

IDEAS ABOUT THE STRESSFULNESS OF THE PARENTAL ROLE IN POTENTIAL PARENTS: OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE DETERMINANTS

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ABSTRACT

Studying stress factors of childbirth intentions is an important parameter in population development policy making. There is no data on the comparison of the relative importance of different types of determinants and stress inducing factors of parenting in the scientific literature.

The aim of the study. To study the factors determining the ideas about the stressfulness of the parental role among modern youth.

Materials and methods. The sample consisted of 364 students with no parenting experience. Three groups were identified, differing in their orientation towards having children: a group with a focus on single-child parenting (257 people); group with childfree focus (32 people); group with a focus on multi-child parenting (75 people). The following methods were used: socio-demographic questionnaire; "Parental Stress Scale" (J.O. Berry, W. Jones, 1995; adapted by Yu.V. Misiyuk, I.V. Tikhonova, 2022); "Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire" (M. Liss, H.H. Schiffrin, V.H. Mackintosh, H. Miles-McLean, M.J. Erchull, 2013; adapted by Yu.V. Misiyuk, 2022); express version of the "World Assumptions Scale" (R. Yanoff-Bulman; modified by M.A. Padun, A.V. Kotelnikova; author's semi-structured interview.

Results. We analyzed the ideas about the stress that is associated with fulfilling the parental role. Parameters that potentially act as the factors determining the stressfulness of parenthood are considered. The specificity of ideas on parental stress and its determinants is analyzed in accordance with the dominant orientation towards childbearing.

Conclusion. Ideas about the stressfulness of the parental role are determined by objective (age, status of personal relationships, education) and subjective (assessment of family relationship, attitudes towards the need to stimulate the child's development, essentialism and satisfaction from upbringing children) factors, but subjective ones have the greatest weight. The specificity of the determination of ideas about parental stress depending on the orientation towards childbearing has been revealed.

Key words: parenting, ideas about parenting, parental stress, intensive parenting, stressful parenting role, youth

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ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЯ О СТРЕССОГЕННОСТИ РОДИТЕЛЬСКОЙ РОЛИ У ПОТЕНЦИАЛЬНЫХ РОДИТЕЛЕЙ: ОБЪЕКТИВНЫЕ И СУБЪЕКТИВНЫЕ ДЕТЕРМИНАНТЫ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Изучение стресс-факторов намерений рождаемости является важным параметром формирования политики развития населения. В научной литературе отсутствует сравнение относительной важности различных видов детерминант и факторов стрессогенности родительской роли.

Цель исследования. Изучение факторов, детерминирующих представления о стрессогенности родительской роли у современной молодёжи.

Методы. Выборка состояла из 364 студентов без опыта родительства. Выделены три группы, различающихся по ориентации на рождение детей: группа потенциально малодетных родителей (257 человек); группа с чейлд-фри ориентацией (32 человека); группа с ориентацией на многодетность (75 человек). Использовались следующие методики: социально-демографическая анкета; «Шкала родительского стресса» (Parental Stress Scale; J.O. Berry, W. Jones, 1995; адаптация Ю.В. Мисиюк, И.В. Тихоновой, 2022); «Опросник установок на интенсивное родительство» (Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire; M. Liss, H.H. Schiffrin, V.H. Mackintosh, H. Miles-McLean, M.J. Erchull, 2013; адаптация Ю.В. Мисиюк, 2022); экспресс-вариант «Шкалы базисных убеждений» (World Assumptions Scale (WAS); R. Janoff-Bulman; модификация М.А. Падун, А.В. Котельниковой); авторское полуструктурированное интервью.

Результаты. Нами были проанализированы представления о стрессе, который сопряжён с исполнением родительской роли. Рассмотрены параметры, потенциально выступающие как факторы, определяющие стрессогенность родительства. Проанализирована специфика представлений о родительском стрессе и его детерминант в соответствии с доминирующей ориентацией на деторождение.

Заключение. Представления о стрессогенности родительской роли определяются объективными (возраст, статус личных отношений, образование) и субъективными (оценка семейных отношений, установки на необходимость стимуляции развития ребёнка, эссенциализм и получение удовлетворения от воспитания детей) факторами, однако наибольший вес имеют субъективные. Выявлена специфика детерминации представлений о родительском стрессе в зависимости от ориентации на деторождение.

Ключевые слова: родительство, представления о родительстве, родительский стресс, интенсивное родительство, стрессогенность родительской роли, молодёжь

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INTRODUCTION

«Parenting as the main purpose of life», «happiness of motherhood/fatherhood» – all these clichés have turned into social stereotypes, which, however, have little relation to reality. Parenting as a source of stress and a cause of maladaptive mental states is increasingly considered by Russian and foreign science [1, 2]. Costs, inconveniences both material and psychological can aggravate the current situation in the life of parents [3]. The consequences of parental stress (PS) are wide-ranging and diverse: it is associated with poor health, poor marital relationships and child abuse, and interference with children's normal mental development [4]. It has been evidenced that perceived parental stress related to parental demands upon themselves can have a negative impact on maternal mental health and well-being [5], contribute to the dysfunctional development of parent-child and partner relationships, and thus represent risk factors for psychopathology of all members of the family system [6]. Consequently, examining stressors of parenting image is an important part of early identification of risks and targets for intervention to prevent more serious adverse outcomes.

The factors contributing to the stressogenicity of the parental role have now been systematised and identified into several groups [7]:

Socio-demographic indicators: gender (parental role is more stressful for mothers than for fathers) [1, 8]; age (young parents are more stressed, as well as parents over 37 years old) [9]; material security (indicated as the main factor of stressfulness of the paternal role) [10].

Social-psychological indicators: social support (insignificant support from family and society is associated with more negative emotions and more stress from upbringing) [1, 11]; presence of a conflict situation in the family [9].

Psychological characteristics of the child: infant temperament [12]; developmental disorders and childhood illnesses, behavioural problems of children [13], etc.

Psychological characteristics of the parent: difficulties in time allocation and differentiating the spheres of family and work [14]; physiological factors and sleep deficit [11], parenting style [3, 13]; parental competence and emotional state [15].

An important point to note, however, is that there is no comparison in the literature of the relative importance of different types of parental role stressors, which represent a key component of fertility orientation that should help optimise fertility promotion policies. Existing studies have focused on actual parents rather than young people who are potential parents and therefore key targets of fertility policy interventions. In doing so, it is crucial to understand what factors determine the stressfulness of parenting images among young people and, consequently, may influence attitudes towards childbearing intentions.

Analyses of the age of decision-making with regard to deliberate childlessness show that most child-free adults declare their intentions to remain childless early

– in adolescence or, predominantly, in early childbearing (adolescence), while the age of decision-making does not show differences by gender subgroups [16]. Parenting attitudes are formed as relatively stable by adolescence, undergoing later only some changes under the influence of the life situation and other factors, and by adolescence, on the basis of the formed attitudes, an image-constructed content has already been formed, including individual and general cognitive schemes of parental actions in particular and parental behaviour in general at three levels: social, microsocial, personal and semantic. Accordingly, the perceptions of the difficulties associated with the fulfilment of the parental role, as well as one's own reproductive plans, which are expressed in the orientation to parenting that we are studying, make sense to study in adolescence [17, 18].

