

ASPECTS OF GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN DOMESTIC LIFE

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Abstract

Gender equality within private life defines a family and social model of development in which the rights and responsibilities of individuals are not influenced by their birth as male or female but by egalitarian interaction in terms of making the maximum out of their own potential. In the social construction of genders (be it male or female), the family background and social environment in which character develops has a significant role. The research aims to identify students' perceptions of USAMV Bucuresti on the attributes of a happy marriage and alternative forms of family structures, the perception that respondents have related to domestic work and the responsibilities of each member regarding its implementation. The research results reveal the option of switching the marital kind of rational criteria (money, property) to the psycho-affective and relational type. In the distribution of domestic activities a primal role is manifested through the distribution of work on gender criteria.

Key words: gender equality, social basis of gender roles

INTRODUCTION

According to UNPFA Organization, gender equality is defined as follows: "Gender equality is a human right. Women are entitled to live with dignity and with freedom from want and from fear. Gender equality is also a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty: Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities, and they improve prospects for the next generation". [6] Gender equality is a goal of family life. Egalitarian relationships involve the participation of both partners in making decisions and implementing them within their families. An important role in the perception of family roles is carried by the socialization process through which individuals internalize various models of interaction. [3]

The mechanisms and socialization agents know a great variety and they ensure, taken together or individually, stability and functionality to social structures, internal cohesion, subsequently maintaining social order. The family is one of the major institutions of society socializing, defining social as a "fundamental social process through which any society is projecting,

reproducing and establishes its legal and cultural model through the proper conduct of its members".[5]

The family influences the child's development in so many ways, thus we consider it the "building block" of primary socialization, **that can not be rivaled by any other social institution.** [4]

The character of relations within the family (dominated by tradition or opened to novelty) decisively influences through primary socialization process values, the individual's decision making patterns and relating skills towards others. That is why the family is the social group of paramount importance in ensuring harmonious development of its members in relation to biological, emotional, psychological, financial protection, proper socialization and education of children. [5]

The role of each subject is to overcome any traditional patterns and to form their own interaction model that emphasizes skills of adapting to the current situation and to others beyond gender stereotypes. [2]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research aims to identify aspects of gender equality manifested in the privacy of

domestic life of students from the Veterinary Medicine University of Bucharest. In order to identify the attributes of a happy marriage we have used the following items: "to have a place of their own", "to have good living conditions", "to have money", "to have the same education," "to support one another", "being faithful", "to love each other", "sexual compatibility", "to trust each other", "small age gap". Perception of respondents regarding marriage and alternative forms of family life (cohabitation, single-parent family) was studied by using the items listed below: "it is a good idea for a man and woman to live together before getting married", "there is nothing bad in the fact that a man and a woman live together without wanting to get married", "a single parent can raise a child just as well as both parents", "it is better to have a bad marriage than not be married at all", "the main advantage of marriage is security / financial security", "generally, married people are happier than unmarried people". I sought to identify the perception that respondents have related to domestic work and the implied responsibilities of each member, by reference to its realization. Common couple participation in decisions is an indicator of gender equality in the family. [1]

The research was conducted at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest on a research group consisting of 375 respondents. The research group includes young people aged between 20 and 25 years old, as they are the promoters of modern family values based on democracy

and gender equality. The data collection period was June 1st to July 31st 2014. The group comprises 161 female students and 213 male students, with a distribution representative across the faculty components (Agriculture, Zoology, Veterinary Medicine, Horticulture, Biotechnology and Management).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The attributes of a happy marriage

In the questionnaire we wanted to identify which are the attributes of a happy marriage by considering the following items: "to have a home of their own", "to have good living conditions", "to have money", "to have the same education" "to support each other," "to be faithful", "to love each other", "be a sexual match", "trust each other", "of close age".

Respondents revealed that in order to have a happy marriage partners must "trust each other" (80.53%), "love each other" (80.00%), "to support one another" (79.20%), "be faithful" (78.13%), „to have a home of their own"(66.93%), "sexual compatibility" (56.53%). Less important are considered: "close age" (22.93%), "have the same education" (24.00%), "have money" (27.20%). The partnership realized through marriage is based on mutual valuing of the other through trust, love, support, loyalty and only then, owning their own home. We note in passing the change in views from the marital kind of rational criteria (money, property) to the psycho-affective and relational type (Table 1).

