



The Future Spouses to Educate Children in the Family Created in the Second Marriage

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Abstract. The article explores attitudes to child's education in the second marriage. The research was conducted inquiring people who wanted to create a family or establish long-term relationships. They were members of the online dating site "Harmonious Couple". In 2007, 4000 participants were interviewed. In 2012 the research was carried out again. A 1000 participants were interviewed. In both surveys, groups of participants who were to be interviewed were formed randomly. The research data showed that the predominant model of the family after divorce is mother and child(ren). This type of the family splits into two groups: the family in which the father is actively involved in child(ren's) education and the family where he is excluded or opts out of this obligation. In the second case, a woman searching for a new marriage partner pays more attention to his paternal qualities and skills. However, many men who are planning the second marriage do not consider special preparations to communicate with a future spouse's child (ren) as a prerequisite for the success of an intended marriage. The research confirmed that parents encounter many difficulties in adolescent education. Parents of children of this age were in need of training in children's psychology and education.

Keywords: *modern family, remarriage, attitudes to children's education, a choice of a potential partner in children's education.*

Introduction

Since the end of the 21st century relationships in the family have been rapidly changing in Lithuania. Their nature is close to earlier and recent family changes in Western countries, a transition from the traditional family model to the one of modern family. V. Stankūnienė indicates that the traditional family is characterized by an early marriage,

the family is created by marrying, the quality of marriage is high, the family is usually medium-sized. On the other hand, the modern family prefers not to register their marriage, postpone marriage and raise few children (Stankūnienė, 2003).

Changes in family relationships called forth changes in the birth-rate. The former model of birth-rate characterized by the predominance of legitimate children, child-bearing at a younger age, which ensured a change of generations, was replaced by a new model characterized by the increasing number of illegitimate children, postponement of child-bearing and low birthrate, which does not ensure a change of generations.

It is agreed that the aforementioned changes have a negative effect on Lithuanian social and economic prospects due to the absence of demographic balance and a wave of emigration.

On the other hand, love relationships, marriage, children are still recognized by the majority as values. Their importance is confirmed by research which shows that married people living in a harmonious family are happier. For example, S. Stack and J.R. Eshleman analyzed the research carried out in seventeen developed countries and found out that married people are 3.4 times happier than those living in cohabitation. The research was carried out in the 1980s (Stack & Eshleman, 1982). The research which was done later proves the same regularity. The survey of longitudinal research shows that among those who consider themselves very happy, 42 per cent were made up of married people, 17 per cent – of divorced men and women, 15 per cent – of widows and widowers, and 26 per cent – of people who had never married (Lucas, Clark, Georgelis, & Diener, 2003). Therefore, the modern family also remains the school of social and spiritual life, an example and an incentive to strengthen psychological relations, promote an intergenerational dialogue in the spirit of respect, justice and love (Ralyš, 2011). Such a dialogue is always unique and distinctive and has a considerable influence on children's education as well as becomes distinctive in the second marriage.

It can also be stated that modern families often have problems regarding a dialogue. Although many people regard a harmonious family and children as values, the rate of divorce remains high, and the relations between parents/guardians and children are often conflicting.

One of the reasons of these difficulties is people's insufficient preparation for life in the modern family where an interaction between personalities but not clearly defined roles, became the primary factor of harmony. According to Ch. Sibley and J. Liu, in these families the ability to improve oneself and encourage the family members' self-expression, the growth of personality, became of primary importance (Sibley & Liu, 2006). These skills are especially important in educating children, creating complementary roles of father and mother. They and their hierarchy are not always clearly realized, the prerequisites of their formation are often forgotten, whereas in a functional family they are well-balanced and complement one another (Minuchin, 1984). It becomes even more complicated to create such roles in families created in the second marriage. Marriage like

this have become a mass phenomenon. Currently, a fifth of all marriages is the second one to at least one of the spouses. For example, in 2000, 21.6 per cent of men and 20.3 per cent of women were married for the second time. During a decade part of such marriages remained unchanged. In 2010, 21.4 per cent and 20.1 per cent created the second family (Lithuanian statistics annual, 2011, p. 50).

