SOCIAL FACTORS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF REPRODUCTIVE ATTITUDES

SOCIALI FACTORII ȘI DETERMINANȚII PSIHOLOGICI AI COMPORTAMENTELOR

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Motherhood is a sociocultural and psychological phenomenon that plays a significant role in women's lives and gives them a special status in society. Since time immemorial, the role of women and their position in society have been associated with motherhood. However, the world is undergoing some changes. Modern women do not strive to have a large family, but focus on personal development, career, etc., limiting themselves to one or two children, or deciding to push the maternity stage as far as possible. This affects the overall demographic situation. According to the NBS, birth rate in Moldova has been declining in recent years. These changes are influenced by several reasons, among which priority is given to economic factors, but psycho-social issues also play a significant role.

The study of reproductive behaviour and reproductive attitudes optimal for society and harmonious for the woman herself is an important task of science. Thereby, the study of social factors and psychological determinants of reproductive attitudes (before maternity) is of relevance.

The understanding of the reproductive attitude in psychology, usually is derived from the concept of "social attitude", while it is a more general concept of "attitude". Reproductive attitudes are a set of knowledge and attitudes towards parenthood, reflecting the predisposition of the individual to the manifestation of various forms and models of reproductive behaviour.

There are various factors and determinants influencing formation of reproductive attitudes. These include socio-economic living conditions, level of education, value-need sphere, political situation, sibling position, individual-typological features of personality and others.

After analysing the scientific literature, we identified two groups of predictors: social factors and psychological determinants of reproductive attitudes (Figure 1).

Social factors include age, marital status and place of residence of girls and young women.

- *Age*. The nature and sign of reproductive attitudes vary depending on age. There are sensitive periods in the development of attitudes' components. For example, adolescence is a sensitive period for behavioural component's formation.

• *Marital status*. The role of marital status and attitudes towards marriage have a significant effect on reproductive attitudes [1]. The birth rate among unmarried women in the Republic of Moldova is about 21.5% of the total number of births. Most unmarried women are not ready to have a child. This reluctance and psychological unpreparedness for motherhood are often associated with uncertain marital status of a woman [2].

• *Place of residence* is one of the factors influencing birth rate. In Moldova the childbearing attitudes differ among rural and urban populations. The birth rate of the rural population has a decisive influence on the level and characteristics of the birth rate of the whole country, because over the past two decades the share of rural areas has been about 62-65% out of total number of births [3].

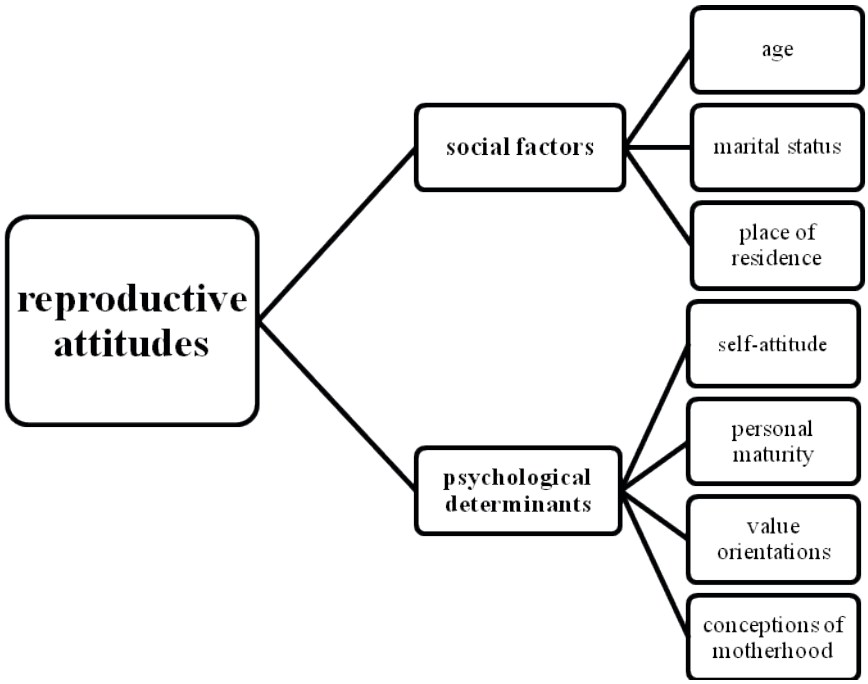


Fig. 1. Social factors and psychological determinants of reproductive attitudes

To the main psychological determinants, we include the features of self-attitude, personal maturity, value orientations and representations of motherhood.

• *Self-attitude* is a holistic, relatively constant emotional attitude, a measure of self-acceptance or non-acceptance by an individual [4]. Conscious and reproductive behaviour is possible through self-understanding, self-trust, acceptance, interest in own thoughts and feelings.

• *Personal maturity* is a systemic quality of an adult's personality, reflecting the readiness and ability to solve life problems effectively [5]. Structural features of personal

maturity are interconnected with psychological readiness for motherhood. It is based on a high level of personal maturity, the ability to take responsibility for everything that happens in life and a strong Ego [6].

• *Value orientations* are a selective attitude of a person to material and spiritual values, a way to differentiate objects according to their significance [7]. Reproductive attitudes are conditioned by an individual's values. The system of formed social value orientations serves as a kind of catalyst that stimulates certain human behaviour. "Motherhood is one of the social values (the value of the family), therefore, even if their need to be a mother is biologically inherent, the social norms and values still have a decisive influence on each woman" [8].

• *The concept of motherhood* – is a visual image of parenthood as a phenomenon, based on personal experience (primarily in the parental family) by reproducing it in the imagination" [9]. One of important factors determining reproductive attitudes is the concept of motherhood. Starting from the first days of life it is formed in the dyadic system "mother-daughter". In case of a distorted idea of motherhood, potential mothers begin to focus on the negative aspects of parent-child relationships.

There are many studies devoted to motherhood problems, however, issues related to the reproductive attitudes of women before pregnancy have been little studied. Literature analysis lets us conclude that the formation of reproductive attitudes is influenced by social factors (age, marital status, place of residence) and psychological determinants (self-attitude, personal maturity, value orientations, representations of motherhood).

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