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Socio-Demographic Construct of Social Loneliness in Modern Russia

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the theory and methodology behind social loneliness in the family context, as well as empirically assessing the socio-demographic manifestation of this phenomenon in modern Russia. Several factors exacerbating and minimizing social loneliness are presented. A strong emphasis is placed on the importance of families in alleviating social loneliness and on family construct preservation. Using the cluster method, the authors analyze criteria-defined groups from the general sample of an empirical study that was held by the Family and Demography Center of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences (TAS) in 2022. As a result, a conclusion is drawn about factors that the respondents consider to be the most significant in minimizing social loneliness. In this connection, the authors find it important to define the family as a synergistic mechanism for reducing such social risks and assess the risks of transforming the traditional family construct. In addition, the study uses the female subsample to examine the role of gender in the severity of social loneliness. Determining the role of women in the creation of family relations and the transfer of social value-based attitudes, the authors assess the family construct stability and the likely features of its transformation to develop a preventive socio-demographic policy for reducing social deviation and maintaining stable social value-based relationships.

Introduction

Loneliness constitutes one of those concepts whose actual meaning is seemingly clear to the ordinary consciousness. However, such clarity is deceptive since it hides a complex, largely contradictory socio-philosophical content, which is often hard to construct using rational analysis.

Recent years have seen a surge of interest among psychologists in the concept of loneliness. This concept has been associated with both physical (Lynch, 1976) and a range of serious mental illnesses, including alcoholism (Bell, 1956), suicidal ideation (Wenz, 1977), and depression (Bragg, 1979; Cutrona, 1981; Peplau et al., 1979; Weeks et al., 1980). Laboratory studies into the social behavior of lonely people revealed social skill deficits (Jones, 1982), i.e., negative attitudes towards self and others (Jones et al., 1981), unresponsiveness to others in social interactions (Jones et al., 1982), and inappropriate patterns of self-disclosure (Chelune et al., 1980; Solano et al., 1982). These and other studies (Peplau & Perlman, 1982) suggest that loneliness constitutes a significant psychological construct.

The empirical clarification of social loneliness in the family context differs in various countries due to cultural, economic, and housing reasons, which became relevant during and after the pandemic. For example, Japan has produced a number of well-known loneliness researchers. In fact, the scale of the loneliness problem there and its negative impact on the nation's well-being prompted the Japanese government to recommend distant employment as a way to restore work-life balance (Fujii et al., 2021).

Cross-national research (17 participant countries) conducted in order to discover the effect of family ties on loneliness helped to refute some myths: e.g., it is marriage rather than parenthood that alleviates loneliness; however, when occurring simultaneously, these demographic events make people twice less lonely (Stack, 1998). An analysis of contemporary research reveals several areas of social loneliness studies in the family context: (a) loneliness in parenthood (Nowland et al., 2021); (b) loneliness during pregnancy (Kent-Marvick et al., 2022); (c) loneliness in an intergenerational family (Heshmati et al., 2021).

A large number of researchers agree that as a socio-philosophical phenomenon, loneliness is generally associated with the degree to which people are involved in a community of people, their family life, social reality, and macro-social environment (Alwin et al., 1985; Klinenberg, 2012; Putnam, 2000). In this connection, it is vital to understand, evaluate, describe, and analyze this degree of involvement, whose cessation leads to behavioral deviation caused by an increased self-inflicted sense of social loneliness, as well as to the inner (in exceptional cases outward) urge to

enter into social and personal dissonance with the social environment or personal self-organization.

In the modern world, physical isolation does not always coexist with a feeling of loneliness. Most acutely, people can experience loneliness in situations of intense, sometimes forced communication in a city crowd, in a family circle, and among friends. Introduced in the 1950s by the American sociologist David Riesman, the term "lonely crowd" has become symbolic of our time (Riesman et al., 1961/2020). In contrast to the objective isolation of a person, which can be voluntary and full of inner meaning, loneliness reflects a painful personality discord, prevailing disharmony, suffering, and an identity crisis. Painted in tragic colors, the entire world is perceived as insignificant.