D. P. Schneller and J. A. Arditti proposed the hypothesis that the divorced attempt to change the structure of their former family and create more positive relationships (Schneller & Arditti, 2004). Therefore, it can be expected that spouses in families created in the second marriage would pay more attention to children's education, aim at a more productive dialogue regarding objectives of their education. On the other hand, roles of father/stepfather and mother/stepmother in such families are not yet clearly realized and defined in society. Even their descriptions lack both scientific terms and words of everyday speech. For example, the concept of "stepfather" is not really appropriate to define roles in the family if it is created in the second marriage, but the father who the mother divorced is actively involved in child's education. Lack of traditions and a model of children's education in the family created in the second marriage, the insufficient parental preparation for a dialogue with children etc., can have a negative effect on family creation, proper education of children in the family as well as family stability. Therefore, a better understanding of the approach to children's education in families created in the second marriage is a problem of social science, theory of psychology as well as social work with the family, practice of consulting families.

Research results of attitudes approach to a potential partner in children's education in families created in the second marriage

Research methodology and empirical basis

The research of the choice of a potential partner in children's education included participants who wanted to create a family and establish long-term and binding relationships. They were members of the online dating site „Harmonious Couple“. This dating site is devoted to people who are searching for a permanent partner. It provides exhaustive information about the clients' social demographic characteristics. The clients are also tested in order to evaluate the potential partners' psychological compatibility. The site has been running since January 15, 2007.

To improve the test material, the clients were asked various questions and were offered tests. The present article is based on the research data. It should be noted that first of all, the research had a practical aspect, it was carried out in order to create the prerequisites for the effective ascertainment of couple compatibility.

4000 participants were interviewed – 2000 men and 2000 women. The people had registered themselves on this dating site.

Groups of the participants of the research were formed by random selection. The participants were grouped according to their age and education. Groups of both men and women included people of a certain age and education..

The research participants' age groups: 18–20 years old – 300 men and 300 women, 20–24 years old – 300 men and 300 women, 25–30 years old – 300 men and 300 women, 31–35 years old – 200 men and 200 women, 36–40 years old – 200 men and 200 women, 41–45 – 200 men and 200 women, 46–50 years old – 200 men and 200 women, 51–55 years old – 100 men and 100 women, 56–60 years old – 100 men and 100 women, 60–70 years old – 100 men and 100 women.

The research participants' education: 1200 men and 1200 women had a university education, 600 men and 600 women – a higher non-university education, 200 men and 200 women – a secondary education.

The distribution of the research participants does not fully comply with the distribution of the participants of the dating site “Harmonious Couple”. It was chosen in an attempt to better compare groups under research. The research was carried out in 2007 (Navaitis, 2007).

The dating site system is always improved. Recent research was conducted in 2012. A 1000 participants were interviewed – 500 men and 500 women. The proportions of the research participants' distribution conform to the former research. Alongside other objectives, the research focused on the need for training related to family relationships. The latter data can be interpreted as the realization of the insufficient preparation for marriage and family as well as willingness to improve one's skills and acquire knowledge of certain areas.

The main results of the study

While analyzing attitudes to children's education in the family, paternal and maternal expectations, it is useful to distinguish between groups of those who do not have children and those who do have them and discuss the acceptability of acquaintance with those who are raising a child/children; cooperation with a potential marriage partner in children's education; the relationship between a broken marriage and lack of proper paternal and maternal behaviour and qualities; the need to improve paternal and maternal skills and knowledge.

Attitudes to marriage with those (men and women) with children

In the age group from 18 to 30 (900 men and 900 women), only 1.2 percent of men and 5.1 per cent of women indicated that they find the acquaintance with a potential partner with a child acceptable.

In the age group from 31 to 35 (200 men and 200 women) an attitude to the acquaintance with a potential partner with a child is much more favourable. What is more, in this

group the opinions of men and women diverge considerably. 36.8 per cent of men and 54.2 per cent of women who were interviewed, considered such an acquaintance acceptable.

In the latter and younger age groups a potential partner's child is often viewed upon as a "disadvantage" which, it seems, should be compensated for.

For example, the interviewee Ernest B. (31 years old, higher non-university education, entrepreneur, single) wrote: "I want to get acquainted with a childless woman, but if she meets all other requirements regarding appearance, education, financial status, I don't object to her raising a girl."

The interviewee Rimgailė T. (32 years old, higher non-university education, teacher, single) wrote: "I want the man who wouldn't have been divorced and abandoned his children. However, if he can support a family, I wouldn't say no to a widower with a child."

Some interviewees of this group saw the opportunity to get acquainted with a person with a child as a sign of failure.

For example, the interviewee Saulius S. (33 years old, university education, manager, single) stated: "I can have my own children, so I don't need another's."