Table 1. The frequency of answers to the statement of „In your opinion, what is important to a happy marriage?"

	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Not important (%)	Not important at all (%)	NA/DK (%)
Have a place of their own	66.93	26.67	4.00	1.60	0.80
Have good living conditions	48.53	47.20	2.67	0.80	0.80
Have money	27.20	60.27	10.93	0.80	0.80
Have the same education	24.00	45.33	27.73	1.60	1.33
To support each other	79.20	18.93	1.07	0.27	0.53
To be faithful	78.13	20.00	1.33	0.27	0.27
To love each other	80.00	18.13	1.07	0.53	0.27
Sexual compatibility	56.53	35.20	6.13	0.27	1.87
Trust each other	80.53	17.07	1.87	0.27	0.27
Be of close age	22.93	37.07	36.27	2.67	1.07

Source: Own SPSS analysis

To have a happy marriage, female students appreciate to a greater degree than male

students that partners must "have the same education" (+ 9.27%), "have a home of their

own" (+ 5.81%), "have money" (+ 5.70%), "to be close age" (+ 4.52%).

Respondents residing in rural areas considered to a higher extent than those in urban areas that the partners "must have money" (+ 3.40%), "have a home of their own" (3.02%). "Having the same education" is more valued in urban than in rural environments (+ 3.49%) as well as "to trust one another" (+ 1.66%). Respondents from rural backgrounds significantly value the rational aspects, such as the financial ones, while in urban areas the educational and symbolic aspects are highly appreciated.

2. Perception on marriage

The perception of respondents regarding marriage and alternative forms of family life (cohabitation, single-parent family) was studied by using the following items "it is a good idea for a man and woman to live together before getting married", "there is nothing bad in the fact that a man and a woman live together without wanting to get married", "a single parent can raise a child just as well as both parents", "it is better to have a bad marriage than not be married at all", "the main advantage of marriage is security / financial security", " generally, married people are happier than unmarried people" (Table 2).

Respondents had a positive and concurring view that "a man and a woman should live together before getting married" (88%), that "there is nothing wrong with a man and woman living together without wishing to marry" (65.60%). Such cohabitation before marriage and as an alternative to marriage is accepted. A neutral opinion is noticed on: "in general, married people are happier than unmarried ones" (37.33%).

Personal happiness can be achieved both in marriage and outside it. Negative opinions refer to "it is better to have a bad marriage than not be married at all" (79.20%), "a single parent can raise a child just as well as both parents" (42.40%), "the main advantage of marriage is financial security / safety" (46.13%).

Table 2. Perception on marriage

Do you agree with the following statements	Totally agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither agree or disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Completely disagree (%)	NA/DK (%)
Is it a good idea that a man and a woman live together before marriage?	44.00	44.00	9.33	1.60	0.80	0.27
There is nothing wrong with a man and a woman living together without considering marriage	26.93	38.67	22.67	9.60	1.87	0.27
A single parent can raise a child just as well as both parents	14.93	17.87	24.80	31.73	10.67	0.00
It is better to have a bad marriage than none at all	2.40	6.40	11.20	40.80	38.40	0.80
The main advantage of marriage is financial security/safety	6.40	15.73	31.20	35.20	10.93	0.53
Generally, married people are more happy than unmarried people	12.80	21.07	37.33	21.60	6.93	0.27

Thus the quality of marriage is very important, respondents will more likely appreciate the value of relational and affective bonds over the financial aspects. The single-parent family is not accepted as an alternative to the conjugal family in terms of the fulfillment of parental roles.

3. Structure of daily house work activities

Housework in the respondents' families is strictly distributed by gender.