The assembly line fashion in which socio-psychological stereotypes (habits, customs, tastes, assessments, and types of perception behavior) emerge deprives people of their individual differences while providing an outward unification of the social environment, which essentially dissolves the community into largely contrasting social atoms.

As people started to realize their connection with the human race, they also discovered pain associated with losing such a connection or even weakening it (Parkes, 2006). This phenomenon has not always been called "loneliness." Having existed for centuries, the full depth of its general philosophical meaning was not always considered, though invariably woven into the spiritual development of humankind.

As a small social group, the family undoubtedly plays a decisive role in personal development, determining the marital and reproductive behavior of each individual. An empirical study conducted by the Family and Demography Center of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences (TAS) revealed that in the modern Russian society, parents discourage their children from early marriages, as well as early pregnancies. In this way, they intend to take a break (also economically) from raising their children while directing their attention to securing stable positions in the labor market. For a large number of individuals, this results in the choice of employment over family formation. Thus, delay of important demographic events can lead to loneliness (Abdul'zianov et al., 2022), while kinship serves as a base for expectations, support, and identity (Mason, 2008).

Traditionally family ties, as well as parent and spouse statuses, have been associated in the public consciousness with social roles that help to alleviate loneliness; however, the contemporary thesaurus of personal development and success is connected with psychic, physical, and financial safety, resulting in the choice of single life. Having a partner and a child is viewed as a challenge and a risk to a person whose primary life goals include a stable, well-paid job, personal life full of hobbies, self-development, etc.

Thus, the social role of an individual in traditional society is very often considered in the family context. In public perception, such a social group a priori provides tools for minimizing the risks of social loneliness, predetermining an opposite feeling—happiness.

In this article, we examine the relationship between the social constructs of family and children in society and their sense of self in the context of social loneliness. The article aims to assess the degree of happiness as a counterbalance to social

loneliness. To this end, the following objectives are set: to determine factors of loneliness; to study age differences in perception of loneliness; to examine how marital and parental statuses affect the identification of family members as the inner circle; to identify loneliness risk groups; to ascertain the degree of fulfillment in social value-based spheres according to the self-assessment of female respondents.

Theoretical Framework

Loneliness researchers have generally concluded that the experience of loneliness can be characterized in two ways (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). On the one hand, loneliness constitutes an aversive experience that is similar to other negative affective states such as depression or anxiety (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). On the other hand, current studies reveal loneliness to be distinct from social isolation and reflect an individual's subjective perception of flaws in their social relationships (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Chudacoff, 1999). These shortcomings can be quantitative (e.g., not enough friends) or qualitative (e.g., lack of closeness with others).

Some studies indicate that "loneliness" is represented by a common core of experiences (Hughes & Gove, 1981). Thus, it is essential to determine what common experiences form the construct of loneliness. An alternative view (primarily sociological) holds that loneliness can be divided into two or more qualitatively different types (Hortulanus et al., 2005; Yang, 2019). According to this theoretical point of view, the construct of loneliness is exclusively subjective, i.e., the subjective experiences of loneliness differ from person to person.

Social loneliness studies adopt a large number of approaches. For example, existential psychology (Moustakas & Moustakas, 2004; Yalom, 2014) believes loneliness to be inherent in human nature. The existentialist Moustakas defines the "vanity of loneliness" as a system of defense mechanisms, stating that "true loneliness" arises from the awareness of the "reality of a lonely existence." Another representative of the existential approach, Irvin Yalom, emphasizes that lonely existence is preceded by some borderline life situations, such as death, life shocks, and tragedies experienced by an individual alone. In existential philosophy, the concept of conflict is adopted to define an individual's relationship with the objective world, with existentialists focusing on the underlying causes of loneliness in the context of an individual's existence (Berdyaev, 1949/2021; Dahlberg, 2007; Sartre, 1946/2007). According to the psychoanalytic approach within the neo-Freudian paradigm, certain childhood events and experiences can lead to loneliness (Fromm-Reichman, 1990; Smirnova, 2010; Sullivan, 2001; Zilboorg, 1938). Proceeding from this idea, Gregory Zilboorg distinguishes between the concepts of loneliness and solitude, considering the former as inescapable, with its causes arising from the personality, and the latter to be a normal state.