According to A. Eisen's theoretical scheme, the decision-making process about having a child is limited by certain "life factors" (i.e. subjective and contextual conditions) [19]. Childbearing intentions are associated with individual socioeconomic status, including family income, human capital (i.e. education/health) and quality of employment, which is conventionally categorised in the literature as objective factors. Studies are available examining perceptions of future parenting in relation to factors such as gender and age [17]. Adolescence is ascertained as a period of formation of more adequate and definite ideas about parenting; gender specificity is also revealed, which is manifested in the advanced nature of formation of ideas about future parenting in girls. A subjective factor such as perception of parental role is also associated with heterogeneity in fertility intentions [20]. The system of value orientations acts as a condition for the formation of a harmonious attitude to parenting, and a high value of parenting is associated with a positive attitude to motherhood and fatherhood and to oneself as a parent. Peculiarities of parental families [21], self-awareness and conscious regulation [22] are also considered as factors influencing the formation of perceptions of motherhood and fatherhood. S.V. Merzlyakova et al. performed a systematic study of macro-, meso- and micro-level factors that determine different components of family self-determination. The role of such factors as gender, age, cognitive abilities, temperament properties, emotional and volitional features of personality, competence in communication, responsibility, moral orientations is demonstrated at the micro level [23].

Thus, a large volume of literature has been published that has theoretically or empirically discussed fertility intention and its determinants. Numerous situational, socio-economic, child and parental factors contributing to PS, quite widely studied in domestic and foreign literature, are not exhaustive characteristics that influence the stressoriness of the parental role image in potential parents. At the same time, in-depth knowledge about the relative importance of various factors influencing the subjective perception of parenting and specifically the image of parental role stressors is still lacking. However, it is crucial to reveal them in order to be able to help reduce stress during the childbearing planning stage. The significant

role of subjective psychological factors of the image of parenting stressogenicity remains beyond the scope of the study, forming the problem field of the present study. Moreover, the study of constraints (stressors) affecting fertility intentions is an important basis for shaping population development policies.

As a result, **the purpose of the study** was determined by the exploratory study of the factors determining the perceptions of stressfulness of the parental role in modern youth. In accordance with the theoretical framework, the current study considers personal and contextual determinants of the perception of parental role stressoriness, and they are subdivided into two conventional measurement vectors: objective (socio-demographic and anamnestic characteristics, gender, age, education, marital status, type of parental family, socio-economic status) and subjective (basic beliefs of the individual, attitudes about the intensity of parenting, assessment of their own child-parent and family relationships).

The choice of the mentioned subjective factors is oriented on modern research of stress mechanisms and factors, among which a significant role is assigned to beliefs and attitudes. Baseline beliefs are defined as «an individual's implicit global, stable beliefs about the world and himself/herself that influence the thinking, emotional state and behavior of a person» [24] as one of the significant mechanisms for the formation of intense stress and posttraumatic recovery. Their influence over essential aspects of a person's social life, interaction and relationships with surrounding people has been demonstrated [25]. Among the dominant trends and approaches to upbringing is a variation of conscious, super-inclusive parenting, which implies excessive involvement of modern men and women in the development of the child, parental determinism and comprehensive development of the child to achieve a higher social status. This approach in the Western and domestic scientific discourse is represented by the attitudes to «intensive parenting» [26]. Intensive parenting attitudes can act as a stressor of the parental role, detrimentally affecting the mental health of parents [3], associated with decreased life satisfaction, a constant sense of burden due to the parental role, and reflecting the severity of the demands of parenting, which in the context of increased expectations of the parenting role from society forms a stable subjective attitude to the perception of fatherhood and motherhood long before the appearance of children.

The main **hypothesis of the study** is the assumption of the predominant influence of subjective factors over the perceived stressfulness of parental role representations.

METHODS

To investigate the perceptions of stressfulness of the parental role among potential parents, the Parental

Stress Scale (Parental Stress Scale; J.O. Berry, W. Jones (1995), Russian version adapted from Y.V. Misiyuk and I.V. Tikhonova (2022)) was used, which reveals the general level of PS (in our study – perceptions of PS level) regardless of socio-demographic and situational indicators, and also allows to determine the expression of PS parameters (parental stressors, loss of control, parental reward/damage, parental satisfaction/dissatisfaction) [27].

A socio-demographic questionnaire was used to observe objective factors, and the following techniques were applied to study subjective factors:

- the socio-psychological section of the questionnaire, which surveyed the assessment of relationships in the family, orientations towards marriage, family relations, and childbearing;
- Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (M. Liss, H.H. Schiffrin, V.H. Mackintosh, H. Miles-McLean, M.J. Erchull (2013); adaptation by Y.V. Misiyuk (2022)), which diagnoses the expression of attitudes towards intensive parenting, which include essentialism, satisfaction, difficulty, stimulation, and detocentrism [26];
- express variant of the World Assumptions Scale (WAS) questionnaire (R. Janoff-Bulman; modified by M.A. Padun and A.V. Kotelnikova). The original form of the questionnaire was modified. From each scale proposed by the authors («Self-image», «Benevolence of the surrounding world», «Justice», «Luck», «Beliefs about control»), the statement that has the highest factor loadings according to the results of psychometric testing was selected [25]. These statements were offered to respondents in the form of visual scales, the degree of agreement with the statement was assessed in percentage expression on the scale.

In the text, results are presented in the format of mean scores and percentage expression, taking into account the maximum possible values (parameters are given for each indicator). Percentage scores should be used when assessing scale severity and for ease of comparison of results.

The instructions for the questionnaires were subject to modification; respondents were asked to give answers in terms of perceptions of a hypothetical relationship with a future child.

The following statistical procedures of the SPSS Statistics 22 software package (IBM Corp., USA) were used: descriptive statistics (for an overview description of the results of the research instruments); Spearman's correlation coefficient (to determine correlations between variables); regression analysis (stepwise ridge regression method – to identify the influence of variables).

The study was based on the principle of voluntariness; all respondents gave informed consent to participate. Interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study and their rights. The principles of confidentiality and environmental friendliness were respected. The study was approved by the local ethical committee of the Kostroma State University (Minutes No. 2 dated April 22, 2022).

RESULTS

The sample (generalised characteristics are summarised in Table 1) consisted of 364 childless students (218 (59.9 %) girls, 146 (40.1 %) boys) who receive pedagogical, medical, sociological, engineering and technical education in higher educational institutions of Kostroma and Yaroslavl. The mean age was 19.43 years ($SD = 1.87$).

In the sample there is a significant representation (26.9 %) of the group of respondents with «incomplete higher» education – these are persons who have not completed higher education in the past or who have changed their speciality of education; 47.53 per cent of young people are not in a relationship. 71.15 per cent were brought up in a small family, 19.5 per cent of respondents had no siblings.

The results of descriptive statistics (Table 2) demonstrate that the overall level of PS in the perceptions of young people corresponds to moderate values. Parental dissatisfaction is the least expressed in the PS «profile»; increased level of demands to the parent («stressors»), the probability of losing control over one's own life and the deficit of emotional rewards from the realisation of the parental role are recognised.

Prospective parents perceive the parenting role as «intense». They have beliefs about the need to actively stimulate children's development, an attitude of perceiving the parental role as time-consuming and perceive the child as the centre of attention in the family. To a lesser extent, the attitude to essentialism is expressed, i.e. the respondents are not oriented to the mother's primacy in child care and upbringing.

Generally, young people show a prevalence of positive basic beliefs about the «Self-image», demonstrate stable perceptions of control over their own lives and events,

but to a lesser extent believe in their own luck, fairness and benevolence of the world around them. Child – parent and family relationships are rated quite highly by respondents ($M = 8.19$ and $M = 8.14$ out of 10).

Let us present a scheme reflecting the dependence of parental stress parameters over objective and subjective characteristics (Fig. 1).