Women especially do the washing / ironing clothes (82.13%), prepare the food (73.87%), clean house (70.67%), wash the dishes (64.80%), daily care of the child / children (43.73%), household care (31.47%) while men are inclined to house installations repair (taps, faucet, light socket, plumbing, etc) (80.27%) etc. The activities that women and men do alike are daily care of the child / children (41.33%) and household care (43.13%) (Table 3).

4. Deciding on daily expenses

The decision on spending money for everyday needs belongs: to both partners equally (76.80%), only to the females (13.6%), only to the males (7.2%) (Fig. 1).

Table 3. Frequency of answers to the „Usually, who does the following daily activities within your household?“ question

	More often the females (%)	More often the males (%)	Females and males alike (%)	Hiring someone (%)	Not the case (%)	NA/DK (%)
Takes care of the household	31.47	20.00	34.13	1.87	11.47	1.07
Repairs the house installations	2.93	80.27	6.93	7.47	1.60	0.80
Prepares meals	73.87	3.73	21.33	0.53	0.53	0.00
Cleans house	70.67	3.20	24.27	1.33	0.53	0.00
Washes / Irons clothes	82.13	2.93	13.60	0.80	0.00	0.53
Wash the dishes	64.80	5.33	28.53	0.53	0.80	0.00
Takes daily care of the child/children	43.73	2.13	41.33	1.87	9.87	1.07

Source: own SPSS analysis

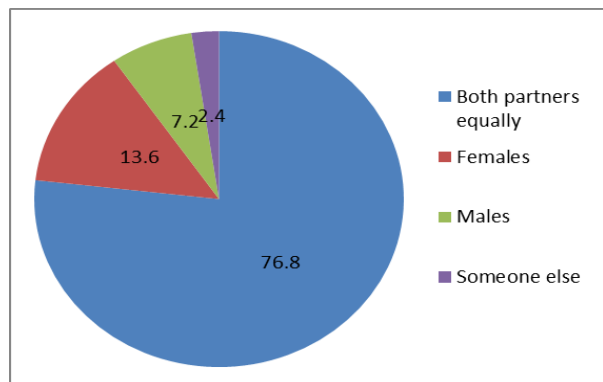


Fig 1. Frequency of answers to "Who decides how to spend the money in your household for daily needs?"

Female students rather than male students appreciate that both partners equally or just the females should decide on household spending (+ 3.3%) and (3.79) (Fig. 2).

Male students consider that decisions on spending are taken usually by the males (5.04) (Fig. 3).

Urban area respondents consider that these decisions should be taken by both partners equally or by the females, when compared to rural area upbringing respondents (+ 0.02%).

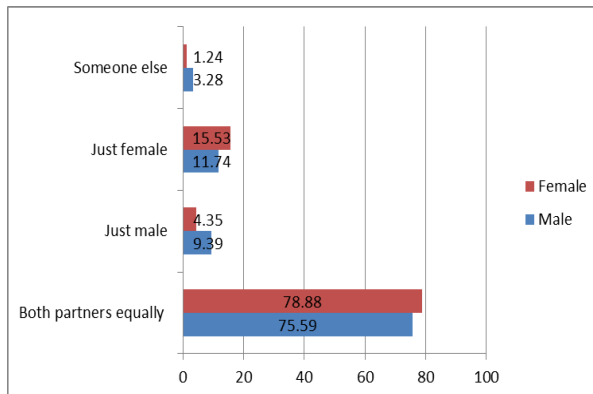


Fig. 2. Frequency of answers to the „Who decides how money is being spent, for daily basics, in your household?“ question, according to gender

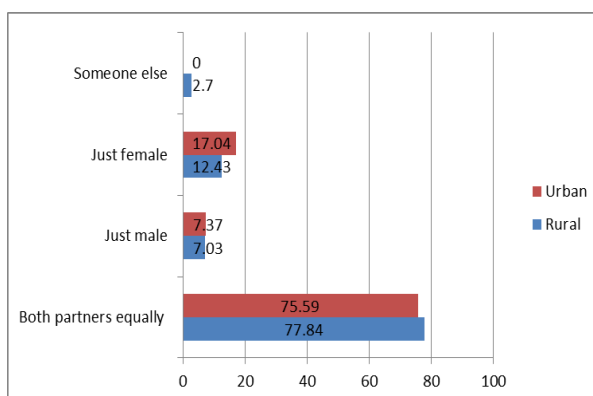


Fig 3. Frequency of answers to the „Who decides how money is being spent, for daily basics, in your household?“ question, according to residency

Source: own SPSS analysis

5. Deciding on major expenses

Decisions on important family expenses are taken by both partners equally (76%), just the males (14.67%) or just the females (6.93%).