Humanistic sociology (person-centered approach) views loneliness as a consequence of some external impact on the personality (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Rogers, 1942/2007); according to Carl Rogers, loneliness manifests itself as poor adaptability of the personality. According to the socio-psychological approach (Riesman et al., 1961/2020), society causes loneliness, specifically, by weakening

ties in the primary group, which in turn exacerbates this feeling. It is emphasized, however, that one of the key causes of loneliness lies in the tendency to focus on others: striving to be liked by others, people adapt to circumstances while losing their identity, to which David Riesman refers as a "lonely crowd."

The cognitive approach focuses on the discrepancy between the social and individual experience of the individual (Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Perlman & Peplau, 1980). Some approaches consider loneliness as a part of a broader concept: e.g., Erich Fromm (1956) identified consumer society as a cause of loneliness. Karen Horney (1994) developed a psychosocial doctrine of loneliness to comprise multiple factors, including the problems of modern families. Using an integrative model of loneliness, W. Sandler and T. Johnson (1980) examined this phenomenon in the context of relationships and human connections, considering the inner world of a person to be a dynamic process determined by certain experiences. Having a certain potential, people must realize it by determining their place in the world at all levels and establishing the number of connections it requires in each case. The problem of loneliness comes down to determining the characteristics of interpersonal relationships, specifically in the family as a small group. Changes in such a phenomenon as social loneliness lead to the transformation of interactions, including within small social groups, as well as to the transformed understanding of the family as a social unit.

Several theories consider loneliness as part of a broader social problem (e.g., Perlman & Peplau, 1980); however, minor factors are found to be essential in exacerbating social loneliness in society (e.g., Fromm, 1956). A large number of researchers turn to the family level to identify the origins of this social deviation. According to Karen Horney (1994), social autonomy at the family level, furthers the development of social autonomy among the members of society. Loneliness is a recurring theme in modern philosophical, psychological, and sociological literature. As the "plague of the 21st century," loneliness calls for serious reflection from the perspective of various social science disciplines, which must correlate with the general interpretation of loneliness in history and culture.

In contrast to social loneliness and associated exacerbating factors, researchers study the phenomenon of happiness as subjective well-being. For example, R. Shamionov (2008) defines subjective well-being as an individual's attitude to his personality, life, and processes, i.e., the degree of satisfaction, while all the concepts of psychological well-being that are similar in meaning are defined as "happiness". All this characterizes the feeling of satisfaction. The concepts of psychological well-being that are similar in meaning include the concepts of "optimism," "happiness," and "life satisfaction." Most studies treat subjective well-being as synonymous with happiness (Bartram, 2012; Cieslik, 2017).

As Iu. Povarenkov (2005) maintains, professional happiness is the highest expression of professional identity. In this connection, the well-being of women and the sense of fulfillment can be defined as "happiness," yet another question to be explored here is what determines a person's degree of "good life," sense of fulfillment, as well as social and personal well-being.

In this connection, the methodological objectives of this study are as follows: to examine the theory behind social loneliness; to identify the social factors of an individual's involvement in small and large communities; to evaluate self-identification with community involvement; to establish the system of individual's social interactions; to identify the empirical features of self-identity formation in the context of an assessment trend within the range of social loneliness to happiness.

