyzing the general readiness for motherhood, it can be noted that approximately 72% of the surveyed women believe that they were ready for motherhood, while 16% believe that they were not ready for it to one degree or another (see Figure 1).

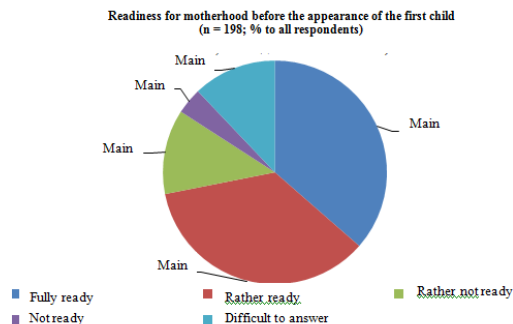


Figure 1. General readiness for motherhood

Let us note that the percentage of women who hesitated to give an exact answer to this question is very noticeable. In our opinion, such hesitancy can also, to some extent, mean not full readiness for motherhood. Thus, we can say that quite a large part of our respondents experienced certain complications in making a decision about motherhood, the reasons for which require a more thorough analysis, which we will carry out below.

As for the meaning of motherhood, the responses were distributed as follows: 64.2% answered that motherhood for them is "an expression of love and care towards a child, which is inherent in a woman by nature itself"; 11.7% of women believe that a woman should simply have children "for happiness", choosing for herself the generally accepted model of female behavior in society. A total of 24.1% of women named other "meanings", such as: "transferring their knowledge and life experience"; "give the child what she could not get in her childhood"; "fulfillment of social and family duty"; "education of an independent person". It can be noted that despite slightly different views on the meaning of motherhood and their overall positive orientation, those that correlate with generally accepted stereotypes about the role of women in society prevail, which confirms our assumptions about stereotypes' significant influence on the idea of motherhood.

In order to analyze the factors that influenced women's perception of motherhood, we asked respondents what they themselves think about this matter (it was suggested to choose no more than three answer options). The majority of women (44.3% of respondents) believe that their ideas were formed on the basis of their own childhood experiences (taking care of siblings, observing parents, etc.); 36.3% of women believe that their ideas were formed on the basis of their own dreams. Another 37.7% are sure that their ideas are based on the literature they read, Internet sources, the experience of friends and acquaintances who already have children in their families.

From this distribution of answers, it can be assumed that a little more than a third of women are consciously preparing for motherhood by reading educational literature, attending childbirth preparation courses, and watching video materials on raising and caring for a child. All others rely either on their own subjective dreams or no less subjective childhood experience, which can lead to further problems with the discrepancy between ideas and reality.

Making a decision about motherhood is one of the key indicators of readiness for it, especially at the psychosocial (readiness of the couple as a separate system, planning the restructuring of their social life) and psychophysiological (emotional, motivational readiness) levels. In this regard, we asked women about the factors that influenced their decision on motherhood (it was suggested to choose no more than three answer options). Thus, 60.4% of women noted that their own opinion regarding planning the birth of children was most important; 40.2%

admitted that the husband's opinion had great weight. It is also important for most women to understand that the difficulties of motherhood and child care fall primarily on her shoulders. As for the opinion of others (parents, friends, colleagues, etc.), for 44.1% of women their opinion did not matter much, and for 35.9% it did not matter at all. So, we see that in the matter of having a child, a woman listens, first of all, to herself, her capabilities, feelings and to the opinion of her husband, as the future father of the child. This conclusion is also confirmed by the distribution of answers to the question "Who can you turn to in difficult situations related to the birth and upbringing of a child?" (it was suggested to choose all possible answer options). The results show that 68.5% of respondents answered – "to their husband" and 60.3% - "to their parents". That is, in the implementation of motherhood, women mainly count on themselves and the closest people.

So, we observe a fairly high level of preparedness of the interviewed women for motherhood (at least, at the level of self-evaluation), most of them have ideas about motherhood formed on the basis of childhood experience (taking care of younger brothers and sisters, models of parental behavior of significant adults), based on own dreams. That is, the ideas are based to a greater extent on the subjective perception of motherhood and parental roles. Slightly more than a third of women are consciously preparing for the role of mother, based on objective facts (literary sources, informative articles on the Internet, etc.). It can be assumed that those women who formed an idea about motherhood based on subjective experience and their own dreams are not prepared for reality.