The overall regression was statistically significant for measures of total expected PS and its components. It was revealed that they were significantly predicted by objective factors such as age, personal relationship status and education, and subjective factors such as evaluation of family relationships, attitudes towards the need to stimulate child development, essentialism and gaining satisfaction from child upbringing. Overall PS ($R = 0.61$; $R^2 = 0.37$; $p = 0.000$) was positively predicted by attitudes towards intensive parenting: difficulty ($\beta = 0.13$; $p = 0.004$) and stimulation ($\beta = 0.14$; $p = 0.001$) – as well as respondent age ($\beta = 0.13$; $p = 0.004$); while it was negatively determined by family relationship evaluation ($\beta = -0.13$; $p = 0.003$).

The assessment of the parental role as stressful (level of «parental stressors») ($R = 0.66$; $R^2 = 0.44$; $p = 0.000$) was positively contributed by the absence of a partner (single/unmarried status) ($\beta = 0.08$; $p = 0.05$), level of education (incomplete higher education) ($\beta = 0.11$; $p = 0.01$), essentialism attitude ($\beta = 0.10$; $p = 0.01$); negative contribution – subjective evaluation of family relations ($\beta = -0.15$; $p = 0.0006$).

Perceptions of potential limitations and emotional discomfort from the parental role («parental damage») are statistically significantly positively predicted ($R = 0.45$; $R^2 = 0.20$; $p = 0.000$) by respondent age ($\beta = 0.13$; $p = 0.008$), stimulation attitude ($\beta = 0.19$; $p = 0.00006$), and negatively by parental role satisfaction attitude ($\beta = -0.19$; $p = 0.0002$).

TABLE 1

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF OBJECTIVE DETERMINANTS/FACTORS IN THE YOUTH SAMPLE ($n = 364$)

Sex (n)		Age (M)		Education (n)			
male	female	male	female	mean	vocational secondary	incomplete higher	higher
146	218	19.43	19.37	184	58	98	24
Marital status (n)				Presence of siblings (n)			
single/unmarried	romantically involved	legally married	1	2	3 or more	no	
179	173	12	188	73	32	71	
Parental family characteristics (n)				Type of activity (n)			
traditional family	single-parent family/divorced	students	employed students				
261	96	364	68				

TABLE 2

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SEVERITY INDICES OF PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL ROLE STRESSORS AND PERCEIVED SUBJECTIVE DETERMINANTS/FACTORS IN THE YOUTH SAMPLE ($n = 364$)

Parental stress parameters														
	Parental stressors (max – 30)		Parental reward/ damage (max – 25)		Loss of control (max – 20)		Parental satisfaction/ dissatisfaction (max – 15)		Overall parental stress level (max - 90)					
M (%)	15.37/51.22		12.11/48.45		9.11/45.55		6.63/36.86		44.37/49.30					
σ	4.34		6.36		3.29		2.85		12.78					
Parameters of attitudes towards intensive parenting														
	Essentialism (max – 48)		Satisfaction (max – 24)		Stimulation (max – 24)		Difficulties (max – 36)		Child centrism (max – 18)					
M (%)	22.48/46.84		17.07/71.14		18.74/72.15		26.75/74.31		11.37/63.19					
σ	5.62		3.53		3.11		3.50		2.43					
Parameters of baseline beliefs and assessment of child-parent family relationships														
	Self-image (max - 100)		Benevolence of the surrounding world (max – 100)		Justice (max – 100)		Luck (max – 100)		Control conviction (max - 100)		Assessment of child-parent relation- ships (max - 10)		Assessment of family relations (max - 10)	
M	77.13		52.47		62.32		61.41		71.07		8.19		8.14	
σ	47.86		24.58		26.91		22.55		21.28		1.91		2.03	

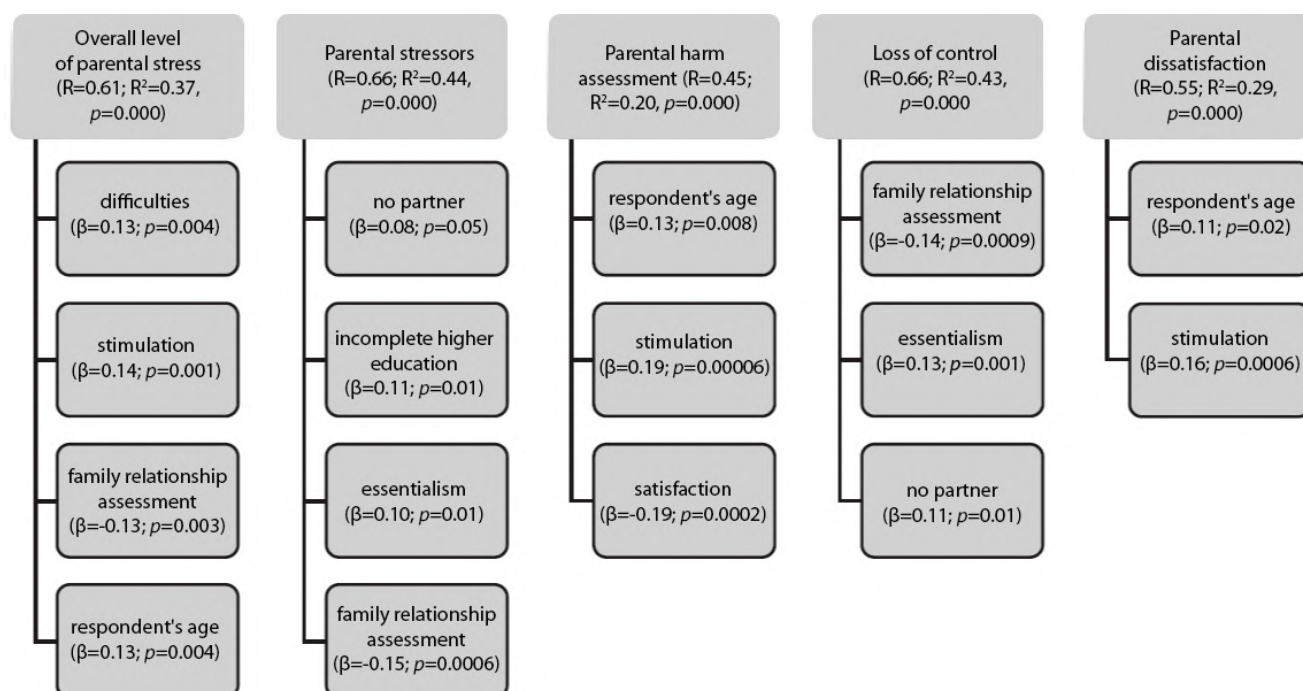


FIG. 1.

Regression analysis of factors predicting perceptions of parental stress among youths

The expectation of losing control over their own lives among potential parents is positively determined ($R = 0.66$; $R^2 = 0.43$; $p = 0.000$) by the fact of not having a partner ($\beta = 0.11$; $p = 0.01$), by the attitude of essentialism ($\beta = 0.13$; $p = 0.001$), and negatively by the evaluation of family relationships ($\beta = -0.14$; $p = 0.0009$).

The important PS indicator «parental dissatisfaction» in young people's perceptions will be positively predicted ($R = 0.55$; $R^2 = 0.29$; $p = 0.000$) by respondent age ($\beta = 0.11$; $p = 0.02$) and attitudinal stimulation ($\beta = 0.16$; $p = 0.0006$).

The sample was divided into three empirical groups by childbearing orientation and based on the respondents' answers in the questionnaire about the desired number of children in the future. Within the study group, the following were distinguished: a group of potentially childless parents with an orientation towards the classical family structure with 1–2 children ($n = 257$; $M = 19.45$; $SD = 1.86$); a group of child-free parents who declared their unwillingness to have children in the future ($n = 32$; $M = 18.78$; $SD = 1.48$); a group of persons with an orientation towards having many children ($n = 75$; $M = 19.45$; $SD = 2.01$), who noted their intention to have 3 or more children (Table 3).