Methodology of Empirical Research

Ideologically and conceptually, this 2022 study was inspired by the involvement of the present authors (as staff at the Family and Demography Center of TAS) in a scientific study of the family and demographic problems at the levels of the region and the Volga Federal District, as well as in all-Russian scientific and practical social work with various social categories (married couples with and without children, social groups who have never been married and have no children, parents deprived of parental rights, divorced with or without children, young people considering whether to start a family of their own). As the pilot pool for studying opinions about loneliness, we used round table discussions held by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in conjunction with specialized non-profit public organizations dealing with the social problems of families, such as *Pod Krylom Sem'i* [Under the Wing of the Family], *Soiuz Ottsov* [Union of Fathers], etc.

In terms of methodology, the focus was on identifying the social component, context, and prerequisites of the individual's self-identification. Since the goal was to find the common characteristics of loneliness for different social groups, as opposed to some specific aspects that are the focus of psychological research, a conventional social survey was chosen as a method for data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their consent to the impersonal generalized processing of the obtained data. The present researchers assured the survey participants that they would be informed about the study results. The analytical processing of these materials became the basis for the development of thematic sections comprising a questionnaire. Implemented using an online Google form, the questionnaire survey was conducted with the support of designated NGOs, other organizations keeping close ties with the Family and Demography Center of TAS, and volunteers by sending a link to complete the survey online. The analysis of obtained results revealed a 20% rejection rate, which is attributed to the failure to answer open-ended questions asking the respondents to define loneliness. The obtained results were processed in Excel with the construction of one-/two-dimensional and cluster tables.

The selected empirical research tool (questionnaire) was presented in electronic form (Yandex forms); it included 20 questions comprising multiple choices with the opportunity to supplement the answer with their own ideas. The study included answers from 1,350 respondents aged 18–60 years. Geographically, this sample was represented by almost all Federal Districts of the Russian Federation, primarily determined by the territories of big cities: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd, Arkhangelsk, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, etc. With the

general population amounting to 91,448,000 people, the sample is representative at a 95% confidence interval (384 people). The obtained sample is continuously random in nature, defined as nested at the last stage according to the age criterion.

An empirical clarification of social loneliness and happiness relies on both the network graphs of interpersonal communication and the index method, proposed in the present authors' interpretation as a tool for numerically comparing different social situations of an individual's involvement in social groups.
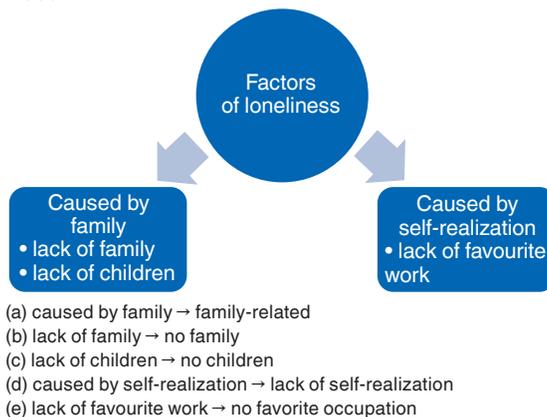
The following primary methods were used in the empirical data analysis: econometric methods of sociological analysis; determination method; factor analysis; methods for building paired and multiple linear regressions having normal and log-normal distribution drawing on panel data with the assessment of descriptive statistics; principal component method.

Results

One thousand and fifty people participated in the study, with slightly more than half represented by the male population. In terms of age distribution, the modal group comprises people aged 36–45 years (37.5%). Every second respondent has a higher education, with the study participants mostly considering their income level to be average (43.3%). When asked about their inner circle, 35.9% chose the option "my husband (wife), children, and I," while a large share selected the option "my parents and I" (30.1%). The respondents consider the creation of a family to be the primary goal of marriage (65%). Overall, 45.6% of the participants maintain that they never feel lonely.

An analysis of the survey results revealed four factors of loneliness, three of which will be categorized as social: unfulfillment in terms of the family and children, unfulfillment in the professional sphere, and most importantly, lack of self-realization defined by an individual predisposition to this state, which is primarily socio-psychological in nature (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1
Factors of Loneliness

(a) caused by family → family-related
(b) lack of family → no family
(c) lack of children → no children
(d) caused by self-realization → lack of self-realization
(e) lack of favourite work → no favorite occupation

Note. Source: Authors.