Regarding the (non)coincidence of ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child, the answers were distributed as follows: 32.2% of respondents believe that the ideas completely coincide; 47.6% believe that the ideas rather coincided, but there are still certain differences; 20.2% of women noted that the ideas either did not match at all or only partially matched. For 36.4% of women, the first month after the birth of a child was the most difficult, which is associated with a woman's adaptation to the new role of mother, as well as the process of physiological recovery after childbirth. For 55.6% of women, the most difficult period was the first year after the birth of a child, when there is a dynamic adaptation to new living conditions with a child and intense psychophysiological changes in the child. Also, 8% of women answered that the most difficult period was the age of the child from 1 to 3 years. Respondents who have 3-4 children gave this answer more often. We assume that this position is related to their greater experience of interacting in a family with several children of different ages. The need to take care of older children at the same time makes it much more difficult to pay enough attention to the younger child, who is beginning to be intensely interested in the environment.

Among the respondents, 40.1% noted that the biggest difficulty for a woman who has become a mother is her physiological recovery after childbirth. Respondents who gave birth to a child for the first time are surprised to note that the recovery process seemed quite long, that they did not imagine it would be so difficult. Moreover, 30.5% noted that chronic fatigue and lack of sleep became a problem for them. For 27.3% of respondents, the most difficult were the problems of household organization; 1.9% hesitated to give an exact answer to this question, or wrote their own specific reasons (for example, a congenital disease of the child, an alcoholic husband, a catastrophic lack of funds for food and child care items).

Thus, we can see that even though almost a third of women are consciously preparing for motherhood, it is still difficult for them to adapt to the new conditions of life in the status of a mother.

In social terms, women consider the biggest problem to be the lack of thorough social support for motherhood (52.4% of respondents) and a convenient work schedule for modern women with children (56.1% of respondents). When asking women about this, we also offered to choose several options for answers

(as in several cases described above), so the total result for all answers may exceed 100%. The problem of combining the work schedule and child care leads to the fact that many women have to give up their careers in favor of a child, but internally not every woman is satisfied with such a choice. At the same time, 29.1% of respondents note that due to the illness of a small child, they often have to go on sick leave, which negatively affects the quality of the professional duties performance and the career as a whole. Even some time after the end of preschool age, the need to constantly monitor the child during the day remains relevant (23.8% of the interviewed women marked this as a significant problem). If for a woman her career growth is of great importance, then the optimal combination of her professional life with the work schedule of children's institutions, etc. seems to be a very difficult task. In case of rejection of a career (even temporarily), a woman may lose her professional skills, suffer psychologically due to her inactive position, etc. Therefore, the objective limitations of a woman's ability to return to work, related to the responsibilities of caring for a child, negatively affect her feeling of self-sufficiency, protection and, accordingly, the entire atmosphere of family life.

Our next step was a comparative analysis of women's ideas about motherhood, depending on individual factors (age, environment, etc.).

Analyzing the age factor, we divided female respondents into two groups, depending on the activity of the reproductive function. At the same time, we set the conditional limit of differentiation of these two groups at the age of 40 years. To determine this limit, we used special scientific literature of a medical nature [17, p. 110; 32] According to this parameter, all respondents were divided as follows: up to 40 years (age of greater reproductive activity) – 57.2% (first group); after 40 years (age of less reproductive activity) – 42.8% (second group). Next, we conducted a comparative analysis of ideas about motherhood in each of the selected groups. The following were the most significant results.

91.1% of the representatives of the second group are included in professional activities, while among the representatives of the first group there are only 21.5% of such, while the so-called "intermediate" options ("housewife", "working at home", etc.) make up 35.3% in total. Such results, on the one hand, can be considered objectively determined, since women after the age of 40 have children who are either adults or have reached the age of relative independence, which allows women to fully engage in professional activities. Women younger than 40 are forced to be more actively involved in child care, which prevents them from leading a full professional life. The peculiarity of these results is that among 78.5% of women of reproductive age, who are not fully included in social and professional activities, there is a part of women whose children have reached the age of 3 years and older, but still this does not allow them to be fully included in professional activities. These results confirm our assumptions that the presence of minor children and the need for constant and careful care of them make it difficult for a woman to achieve her professional (self) realization, even despite the involvement of children in kindergartens care, schools, etc. The criticality of the situation is that the age up to 40 is usually the age of the most active professional, intellectual, and social growth, which seems difficult for women who have small children at this age.