The interviewee Gerda L. (30 years old, university education, civil servant, single) wrote: "I am not that old to be unable to bear my own children and find a man for a normal family."

The interviewee Laima P. (28 years old, university education, chemist) wrote: „Children are best brought up by the woman who has given birth to them, therefore I wouldn't like to get acquainted with a man with children and take care of them."

In older age groups, the acquaintance with a potential partner who already has a child is acceptable to about 92 per cent female and about 84 per cent male interviewees.

Attitudes to cooperation with a potential marriage partner in children's education

Many women (84.4 per cent) indicated that a preferred partner should possess paternal qualities, i.e. he should like to participate in child's education and be able to communicate with him. Maternal characteristics, such as love for children, taking care of them, skills of communication with children were pointed out by 54.8 per cent of male interviewees.

Paternal and maternal cooperation in educating children is usually understood traditionally: the mother takes care of children's daily life and the father helps her.

There was not a single man who agreed with the view that a man takes care of children in the family and his wife helps him. 71.3 per cent of male interviewees would like a future marriage partner to take care of children and their education and state that they will assist her in doing this. 28.3 per cent thought that man's and woman's roles in this area should be of equal value. The latter view was more often expressed by younger men who had never been married.

Women did not claim either that a man takes care of children in the family and his wife helps him. 79.6 per cent of respondents would have liked a future marriage partner to assist them in taking care of children and in educating them. The rest of them believed that roles of man and woman in this area should be of equal value. The latter opinion was more often voiced by younger women.

The relationship between a broken marriage and lack of proper paternal and maternal behaviour and qualities

A significant number of interviewees (1005 men and 1120 women) have a child or children and the experience of broken marriage.

The research data cannot fully uncover the reasons of broken marriage and explain a former spouse's involvement in children's education. Nevertheless, they reveal that among the respondents there were only six women and only two men who said that the child's living place after his parents' divorce is the father's home. Therefore, the latter life situation of the child will not be discussed. The widows' and widowers' attitude will not be considered either.

We will examine the way the mother lives together with a child or children and the father lives apart from them. The bigger part of these women (78.4 per cent) indicated that the father communicates with the child and assists in educating him. In their descriptions of a potential marriage partner they seldom (3–5 per cent of answers) expressed a wish for his more significant contribution.

For example, Danguolė B. (39 years old, university education, manager) said: "Me and the son's father divorced 9 years ago. The son and the father interact normally, so now I'm looking for a friend to myself."

Wanda P. (36 years old, non-university education, saleswoman) wrote: "My daughter is often at her father's, so I won't need any help in educating her."

A markedly different view is held by women whose child's or children's fathers contribute little to their education. Quite often they firmly linked a potential new marriage to a potential partner's preparation for a father's role.

For example, Janina V. (37 years old, secondary education, saleswoman) claimed: "I would like to get acquainted with the man who would become father to my children (Janina was raising two underage children.) A casual relationship does not interest me."

Agnė K. (28 years old, university education, medical doctor) wrote: "Now I understand what a family is. If a man does not love my little daughter, if he doesn't want to become father to her, I don't think that I would be interested in this kind of acquaintance."

The attitude of men who agreed to become acquainted with a woman raising a child or children is essentially similar to the women's attitude. Many of them noted that they would assist her in educating children and would try to perform the father's role in the family.

The possible communication problems in the family can be caused by the fact that the men failed to explain their behavior in a situation when a potential partner's child or children often communicates with the father and he is involved in the child's or children's education. When such a question was clearly formulated and presented to some men, almost all of them admitted that they had never considered a situation like this.

The need to improve paternal and maternal knowledge and skills

As it was mentioned above, the respondents were interviewed to find out what training related to family relationships they wanted. In this part of the research there participated a 1000 members of online dating site "Harmonious Couple". The research was conducted in

2012. 451 people (322 men and 129 women) indicated that they were not interested in any training. All the rest gave priority to psychological and sexological training. Furthermore, 242 people (65 men and 177 women) indicated that they would be interested in children's or adolescents' psychological and educational training. It should be noted that almost all of these respondents had one or more children. (Among those who wanted training of this kind there were only 8 women and 1 man who were childless).