Among the socio-demographic characteristics in the identified empirical groups, the following should be highlighted as key features. Girls (61.9 %) are more oriented towards having few children than boys (38.1 %); the majority are in a romantic relationship (52.5 %) or in an official marriage (4.7 %); this group has the highest percentage of employed (21 %) young people who already have secondary vocational education (16.7 %); the majority grew up in a complete family (70.8 %); the highest percentage of young people without siblings (22.2 %) among all groups. There are more girls in the group with orientation on having many children (58.7 %); 50.7 % of respondents are single/unmarried, 45.3 % are in romantic relations/civil marriage; 17.3 % combine study and work; 16 % have secondary specialised education; the majority (74.7 %) are from a complete family; 12 % have no siblings, while 45.3 % have 2–4 siblings (respondents were brought up in a large family themselves). The group with childlessness orientation has more young men (53.1 %); the smallest percentage among the groups of working students (3.1 %) and those with education (specialised secondary education – 9.4 %); the majority (71.9 %) were brought up in a complete family; respondents mostly have no romantic relations (84.4 %); 15.6 % have no siblings.

The analysis has revealed that the level of parental role stressfulness statistically significantly differs in the perceptions of young people with different childbearing orientation. The maximum stressfulness of the parental role is determined in the perceptions of students talking about unwillingness to have children. They observed a high level of overall expression of parental stress ($n = 32$; $M = 58.44$ or 64.93 % of the maximum score). In the «profile» of its

severity, a prevalence of indicators related to the demands and limitations of the parent: «Parental stressors» ($M = 21.47$ or 71.56 % of the maximum score) and «Loss of control» ($M = 13.94$ or 69.69 % of the maximum score) can be observed. Respondents whose preferred family form is a large family have the lowest parental stress scores. The perceptions of parenting among respondents who prefer many and few children are statistically significantly different in terms of «Parental Stressors» ($M = 13.81$ or 46.04 % of the maximum score; $M = 15.00$ or 50.19 % of maximum score respectively), «Loss of Control» ($M = 7.85$ or 39.26 % of maximum score; $M = 8.88$ or 44.37 % of maximum score respectively), «Parental Dissatisfaction/Satisfaction» ($M = 5.84$ or 32.44 % of maximum score; $M = 6.60$ or 36.10 % of maximum score respectively).

Correlations were determined to reveal factors associated with PS perceptions among youth with different childbearing orientations (Fig. 2, 4, 6), and regression analyses were conducted to reveal determinants predicting increased parental role stressors in young people's perceptions (Fig. 3, 5, 7).

In the group of persons with orientation towards having few children, among objective stressors we can observe the following anamnestic characteristics: age, female gender, absence of a partner (single person/unmarried girl position) (Fig. 2). In the group of persons with orientation towards having few children, among objective stressors we can observe the following anamnestic characteristics: age, female gender, absence of a partner (single person/unmarried girl position) (Fig. 2). Importantly, contextual «objective» factors have weak correlations with PS parameters compared to «subjective» factors, which have moderately strong correlations. Specifically, high significance level negative relationships of all indicators of perceived parental stress were revealed with satisfaction attitudes. Beliefs about the mother's leading role in child upbringing may be positively related to the stressor of parenting in young people's perceptions. The interaction of the loss of control parameter with the assessment of family and child-parental relations is also characterised by strong negative links (Fig. 2). A slightly different picture was obtained in analysing the causal relationships between parental stress symptoms and different groups of factors (Fig. 3).

It appeared that in the group of potentially young people with an orientation towards having few children, perceptions of the overall level of parental stress were determined by only one objective factor, the age of the respondent ($R = 0.20$; $R^2 = 0.42$; $p = 0.001$; $\beta = 0.19$). But its strengthening is predicted by a complex of subjective factors ($R = 0.48$; $R^2 = 0.23$; $p = 0.000$): the expression of attitudes about the mother's primary role in child upbringing ($\beta = 0.32$; $p = 0.00$), the need to stimulate the child's development ($\beta = 0.21$; $p = 0.00$), and the deficit of beliefs in the possibility of getting satisfaction from parenting ($\beta = -0.30$; $p = 0.00$). The remaining parameters of parental stress are influenced only by subjective factors,

among which the greatest role is played by attitudes towards the intensity of upbringing. Perceptions of high levels of parental role demands – «parental stressors» – will be reinforced ($R = 0.50$; $R^2 = 0.25$; $p = 0.000$) in the presence of low valuation of family relationships ($\beta = -0.17$; $p = 0.002$), doubts about being satisfied with parenting ($\beta = -0.35$; $p = 0.000$) and beliefs about its labour-intensiveness ($\beta = 0.29$; $p = 0.000$). Perceptions of low reward from the realisation of parental functions: «parental damage» is determined ($R = 0.39$; $R^2 = 0.15$; $p = 0.000$) by a combination of the expression of attitudes of essentialism ($\beta = 0.31$; $p = 0.0000$), stimulation ($\beta = 0.25$; $p = 0.00002$), but low belief in the need

to prioritise the needs of the child – child-centrism ($\beta = -0.20$; $p = 0.0005$). Loss of control over one's own life as a symptom of parental stress was predicted ($R = 0.53$; $R^2 = 0.28$; $p = 0.000$) by a combination of essentialism attitudes ($\beta = 0.18$; $p = 0.0004$), parental role difficulty ($\beta = 0.19$; $p = 0.0003$) and satisfaction deficits ($\beta = -0.35$; $p = 0.000$), low valuation of family relationships ($\beta = -0.19$; $p = 0.0005$). Parental dissatisfaction as a PS trait was determined by the same set of attitudes concerning upbringing intensity as the overall PS level ($R = 0.43$; $R^2 = 0.19$; $p = 0.000$): essentialism ($\beta = 0.26$; $p = 0.000$), stimulation ($\beta = 0.20$; $p = 0.0003$), and beliefs about parental satisfaction deficits ($\beta = -0.29$; $p = 0.000$).

TABLE 3

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUTH SAMPLE IN THE EMPIRICAL GROUPS WITH DIFFERENT CHILDBEARING ORIENTATION ($n = 364$)

Characteristics	Orientation towards «with few children» ($n = 257$)	Orientation towards «having many children» ($n = 75$)	Orientation towards «childlessness» ($n = 32$)
Age (M)	19.45	18.78	19.45
Sex, n (%)			
Girls	159 (61.9)	44 (58.7)	15 (46.9)
Young men	98 (38.1)	31 (41.3)	17 (53.1)
Type of activity, n (%)			
Students	236 (91.8)	70 (93.3)	31 (96.9)
Employed	21 (8.2)	5 (6.7)	1 (3.1)
Employed students	54 (21.0)	13 (17.3)	1 (3.1)
Marital status, n (%)			
Single/unmarried	110 (42.8)	38 (50.7)	27 (84.4)
Romantically involved	135 (52.5)	34 (45.3)	5 (15.6)
Legally married	12 (4.7)	3 (4.0)	0
Education, n (%)			
Mean	131 (60.0)	37 (49.3)	17 (53.1)
Vocational secondary	43 (16.7)	12 (16.0)	3 (9.4)
Incomplete higher	70 (27.2)	18 (24.0)	10 (31.3)
Higher	15 (5.8)	8 (10.7)	2 (6.2)
Parental family characteristics, n (%)			
Traditional family	182 (70.8)	56 (74.7)	23 (71.9)
Single-parent family/divorced	75 (29.2)	19 (25.3)	9 (28.1)
Presence of siblings, n (%)			
No (subject is an only child)	57 (22.2)	9 (12.0)	5 (15.6)
1 sibling (small family)	134 (52.1)	32 (42.7)	23 (71.9)
2-4 siblings (large family)	66 (25.7)	34 (45.3)	4 (12.5)