Regarding the number of children in representatives of two different age groups, 64.2% of women of the first group have one child and 73.3% of women of the second group have one child. We assume that such data are due to the fact that the birth and upbringing of children by women of the second group occurred at the beginning of the 2000s, when there was a difficult social situation, including with social support for motherhood (reduction in the number of kindergartens, lack of a vaccination system, the actual lack of social facilities at birth child, etc.). In addition, the respondents of the second group experienced a very difficult period in the 1990s, which was characterized by an extremely high level of uncertainty, therefore, most likely, they were afraid to give birth to more than

one child, because they had doubts about the stability of their own resources and the ability to provide a child with everything necessary. On the other hand, representatives of the first group experienced conscious adulthood in a more stable society, which, as we assume, had a positive effect on the willingness of almost 40% to have more than one child.

The distribution of women by age revealed another interesting trend regarding the (dis)coincidence of ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child. In particular, 18.4% of female respondents under the age of 40 answered that their ideas "before" and "after" coincided completely, 56.3% answered that they rather coincided, and 22.2% believe that they did not coincide at all, 3.1% hesitated to give an unambiguous answer to this question. As for women after 40 years of age, a completely different trend manifested itself in this group: 48.3% of respondents report complete coincidence of their ideas (which is more than twice as many as in the first group); the answer "rather they coincided" was fixed in 35.7% of respondents; did not coincide at all - in 14.1%, 1.9% hesitated to give an unambiguous answer (see Table 1).

Table 1: (Non)coincidence of ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child among representatives of different age groups (n1=57.2% n2=42.8%)

Age of women	The ideas completely coincided	The ideas to some extent coincide / did not coincide	The ideas did not coincide at all	Difficult to answer
Under 40 (n1)	18.4	56.3	22.2	3.1
After 40 (n2)	48.3	35.7	14.1	1.9

For women under 40, the difficulties associated with the lack of independence of the child and the need for increased care for it are still significant, however, women after 40, most likely, have already pushed the relevant period of their life out of their memory. The displacement mechanism, firstly, allows preserving positive memories and eliminating negative ones (i.e., psychological defense mechanisms are included), secondly, it allows maintaining a normal or even high self-esteem of a woman as a mother, despite the difficulties experienced.

Regarding the level of readiness for the appearance of the first child, again, women under the age of 40 indicated that they were completely ready - 27.2%, rather ready - 32.7%, rather not ready - 21.1% and not ready at all - 19%. That is, about 40% of representatives of this group indicate one or another degree of unpreparedness for the appearance of the first child. At the same time, women after the age of over 40 answered as follows: were completely ready - 45.3%, rather ready - 32.6%, rather not ready - 12.4%, not ready at all - 9.7%. This confirms the assumption that with the passage of time, difficulties and negative moments associated with the birth of a child and the first years of caring for it are displaced.

The most important meaning of motherhood for 85.5% of women under 40 is caring for and expressing love for a child. Women after the age of 40 were less unanimous in defining the meaning of motherhood, so the answers to the corresponding question were distributed as follows: 37.3% consider it important to express care and love; 29.6% see the meaning of motherhood in the realization of a "full-fledged female life" (attitude - "every woman should have children"); 21.9% - in realizing their potential (to raise a child, to pass on their knowledge, life experience); 11% see the meaning in something else (for example, in the continuation of the family, in ensuring a "reliable old age", etc.). Probably, older women already see a person in a child, and not just a baby who needs to be taken care of, a sense of fulfilled reproductive role appears, a certain transformation of ideas about motherhood takes place, which

finds expression in (often unconscious) longing for the role of a mother.