Differentiation of the Sample Into Criteria-Based Groups

According to the differentiation criterion, the answers to the question: "Why are people lonely?" (see Fig. 2) revealed four dominant groups in accordance with the selected options: "personal predisposition" (43% of the total sample); "no children" (11%); "no favorite occupation" (20%); "no family" (12%).

Figure 2

Why are People Lonely? (%)
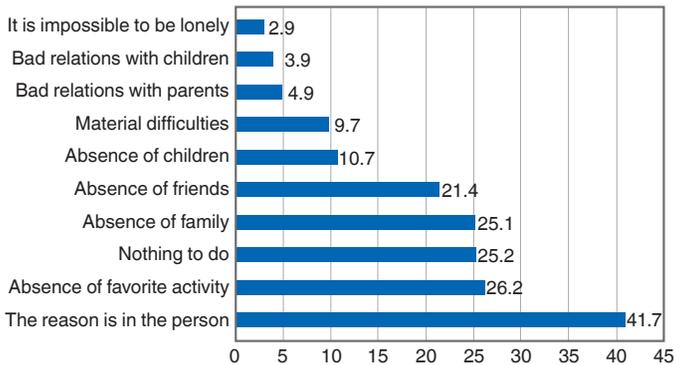
(a) material difficulties → financial difficulties
(b) absence of children → no children
(c) absence of friends → no friends
(d) absence of family → no family
(e) absence of favorite activity → no favorite occupation
(f) the reason is in the person → personal predisposition

Note. Source: Authors.

The first group, which determined that the causes of loneliness should be sought in the person himself, is the most numerous, 51% of which are men, 30% are people at the age of "26–35 years" and another 23% are at the age of "36–45 years", slightly less than half of this group have higher education (44%), every fourth representative of this group defines their level of income as "enough for me" (24%), another 21% define their income as "below average", every third of describes the groups as "me, my husband (wife), children" (27%), another 16% defined their inner circle as "me and my husband (wife)", that is, half of the representatives of this group do not define family as their inner circle, children, while these are usually people of active reproductive age, both men and women equally. 56% of the representatives of this group define the purpose of marriage as "creating a family", 53% of the respondents in this group never feel lonely, 27% noted that "sometimes" they still feel loneliness, 44% of the representatives of this group consider material security as a criterion of well-being.

The first group represented by 42% of the total sample comprises people who consider loneliness to be a personality characteristic unrelated to the surroundings and social ties, i.e., a self-inflicted state, to which the person is predisposed. This group does not exhibit any gender peculiarities (51%—men, 49%—women). However, the survey statistics reveal a steady trend for young adults (30% are 26–35 years old) and middle-aged people (23% are 36–45 years old) to find reasons for loneliness in

themselves. Slightly less than half of this group have higher education (44%). Every fourth representative defines their level of income as "enough for me" (24%), while 21% consider it to be "below average." Every third respondent describes their inner circle as "my husband (wife), children, and I" (27%), while 16% define it as "my husband (wife) and I." Also, 56% of this group representatives consider the "creation of a family" to be the primary goal of marriage. These are usually people of active reproductive age (both men and women; the paradox is, however, that despite being married and having children, half of this group representatives do not define the family as their inner circle (Fig. 3). In addition, 44% of this group representatives consider material security to be a criterion of well-being. Of note is that the respondents generally do not perceive loneliness negatively, treating it as a temporary part of life.

Figure 3

Loneliness in Married Couples Due to Individual Predisposition
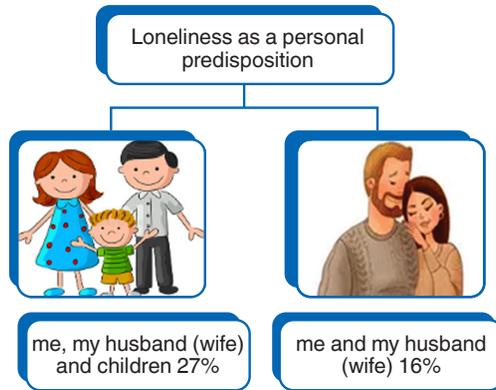
(a) me, my husband (wife), and children 27% → my husband (wife), children, and I—27%
(b) me and my husband (wife) 16% → my husband (wife) and I—16%

Note. Source: Authors.