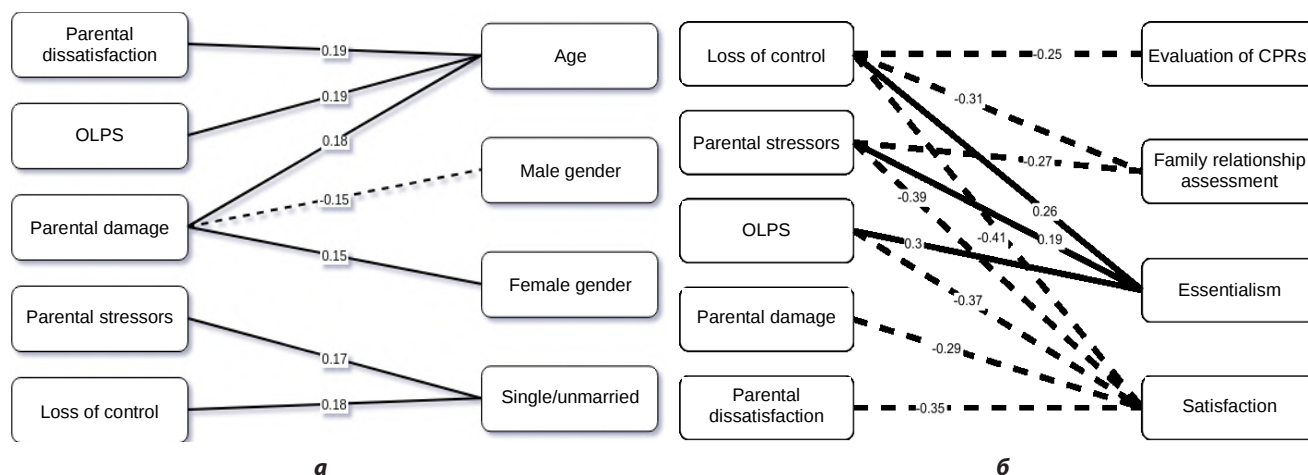


FIG. 2. Correlations of the level of perceived parental stress indices among young people with orientation to having few children: **a** – with objective characteristics; **b** – with subjective characteristics; solid line – direct correlations; dotted line – inverse correlations. Statistical significance level: medium thickness line – $p \leq 0.01$; thick line – $p \leq 0.001$

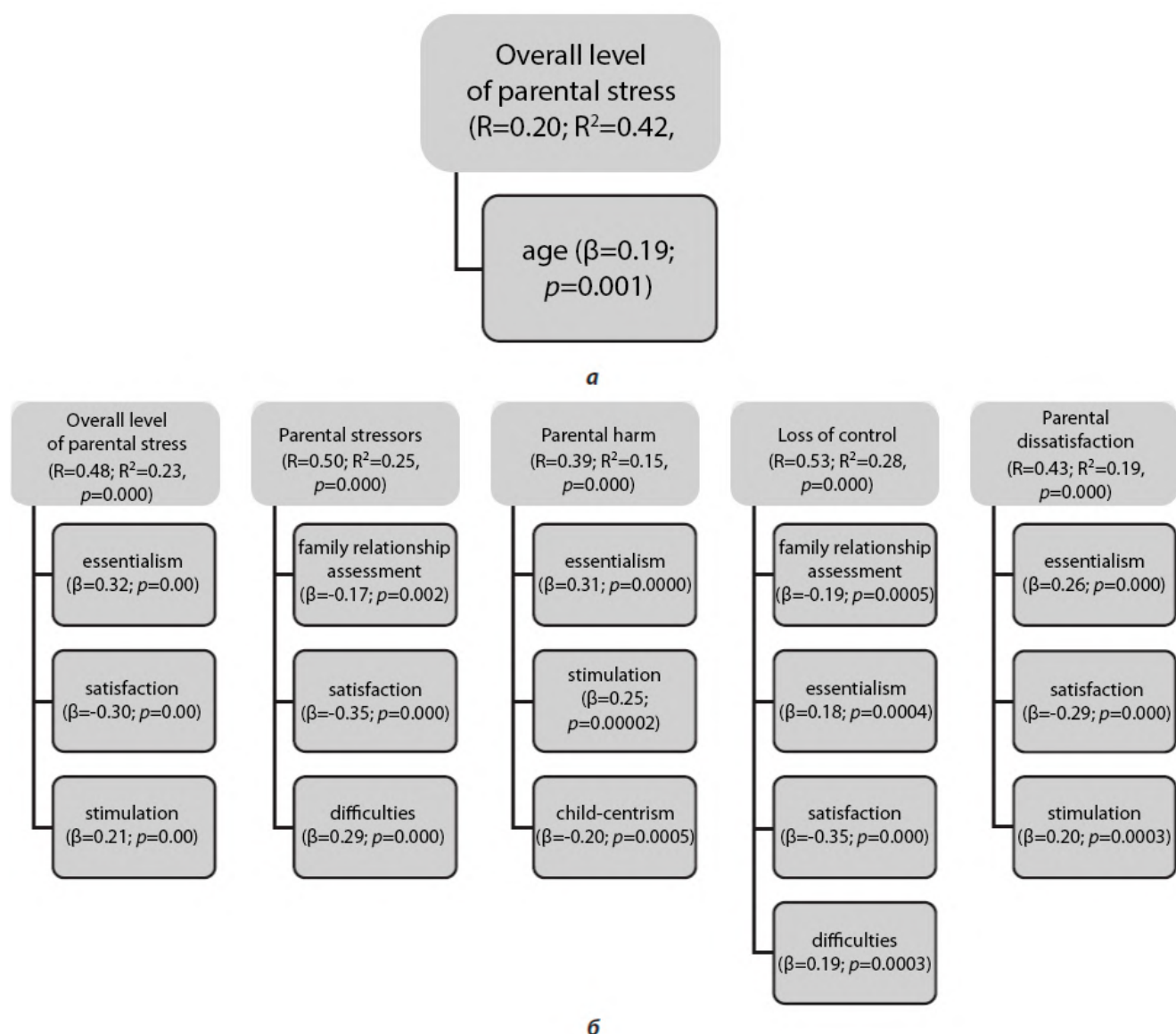


FIG. 3. Determination of anticipated parental stress level indicators among young people with an orientation towards having few children: **a** – objective characteristics; **b** – subjective characteristics

The analysis of correlations in the group of respondents with child-free orientation reveals almost complete absence of correlations between stressor and anamnestic characteristics (Fig. 4), which provides us with prospects for studying child-free orientation from the point of view of its conditioning by one's own experience. It is worth paying attention to the influence of the position from the only child in the family onto the perceptions of stressor of parenting in the form of loss of control, as well as to the greater strength of correlations of the negative nature of subjective factors with all parameters of parental stress. Again the leaders in mutual influence are the attitudes to satisfaction (Fig. 4).

In the group of young people with a child-free orientation, the only determinant of parental stress symptoms is the attitude of being able to enjoy parenting («satisfaction»). It negatively predicted individual attributes rather than overall stress levels, namely parental stressors ($R = 0.51$; $R^2 = 0.26$; $p = 0.003$; $\beta = -0.49$), loss of control ($R = 0.52$; $R^2 = 0.27$; $p = 0.003$; $\beta = -0.49$) and parental dissatisfaction ($R = 0.58$; $R^2 = 0.34$; $p = 0.0005$; $\beta = -0.55$).