As for the ideas about the greatest difficulties of motherhood, then, once again, certain differences between the groups representing respondents of different ages manifested. For women under 40, the greatest difficulties are the following (respondents had the opportunity to choose no more than three answer options): the need to often leave professional activities due to child illnesses (57.4% of respondents); lack of a convenient work or study schedule (50.3% of respondents); the need to constantly monitor the child during the day (34.3% of respondents). As for women over 40, women mentioned the listed difficulties three times less.

77.7% of women who rated their level of readiness for motherhood as high are married, so they felt more protected and confident. These women's ideas about motherhood were formed, first of all, on the basis of childhood experiences and their own dreams (57.7% of respondents in the group). The greatest meaning of motherhood for these women is expressed in the care and expression of love for the child. The most difficult period for this category of women turned out to be the first six months (44.4% of respondents in the group). At the same time, 84.2% of respondents felt love and happiness from the birth of a child. Only 5.5% are categorically negative about having children in the future.

85.7% of women who rated their level of readiness for motherhood as average or low are in unstable relationships, divorced or raising a child alone. These women's ideas about motherhood were formed, first of all, based on the experience of friends and acquaintances, as well as their own dreams (68.4% of respondents in the group). Women of this group see the greatest meaning of motherhood in the opportunity to establish trusting relationships with their children and help them overcome difficulties. The most difficult period for the women of this group was the first year of the child's life (42.8% of respondents in the group). Also, 71.4% of women felt love and happiness from the birth of a child, 42.8% of women liked watching the "new little life". Among the women of this group, 28.5% categorically do not plan to have a child later in life.

Thus, we see another regularity, which is as follows: despite the similarity of the conditions for the formation of ideas in both groups, in the group with a high readiness for motherhood, the stability of the family system and family relationships made it possible to pass the period of transformation of ideas more effectively.

45.2% of women who noted a complete coincidence of ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child, claim that they would give birth to more children if there were favorable conditions in society. Also, 90.1% of women from this group consider the social role of the mother to be one of the most important in their lives. For 50.3% of these women, their husband's opinion is as important as their own. At the same time, in the group of women who noted the discrepancy between the ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child, the opinion of their husbands has weight only for 20.2% of respondents, and their own opinion - for 80.4%. This indicates a certain lack of trust in loved ones, an orientation solely on own strength. And yet 60.3% of such women felt love for the child from the very birth, and approximately the same number watched new life with interest and gradually got used to their new role, although they were not completely ready for it from the very beginning. As we can see, readiness for motherhood is closely related to the level and quality of family relationships.

All this proves our thesis that effective preparation for motherhood, the formation of adequate ideas against the background of emotional readiness for the birth of a child, lays the foundations for the positive dynamics of the family system at the birth of a child.

#### 4 Conclusion

Based on the results of theoretical analysis and empirical research, the results of which are presented in detail in this article, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

- Three main stages of motherhood can be distinguished: 1) formation of ideas about motherhood; 2) making a decision about motherhood; 3) realization of motherhood;
- Each of the stages of motherhood has its own peculiarities and difficulties, which, nevertheless, are closely related to each other. We present the most negative scenario of the development of these problems: 1) idealization of ideas about motherhood; 2) making a decision about motherhood without taking into account the objective situation and objective facts; 3) stressful perception of difficulties accompanying the realization of motherhood, significant deterioration of a woman's psycho-emotional state, postpartum depression, inadequately low self-esteem, problems in the family, in relations with her husband and loved ones;
- In this way, the problems of realizing motherhood as a whole begin with the excessive idealization of the image and social roles of the mother, which are reflected in the ideas of women. The main factors of such idealization and, accordingly, the formation of women's ideas about motherhood are the following: social stereotypes and attitudes regarding the image of the mother, regarding the social roles of the mother, etc., as well as one's own childhood experience (care with younger brothers and/or sisters, parental behavior models) and dreams (about marriage and children).
- The following are the most influential factors causing the inconsistency of a woman's ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child: long physiological recovery after childbirth; high level of child care workload; the absence of a clear system of social support for motherhood, which leads to full or partial, more or less prolonged social isolation of a woman;
- The most influential factors in the transformation of women's ideas about motherhood before and after the birth of a child, which, despite all the difficulties, ensure a certain continuity between the imaginary (before) and the real (after), are the support of the young mother by her husband, as well as close relatives.
- In order to avoid significant problems at the stage of implementing motherhood, it is necessary that ideas about motherhood are formed on the basis of an objective situation, as well as objective facts (and not dreams, myths, images and stereotypes), that is, they are not idealized, but realistic. In our opinion, the most realistic are the beliefs of women who undergo special training (independently or at special courses and/or trainings) before the birth of a child. Such training includes: work with the risks of motherhood; awareness of possible difficulties of motherhood and working out options for overcoming them; formation of skills for building own unique model of motherhood, which would take into account the interests of the mother as an individual (for example, professional) and foresee ways of their implementation.
- It is necessary to implement a thorough system of social support for motherhood, develop and implement a program of psychological measures aimed at preparing a woman for motherhood, taking into account the specifics of restructuring her life after the birth of a child. This will allow: 1) weakening the influence of social stereotypes and attitudes, preventing the formation of overly idealized ideas about motherhood; 2) strengthening the justification of the decision about motherhood, which is based on knowledge/awareness of possible difficulties and readiness to overcome them; 3) strengthening a woman's ability to cope with difficulties at the stage of realizing motherhood, be a happy mother, and enjoy life in general.