Female students to greater extent than male students (+9.06%) claim that the important decisions are taken by both partners, while male students respond that males take important decisions to an even greater extent (+ 9.46%). In rural areas important decisions are taken rather both partners (+0.03%) or by the females (+ 0.02%), compared to urban areas where they are taken mostly by men (+ 0.04%) (Fig. 4).

We note that unless both partners equally make daily decisions or important ones (aprox. 76%) the daily decisions related to basic necessities shopping are taken mostly by the females, while decisions relating to significant expenses are taken by the males.

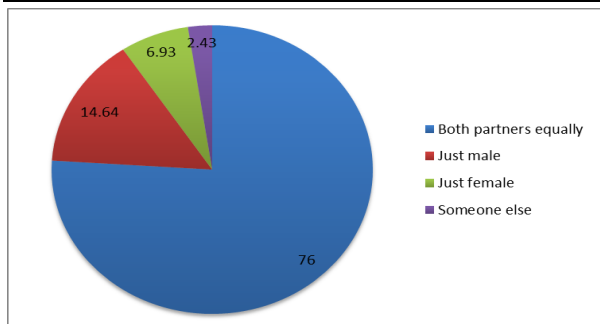


Fig 4. Frequency of answers to the „Who decides how money is being invested in important expenses (car, tv, etc.)” question

Source: own SPSS analysis

6. Perception on housework

Domestic responsibilities are a much debated topic within the family and beyond. An important role in shaping their own gender prescriptions is played by the perception that family members have about household work. Thusly, respondents believe that domestic work is not the easiest work (54.40%), a high percentage of them have not thought about it (30.67%), while 13.87% believe that domestic work is pretty light (Table 4).

Table 4. Frequency of answers to the „Do you agree that housework is one of the easiest forms of work?” question

	(%)
Yes	13.87
No	54.40
Didn't think about it	30.67
Na/Dk	1.07

Source: own SPSS analysis

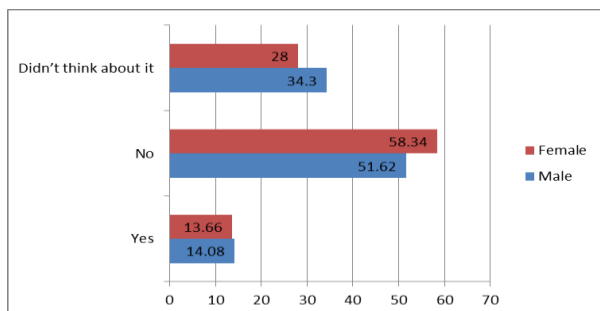


Fig. 5. Frequency of answers to the „Do you agree that housework is one of the easiest forms of work?” question, according to gender

Source: own SPSS analysis

From a gender perspective, especially female students respond that housework is not the easiest work (+6.74%) while the male students to a greater extent than female

students respond that they have not thought about it very much (+6.63%) (Fig. 5).

One possible answer would be the different family socialization levels of girls and boys, especially in the private sphere of the first, leading to an inadequate knowledge of household responsibilities by the boys.

From the perspective of residency, we find that mostly urban respondents consider that household chores are the lightest work (7, 10%) while for the most part, those in rural areas have not thought about it (7.75%) (Fig. 6).