In the group of young people with orientation towards having many children, strong links of stressor indicators with female gender and, on the contrary, negative links with male gender are observed (Fig. 6).

Among personal subjective factors (Fig. 6), it is in this group that the basic beliefs about the positivity of self-image and one's ability to maintain control, as well as the assessment of child-parental relations also become related to the idea of stressor parenting.

The analysis of the determinacy of PS perceptions among young people with a multi-child orientation revealed the influence of only a single objective factor (level of education) over the parental stressors parameter ($R = 0.40$; $R^2 = 0.16$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.39$). In other words,

having an incomplete higher education predicts increased perceptions of high levels in parental role demands. The influence of subjective factors alone was also determined in the remainder. The expression of overall parental stress levels ($R = 0.43$; $R^2 = 0.19$; $p = 0.0001$; $\beta = 0.41$), its symptoms in the form of «parental damage» ($R = 0.41$; $R^2 = 0.17$; $p = 0.0002$; $\beta = 0.39$) and parental dissatisfaction ($R = 0.42$; $R^2 = 0.18$; $p = 0.0002$; $\beta = 0.40$) are predicted by the expression of essentialism attitudes. Low levels of parenting pleasure attitudes predict PS «loss of control» symptom severity ($R = 0.39$; $R^2 = 0.15$; $p = 0.0006$; $\beta = -0.37$). The formation of perceptions of high demands of parenting – «parental stressors» – is being determined by a group of factors ($R = 0.56$; $R^2 = 0.32$; $p = 0.0000$) including attitudes of labour-intensiveness ($\beta = 0.39$; $p = 0.0001$) and low satisfaction ($\beta = -0.48$; $p = 0.000004$) with parenting.

DISCUSSION

Analysing the determinants of perceptions of parental role stressor in a general sample of prospective parents. Among contextual objective determinants of perceptions of parental role stressor in the general youth sample, age makes a significant contribution to the predetermination of perceptions of stressor, which is consistent with available studies about the development of the system of parenting perceptions [17], and can also be explained by the expansion of social experience, cognitive development, and increased level of personal maturity. Apparently, these processes can also explain the role of the education factor. Perhaps higher education that enlightens about developmental patterns shapes the expectation of stressor, as it speaks mostly about crises and difficulties of different age periods and little about options for overcoming them.

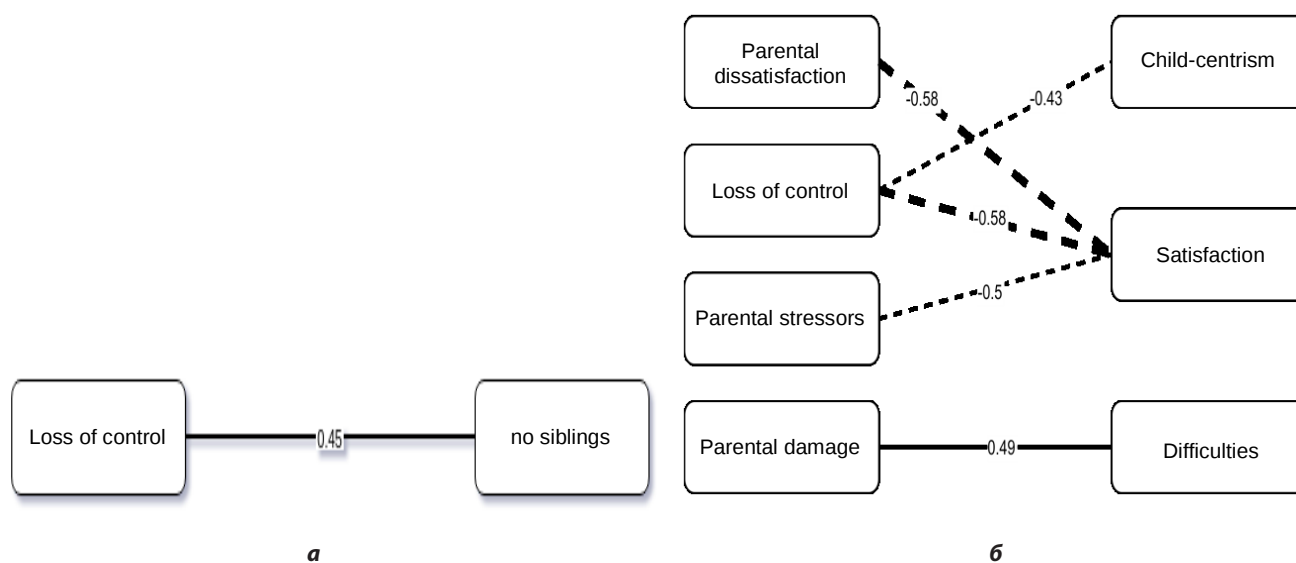


FIG. 4.

Correlations of the level of perceived parental stress indices among young people with child-free orientation: **a** – with objective characteristics; **b** – with subjective characteristics; solid line – direct correlations; dotted line – inverse correlations. Statistical significance level: medium thickness line – $p \leq 0.01$; thick line – $p \leq 0.001$

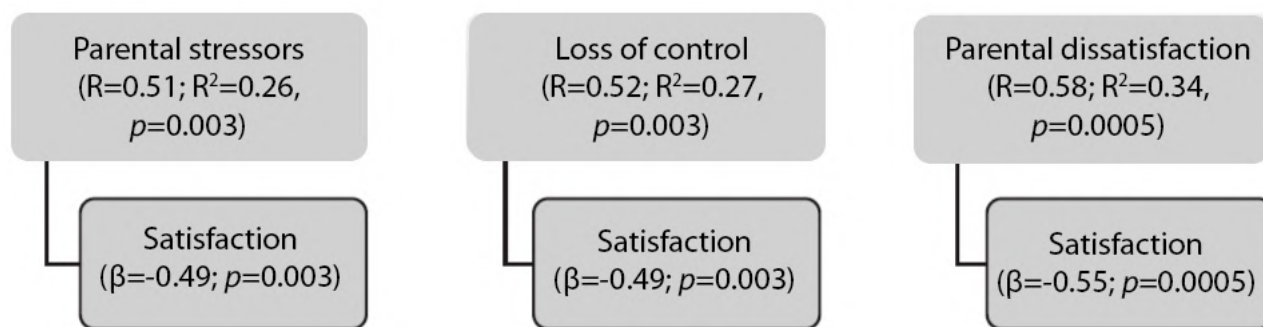


FIG. 5.
Indices of perceived parental stress level in youth with childfree orientation determinants