#### Literature:

1. Abelson, R. P. & Prentice, D. A. (1989). Beliefs as possessions: A functional perspective. In: A. R. Pratkanis, S. J. Breckler, A. G. Greenwald (Eds.). *Attitude structure and function*. (pp. 361–381). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
2. Allport, G. W. (1935) Attitudes. In: M. Murchison (Ed.). *A handbook of social psychology* (pp. 798-844). Clark University Press.
3. Belyaeva, A. V. & Nagula, O. L. (2017). Peculiarities of parental attitudes in young women. *Scientific Achievements of Students of the Institute of Human, 1(7)*, 12-18.
4. Bosnyuk, V. F., Deineko, N. V., & Sklyarov, S. O. (2019). Attitude as an evaluative relation to social objects. International scientific and practical conference "Prospects for the development of psychology as a science in EU countries and Ukraine" (1-2 February 2019). Warsaw, Republic of Poland: Izdevnieciba "Baltija Publishing", pp. 108-111.
5. Chepeleva, N. I. (2020). Transformation of women's ideas during the period of expecting a child as a factor of adaptation to motherhood. *Theory and Practice of Modern Psychology, 1(3)*, 121-126.
6. Chomu materynstvo sprymaietsia cherez pryzmu stereotypiv i dohm? [Why is motherhood perceived through the prism of stereotypes and dogma?] <http://surl.li/esayo>.
7. Dolishnya, N. I. (2010). Postpartum depression: features of the course and treatment. *NeuroNEWS: Psychoneurology and Neuropsychiatry, 8(27)*. <http://surl.li/esbcc>.
8. Greenwald, A. G. (1989). Why attitudes are important: Defining attitude and attitude theory 20 years later. In: A. R. Pratkanis, S. J. Breckler, A. G. Greenwald (Eds.). *Attitude structure and function*. (pp. 429–440). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
9. Ishchuk, O. Yu. (2008). Psychological preparation of a pregnant woman for the first birth. [PhD dissertation brief]. Ivano-Frankivsk: Prykarpattia National University named after Vasyl Stefanyk.
10. Kocharyan, O. S., & Svyarenko, Yu. V. (2014). Psychological aspects of the concept of reproductive attitude and its understanding in foreign studies. *Bulletin of Kharkiv National University named after V.N. Karazina ("Psychology" series), 1121*, 124-127.
11. Kramchenkova, V. O. (2010). *Psychology of the family*. Kharkiv: Novoje Slovo.
12. Kramchenkova, V. O. (2016). Value orientations of spouses as a factor of psychological health of the family. *Problems of Modern Psychology, 33*, 327-338.
13. Kucherenko, S. (2015). Social attitude: adaptive classification of personalities. *Psychology and Society, 1*, 92-101.
14. Loboyko, L. I. (2013). The state of the psycho-emotional sphere of the mother and the psychomotor development of the child in the first year of life in the light of interaction in the "mother-child" system. *Medical Psychology, 1*, 60-66.
15. Mortensen, L. L., Hegaard, H. K., Andersen, A. N., Bentzen, J. G. (2012). Attitudes towards motherhood and fertility awareness among 20-40-year-old female healthcare professionals. *European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care, 17(6)*, 468-481. DOI: 10.3109/13625187.2012.728015.
16. Muzhi, Z. (2017). Motherhood, employment, and the dynamics of women's gender attitudes. *Gender & Society*. <http://surl.li/esayh>. DOI:10.1177/0891243217732320
17. Mykhailoshina, I. O. (2019). Identity crisis and its role in female reproductive function, pregnancy and its final outcome. *Clinical and Preventive Medicine, 4(9-10)*, 108-116. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.31612/2616-4868.4\(10\).2019.05](https://doi.org/10.31612/2616-4868.4(10).2019.05)
18. Nechitailo, I. & Boriushkina, O. (2022). V. Yadov's dispositional concept as a theoretical and methodological basis for the implementation of a competency-based approach to education. Scientific Collection "InterConf" (96). Proceedings of the 6th International Scientific and Practical Conference "Scientific Community: Interdisciplinary Research" (January 26-28, 2022). Hamburg, Germany: Busse Verlag GmbH, pp. 394-397.