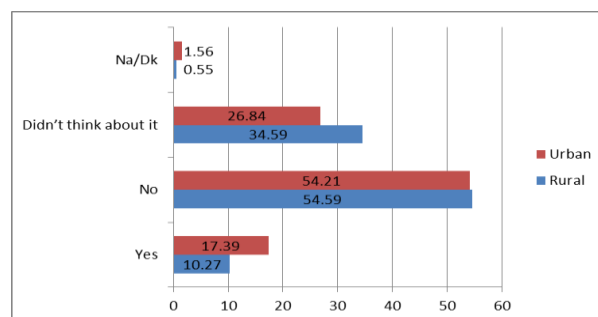


Fig. 6. Frequency of answers to the „Do you agree that housework is one of the easiest forms of work?” question, according to residency

Source: own SPSS analysis

As regards to **viewing domestic work as equal to any other type of paid work**, a very high percentage have not thought about it (41.07%), others consider it an activity that is not equal to any other type of work that is payable (24.27%). Only a third of respondents (32.53%) consider domestic work like any other work which can be paid (Table 5).

Table 5. Frequency of answers to the „Generally, do you think housework is equal to any other kind of paid work?” question

	(%)
Yes	32.53
No	24.27
Didn't think about it	41.07
Na/Dk	2.13

Source: own SPSS analysis

From a gender perspective, mostly the female students have not thought about it (5.6%), while a bigger percentage of male students consider it an activity equal to any type of paid work (2.75%)(Fig. 7)

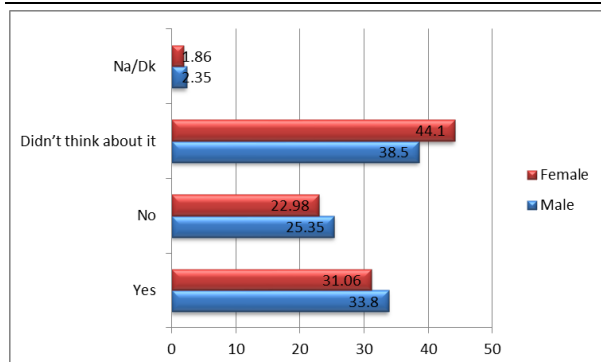


Fig. 7 Frequency of answers to the „Generally, do you think housework is equal to any other kind of paid work?” question, according to gender

Source: own SPSS analysis

Respondents from rural areas consider that household activities are equal to any other type of paid employment (+ 6.20%), while in urban areas, most have not thought about it (6.37%) (Fig. 8).

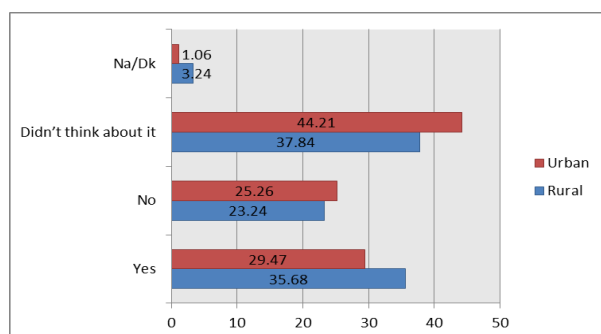


Fig 8. Frequency of answers to the „Generally, do you think housework is equal to any other kind of paid work?” question, according to residency

Source: own SPSS analysis

The high percentage of those who do not consider housework equal in importance with any type of paid work and those who have not thought about it shows that the traditional model of distributing household activities is taken up uncritically and unquestioned by the students. As shown, especially female students conform to this model, to the traditional role prescriptions, with little chance of change.

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents revealed that in order to reach a happy marriage status, partners must "trust each other" "love each other", "support each other," "be faithful", „have a home of their

own", „sexual compatibility". Less important are perceived items such as: "close age", "having the same education," "having money". The partnership realized through marriage is based on mutual valuing of the other through trust, love, support, loyalty and only then home ownership. We note in passing the switch in choices from the rational criteria marital sphere (money, property) to the psycho-affective and relational type.

The single-parent family model is not regarded as an alternative to the conjugal family in terms of fulfilling all of the parental roles and functions.

Housework inside the families from which respondents come from are strictly distributed by gender.

The high percentage of those who do not consider housework equally important to any type of paid work and those who have not thought about it reveals that the traditional model of household activities distribution is taken up uncritically by students.

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