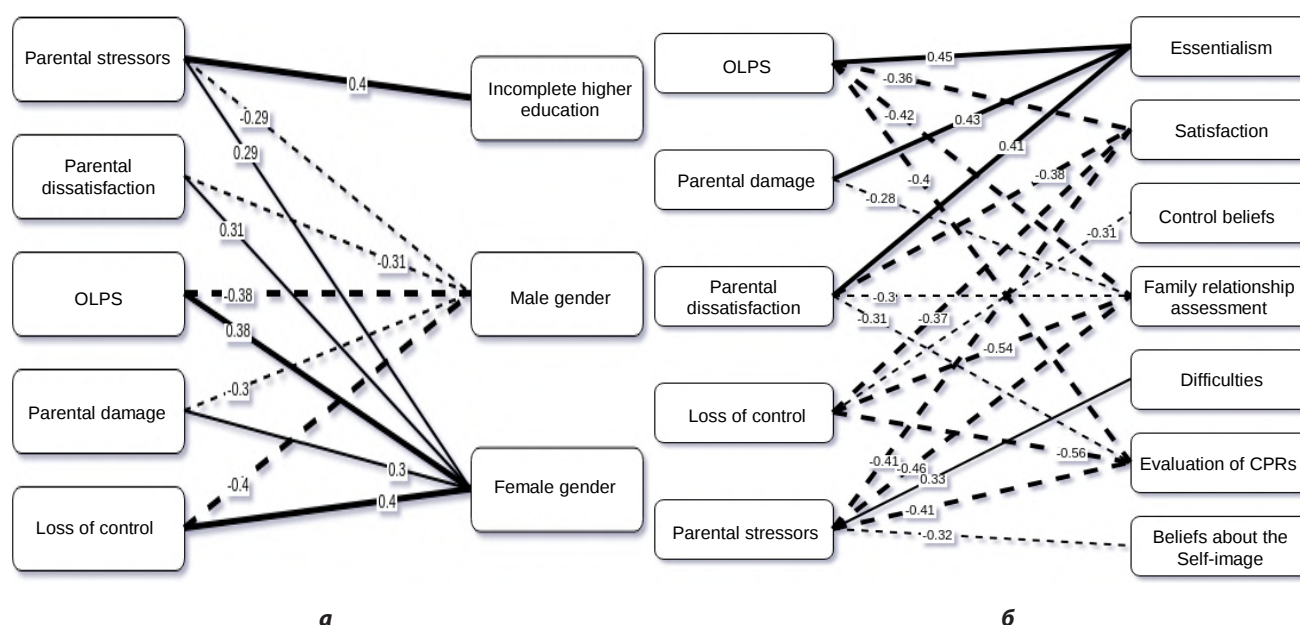


FIG. 6.
Correlations of the level of perceived parental stress indices among young people with orientation to having many children: **a** – with objective characteristics; **b** – with subjective characteristics; solid line – direct correlations; dotted line – inverse correlations. Statistical significance level: medium thickness line – $p \leq 0.01$; thick line – $p \leq 0.001$

The existing experience of failure in higher education (unfinished higher education) increases stressors in terms of perceptions of high demands to parents (parental stressors), which, presumably, may be related to the expectation of future uncertainty.

Highlighting «lack of partner» as a factor in hypothetical PS was not unexpected, as in general the single-parent family is considered more vulnerable and the parent is more susceptible to the difficulties associated with role overload. It is also consistent with the important role of social support in the occurrence of PS [12]. Some studies indirectly identify the factor of partner absence as a stressor because it is associated with lower parental role satisfaction [8].

Gender does not emerge as a determinant of parenting stressor in relation to perceptions of parental stress in the cumulative sample. It may however be a factor influencing these perceptions in separate analyses of data from a group of potentially small number of child

parents. This seems to be following gender stereotypes (the idea that women play a greater role in child upbringing and, as a consequence, are more stressed). A number of studies have shown that mothers experience less satisfaction with parenting than fathers [1, 3]. In the context of the essential attitudes expression of intensive parenting, women often experience societal pressures to conform to cultural standards of highly participatory parenting [26]. Likewise, following L. Ruppanner et al. (2019), this result tends to be justified by the greater orientation of potentially mothers with few children towards a primary role in childcare and upbringing, as well as the predominant fulfilment of household duties [28]. It is worth noting that economic status, parental family type, divorce, and a number of other factors which have been suggested by this study were also not determinants of stressor perceptions of the parental role in the overall sample of potential parents.

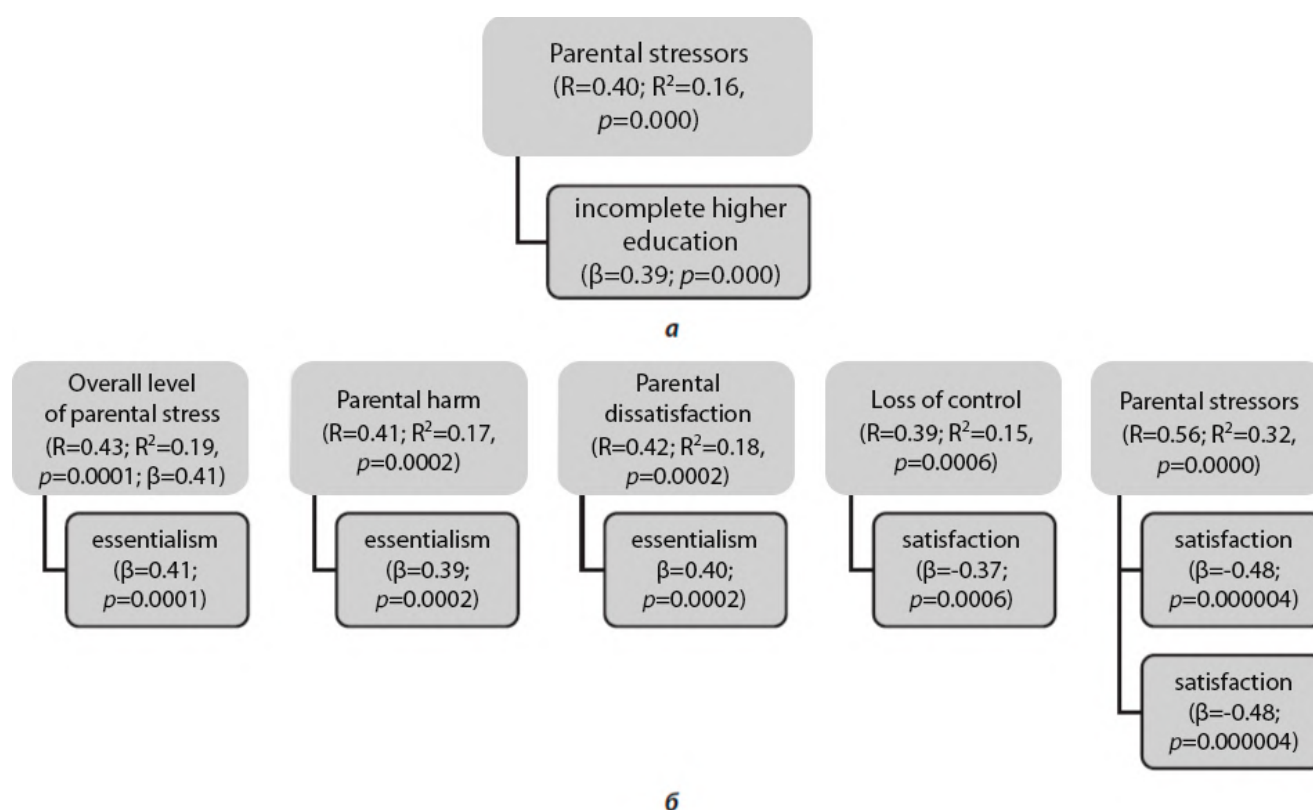


FIG. 7.

Determination of anticipated parental stress level indicators among young people with multiple-childhood orientation: **a** – objective characteristics; **b** – subjective characteristics

Among personal «subjective» micro-level factors that are determinants of parental role stressor in young people's perceptions, attitudes to upbringing intensity play a major role. An interesting fact is the established negative influence of the attitude of satisfaction with parenting in young people's perceptions of PS. This orientation is seen as a variant of self-actualisation, when active child upbringing can bring positive results and pleasure, respectively, can act as a factor reducing perceptions of parenting stressor. Similar findings were obtained previously in a sample of mothers whose stress was low in the presence of beliefs about the rewarding nature of parenting [29].