Another important consideration is that the need to improve their knowledge and skills in the field of children's education is closely related to the children's age. Nearly four-fifths of those who wanted to receive such training are raising adolescents. It should be observed that the number of online dating site „Harmonious Couple“ participants with children from 0 to 3 is very small, but the number of those raising a child or children from 5 to 12 approximates the number of those raising teenagers or even older children. Moreover, when a child reaches the age of adolescence, the mother becomes more active in looking for a new marriage partner, which alongside other difficulties of communication, often leads to a conflict with the child.

For example, Galina F. (42 years old, higher non-university education, tradeswoman, has a 14 year old son) indicated that knowledge of adolescent psychology would be useful to her, because “it is increasingly difficult to communicate with my son. Especially when I meet with some man, he acts as if he were jealous. And I want to have my own life”.

The respondents who indicated that they would get acquainted with a woman with a child or children were offered a brief 4–8 hour course on stepfather's interaction with the child. There were very few who needed it. The refusal was motivated by the fact that communication should not be complicated and that such training is required only if difficulties arise.

For example, Algis N.: “If problems arise, then I will turn for help”, Rimantas D.: I think that one can get on well with a child without any training”, Kęstas G.: “we would solve such problems together with the mother, she should explain everything to the child”.

It should be noted that like the women, the men who wanted training in the form of discussion have adolescent children.

Conclusions

Descriptions of a desirable spouse and a partner in children's education allow us to state that younger individuals (both men and women) who want to create a family are reluctant to choose a partner with a child. In older age groups the acquaintance with a potential partner with a child is acceptable to almost all who are looking for a marriage partner (92 per cent of interviewed women and about 84 per cent. of interviewed men). Thus these people recognize the possibility of participating in a partner's children's education.

Younger people without children more often understood paternal and maternal roles as being of equal value. Therefore it can be assumed that in the second marriage there is an

orientation to the traditional method of father's and mother's cooperation in performing roles in the family: the mother takes care of children's daily life and the father helps her.

The understanding of traditional family consisting of spouses and their children educated in cooperation, cannot always be realized. It is especially difficult to realize it at an older age because marriage statistics reveal that one-fifth of families is the second marriage families. The dominant model of the family after divorce is mother and child or children. This type of family split into two groups: families where the father is actively involved in child's or children's education and families where he is excluded or opts out of this obligation. In the second case, a woman searching for a new marriage partner attaches greater importance to his paternal qualities and skills. The research data suggests that men envision themselves in this type of family better than in the one where father and child still maintain their relationship.

Many individuals planning the second marriage do not believe that a special preparation for interaction with a future spouse's child or children is necessary. This can be explained by the traditional understanding of father's and mother's roles which excludes communication and cooperation between the mother's spouse and her child's father.

The study confirmed that parents encounter quite many difficulties in educating adolescents. Parents of children of this age wanted training in children's psychology and education more than other parents did.

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Būsimieji sutuoktiniai, ugđantys vaikus antroje santuokoje sukurtoje šeimoje

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Santrauka

Pageidaujamo sutuoktinio ir partnerio vaikų ugđyme apibūdinimai leidžia teigti, kad jaunesni žmonės (vyrai ir moterys), norintys sukurti šeimą, nenoriai renkasi partnerį, auginantį vaiką. Todėl galima daryti prielaidą, kad biologiniai vaikų tėvai yra svarbi sėkmingo vaikų ugđymo sąlyga. Supratimas apie tradicinę šeimą, kurią sudaro sutuoktiniai ir jų vaikai, ugđomi bendradarbiaujant, ne visada gali būti įgyvendintas. Ypač sunku tai suvokti vyresniame amžiuje, nes santuokų statistika rodo, kad penktadalis šeimų yra antrosios santuokos šeimos.

Vyraujantis šeimos modelis po skyrybų yra mama ir vaikas. Šio tipo šeimos skirstomos į dvi grupes: šeimą, kurioje tėvas aktyviai dalyvauja vaiko ar vaikų ugđyme, ir šeimą, kurioje jis yra pašalintas arba atsisako šios pareigos. Antruoju atveju moteris, ieškanti naujo santuokos partnerio, daugiau dėmesio skiria jo tėviškoms savybėms ir įgūdžiams. Duomenys rodo, kad vyrai geriau save įsivaizduoja tokio tipo šeimoje nei toje, kurioje tėvas ir vaikas vis dar palaiko santykius.

Esminiai žodžiai: *moderni šeima, pakartotinė santuoka, požiūris į vaikų ugđymą, potencialaus partnerio pasirinkimas vaikų ugđyme.*

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