19. Neroba, M. V. (2015). Motherhood as a psychological phenomenon. *Pedagogical Process: Theory and Practice*, 3-4(48-49), 90-93.
20. Odishariya, L., Bayer, O. (2020). Development of the ideas of the D. N. Uznadze' theory of attitude in the works of his contemporaries, students and followers. *Bulletin of Alfred Nobel University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*. *Pedagogical Sciences*, 2(20), 64-76. DOI: 10.32342/2522-4115-2020-2-20-8.
21. Orban-Lembryk, L. B. (2003). *Social psychology*. Kyiv: Academic Publishing.
22. Psykholoh kliniky ISIDA Nataliia Romanchenko – pro osnovni etapy rozvytku materynskoho pochuttia [ISIDA psychologist Natalia Romanchenko - about the main stages of the development of maternal feeling]. <http://surl.li/esbbq>.
23. Shcherban, E.A. (2009). The image of motherhood in the psychological picture of the world of the student's personality. *Bulletin of Psychology and Pedagogy*, 1. <http://surl.li/esaxl>
24. Strelnyk, O. (2011). Parental practices in modern young families. *Social Psychology*, 6, 62-67.
25. Strelnyk, O. (2017). *Care as work: motherhood in the focus of sociology*. Kyiv: Kritika: Kyiv National University named after T. Shevchenko.
26. Suri, R., Burt, V.K., Altshuler, L.L., Zuckerbrow-Miller, J., Fairbanks, L. (2001). Fluvoxamine for postpartum depression. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 158, 1739-1740.
27. Ushakova, V. (2014). The psycho-emotional sphere of women in the postpartum period, taking into account the types of childbirth. Problems of modern psychology. *Collection of scientific works of K-PNU named after Ivan Ohienko, Institute of Psychology named after H.S. Kostyuk of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*, 25, 530-550. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32626/2227-6246.2014-25.%25p>
28. Ushakova, V. (2014). Psychoemotional state of women in the early postpartum period of life. *Psychology and Society*, 3, 144-152.
29. Vyshnovskiy, V.V. (2016). Formation of a woman's psychological readiness for motherhood. Materials of the V International scientific and technical conference of young scientists and students "Actual Tasks of Modern Technologies", Ternopil (November 17-18), pp. 301-302.
30. Yaremchuk, N.V. (2008). Psychological features of a young woman's readiness for future motherhood. *Bulletin of Postgraduate Education*, 7, 234-239.
31. Yurina, Y.I. (2016). The phenomenon of attitude in psychological theories. *Bulletin of KhNPU named after H.S. Skovoroda, series Psychology*, 54, 261-269.
32. Zhabchenko, I.A., & Sydmak, O.R. (2016). Problems of delayed childbirth: impaired fertility in women of older reproductive age and methods of their correction. *Reproductology*. <http://surl.li/esbcq>

**Primary Paper Section: A**

**Secondary Paper Section: AO**