Thus, the question is whether marriage can save people who created their own family units from feeling lonely. While 27% of respondents note that they still feel loneliness "sometimes," 53% of this group representatives never feel lonely. It is not our intention to make judgments and conclusions about the general benefits and drawbacks for society. However, noteworthy is that having a family is a lot like running a company—every member has to contribute in order to work as a team. A hefty 75% of marriages arise from the desire to avoid loneliness and to be with the loved one (81%—women vs. 64%—men). When the needs of one of the marriage partners are not satisfied, the feeling of loneliness appears, which can lead to divorce. In this situation, 42% of respondents would not keep the family together for the sake of their children. That is how the concept "to be lonely in a family" emerges.

The second group primarily aged 36–45 years comprises representatives who selected "no children" as a loneliness factor (only one in ten of the total sample). These adults mostly have a higher education (73%) and consider their income to be "average" (54%). In 27% of cases, respondents chose the "children and I" option as their inner

circle. When asked about the goal of marriage, 26% of people say that they see no point in getting married. While 45% of them feel lonely sometimes, the majority of this group (64%) consider material well-being to be their life goal.

The third group (20%) consists of respondents who chose "no favorite occupation" as a probable reason for loneliness in society. These are primarily the representatives of two age groups: 26–35 years old (30%) and 36–45 years old (35%). In 55% of cases, the respondents have a higher education, while 45% have a secondary vocational education. Every second representative of this group considers their income to be average (45%). Although they believe that the creation of a family is the primary goal of marriage (50%), 65% of this group representatives note that they feel lonely "sometimes."

The fourth group (12%) comprises those who chose the "no family" option as the probable cause of loneliness in society. These are predominantly male respondents (67%) aged 36–45 years (42%) that have a secondary vocational education (67%). Every third of these adults consider their income level to be below average (34%) and their inner circle to be "my parents and I" (35%). While clearly being aware of the fact that marriage is meant for creating a family (67%) and often (30%) feeling lonely, in contrast to the above groups, they seldom consider the level of material security as a significant well-being criterion (17%).

According to the presented distribution, three groups are at risk of social loneliness (Fig. 4): married couples aged 36–45 years without children; unmarried men aged 36–45 years having a secondary vocational education; unmarried women aged 36–45 years with children.

Figure 4
Loneliness Risk Groups
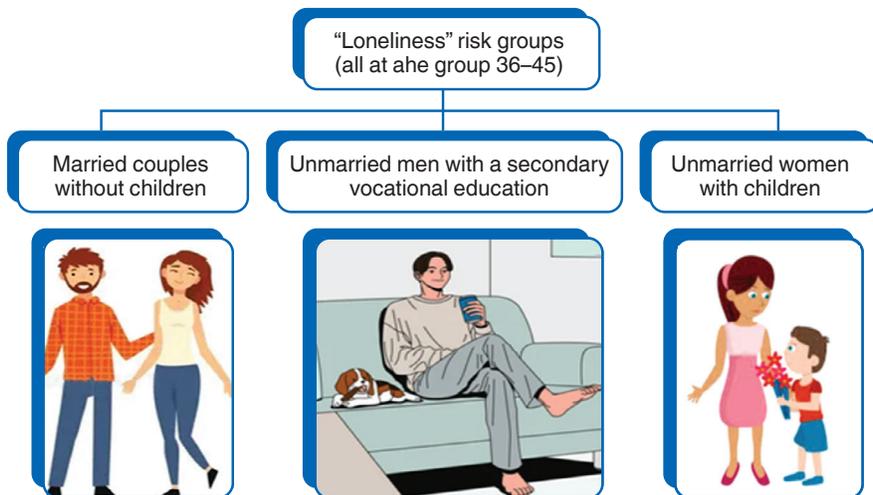
(a) married couples without children
(b) unmarried men with a secondary vocational education
(c) unmarried women with children
Note. Source: Authors.