Attitudes about the need to stimulate child development from an early age are a factor that reinforces the perception of the parental role as stressful. This relationship is also observed in groups of young people oriented towards childlessness or having few children, emphasising its role in fertility plans. The identified pattern confirms the negative role of parental determinism as a total social attitude that creates orientations to «proper parenting» [30].

It is worth noting the large number of links of the dimensions of perceived parental stress with the perception of the parental role as difficult (parenting is perceived as a difficult life task, a «challenge», a «labour-intensive project») and essentialism beliefs (women are more competent parents and bear the main burden of care and upbringing). The highlighted subjective factors of parental

role stressor in the youth environment are also characteristic for parents with children. Men and women who found parenting challenging were prone to depression and showed higher levels of stress, while experiencing lower life satisfaction. Women's belief that «motherhood is a challenge» reduces their sense of competence as a parent, leading to poorer well-being [29].

A significant contribution to the perceptions of the parental role stressor is made by the factor of evaluation of the respondents' family relationships. It should be noted that the assessment of child-parents' relationships did not become a determinant (although it is associated with PS perceptions in some groups of respondents), which contradicts the available studies showing the role of parents' relationships in the formation of perceptions [17]. It does, however, point to the role of inclusion in the family system, the presence of systemic social support as a protective factor in the perception of the parental role stressor. Baseline beliefs have not been identified as determinants of general perceptions of parental role stressors, but some of them may influence the parental stress perceptions of a group of young people oriented toward having many children.

Determinants analysis of parenting stressor perceptions taking into account reproductive plans allows observing the presence of a system of producing (determining) and secondary (acting as conditions) factors of parental role stressor. Among both the former and the latter, however, there are statistically significantly

strong and numerous associations of PS parameters with subjective factors in all three groups. Common for all groups was the negative relationship of parental stress parameters with satisfaction, which fully correlates with the studies of foreign scientists indicating negative aspects of parenting [1, 2].

The group of hypothetical parents with few children, among whom the majority grew up in complete families and they have the highest percentage of no siblings among all groups, represent the parental role as moderately stressful, having a resource in the form of receiving positive emotions, pleasure from parenting. The factor of age acts as objective determinants of PS perceptions, which suggests that critical but anxious attitudes to parenting and, accordingly, attitudes to having few children during maturity are fixed. Female gender and education may be contributing factors to PS perceptions in this group. Among the subjective determinants of parenting stressor is a combination of different attitudes to the intensity of parenting, as well as low evaluation of family relationships. The combination of attitudes to the mother's primacy («essentialism») and attitudes to the deficit of nurturing pleasure («satisfaction») or to the need to stimulate development («stimulation») most often plays a significant role in the system of producing subjective factors that reinforce PS. This forms a certain psychological portrait of the family that exists in this group and is associated with PS, with a hyper-responsible mum who feels the need to develop the child and does not enjoy doing so.

The group of respondents with orientation to large families, who revealed the lowest expression of parental role stressor, were predominantly brought up in a full family, and a significant part of them – in large families. Their objective determinants of their PS perceptions are the experience of incomplete education. This is probably considered in this group as a loss of a resource against PS. As in the previous group, belonging to the female sex has an enhancing effect here, while only the male sex is associated with a decrease in PS. The obtained results are consistent with the data of other scientists [1, 7], which is relevant in the case of the emerging trend to change the situation and to greater involvement of men in the process of child upbringing and, consequently, their greater exposure to parental stress. The subjective determinants are exclusively attitudes towards upbringing, among which the parameter of essentialism and the feeling of mothers' primary responsibility for upbringing a child are the leading ones. This may be a result of fear of social support loss, as reported, for example, by women with children [14].

In this group, the correlation of PS parameters with the assessment of relations in the family system (child-parental and family relations in general) is also observed, which is a condition for strengthening PS in the perceptions of young people. The literature partly highlights family conflict [8] and characteristics of parental families as stressors [19], and in our case this may emphasise the role of subjective evaluation of parental

family upbringing experiences. The influence of basic beliefs over PS indicators was revealed only in this group of respondents, which, in our opinion, may indicate the role of personal factors in the formation of perceptions of parenting and requires further study.

Almost complete absence of objective determinants of parental role stressor was revealed only in the group of people with childlessness orientation. This group has more male respondents who are not in a relationship and the highest expression rates of perceived PS, which may be influenced (as an objective condition) by the position of an only child in the family. The inability to derive pleasure and fulfilment from the upbringing process is a derived factor for PS symptoms, and the expression of other upbringing attitudes may influence perceptions of the stressor of the parental role. Of interest is the established negative effect of unformed child-centrism attitudes and the need to stimulate children on the increase in signs of parental stress. This fact suggests an internal conflict among these respondents: on the one hand - unwillingness to make upbringing of a child a life priority and spend personal resources on it, on the other hand - understanding the necessity of it. This situation, in our opinion, can lead to feelings of guilt, and the chosen orientation towards childlessness can be considered as a way out of the conflict.

The limitations of the study are some overview of the highlighted subjective factors of disclosure of determinants of perceptions of parental stress, which is due to the exploratory nature of the study. The age of respondents imposes restrictions upon generalising the findings to the entire population of young people without children (e.g. over 30), but it allows us to identify statistically significant patterns relevant to Generation Z youth. We see a full account of the determinants of perceptions of parental stress as a prospect for further studies of this topic.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of theoretical analyses, the negative impact of parental stress and the tendency towards intense parental role fulfilment upon the mental health of parents and children in terms of creating obstacles to normative maturation and mental development has been observed.

The empirical study allowed us to identify a set of factors that can influence the increase of parental role stressor in the perceptions of potential parents and, accordingly, increase the risk of parental behaviour unfavourable for their own mental and physical health and children's health.

Young people as potential parents perceive the parental role in terms of its «intensity» and labour-intensiveness. Generally, young people's perceptions of the potential stress of parenting are determined by a complex of contextual «objective» (age, status of personal relationships, education) and personal «subjective» (assessment of family relationships, attitudes

to the need to stimulate child development, essentialism and getting satisfaction from upbringing) factors, but subjective factors make the greatest contribution.

The level of stressor of parental role statistically significantly differs in the perceptions of young people with different orientation to childbearing, which can be considered as one of the conditions for the formation of fertile attitudes. The level of parenting stressor is determined by a system of determinant factors. As general preconditions of PS (independent of plans for childbearing) are attitudes to the intensity of upbringing, which, apparently, are formed as a generalisation of children's family and social experience. The attitude of a deficit of pleasure in upbringing plays a fundamental role here.

In the group of persons with a child-free orientation, there is almost complete absence of determination of stressor parenting by objective characteristics, and the high level of PS in young people's ideas is conditioned by the attitude to the impossibility of self-fulfilment and enjoyment from upbringing children. The choice of childlessness orientation may be a way of resolving the conflict between unformed attitudes to the priority of a child and the pressure of social requirements for upbringing.

Similarity of determinants of PS, moderate level of which is predicted in the future, in groups of respondents with childbearing orientation was revealed. The main parameters are essentialism, reflecting the unequal distribution of responsibilities for upbringing and development of children between mother and father, excessive level of mother's responsibility for this. In the group of young people with orientation having few children, the increase in PS and its symptoms is determined by a set of attitudes including essentialism, as well as the evaluation of family relationships.

Thus, the predominant determination of perceptions of parental role stressor by subjective factors as opposed to objective factors was observed. The specificity of the determination of ideas about parental stress depending on the orientation towards childbearing has been revealed.

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Conflict of interest

The authors of this article declare no conflicts of interest.

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