Despite a general public perception of significance underlying the traditional family construct, stable social trends indicating the personal criteria-based unawareness of what well-being implies emerge through marriage, family, and childbearing, with the role of childbearing being particularly under-recognized. In many cases, a frequent feeling of loneliness is noted; however, in the absence of a clear message about social reproductive and marital behavior, the personal reasons for such loneliness are attributed to entirely different factors or may not be apparent in one's life attitudes, obscured by other life criteria.

Loneliness in the Construct of Women's Social Environment

As part of the study, we will identify the features of the female thesaurus according to the criteria of family and reproductive behavior. The obtained results will help to ascertain the key factors in the formation of the family and female reproductive behavior, as well as to determine how the family is reflected in the structure of value-based attitudes adopted by modern women.

At the time of the survey, almost half of the women were married (46%), 37% had never been married, 11% were divorced, and 4% were in a cohabiting relationship. In the presented sample, two marital statuses are predominant among women: "married" and "never married." A stable family thesaurus can be ascertained only for half of the women: the rest develop their family values outside of marriage, within a single-life context.

Of those who were not married at the time of the survey, about 55% are still going to get married, 26% have no such intention, and 20% found it difficult to answer. Thus, using the focus on family values as a criterion, the following three groups can be distinguished: "family-oriented" "singletons," and "those in doubt."

Marriage registration does not constitute an integral part of entering into a relationship; rather, premarital cohabitation is considered to be an important step prior to marriage registration, which enables the couple to determine whether they are compatible (47%). For a mere 5% of respondents, the birth of a child can also be a reason for marriage registration.

Most women note the desire to be with someone they love and not to feel lonely as their main reason for getting married.

The correlation estimates of three factors studied in the survey regarding the process of forming a family thesaurus (namely, marital status, factor of marriage, and marriage registration) allow the following conclusions to be drawn. A stable positive correlation is observed between the decision to marry and registration (0.63), as well as an extremely weak negative correlation between the existing marital status and the factor of marriage registration, for the reason that the decision to register a marriage is associated with the very fact of marriage. Also, a weak, yet positive, correlation is noted between the marital status factor and the factor of matrimony. Despite the fact that about 37% of respondents were unmarried at the time of the survey, it is possible to assume that they have no strong desire to get married.

General estimates on the topic of childbirth indicate that the reproductive behavior of women is highly dependent on material wealth primarily acquired through labor.

The level of material pressure associated with the need to contribute to the family's budget prevents women from focusing on higher (including social) motives in their reproductive efforts.

In accordance with the answers to the question "Do you feel lonely?" and general socio-economic characteristics, it is possible to identify several groups. In the sample, 29.2% note that they never feel lonely ("No, never" option). These respondents are women aged 26–35 years who live with their husbands and children and chose "creation of a family" as their goal in marriage.

According to the criterion of "social loneliness," two social risk groups can be identified in the presented sample:

- those who define "children" as the goal of marriage;
- those who define "creation of a family" as the goal of marriage, yet for some reason lived only with children (without a husband) at the time of the survey.

When asked about feeling lonely at the time of the survey, both group representatives chose the "often" option; however, in terms of the entire sample, this is just 7.3% of respondents. Nevertheless, such social markers point to the fact that social dissonance between what is expected and what happens is a contributing factor in the social destruction of women (specifically, the increased social loneliness).

Women do not tend to see loneliness as a matter of social dissonance related to marital or reproductive behavior. Every third respondent (36.5%) attributed loneliness to personal characteristics, while 26.8% noted "no favorite occupation" as the reason for loneliness. These data emphasize the importance of both the social identification of women in the social sphere and their social inclusion, but according to the criterion of social significance rather than the family or reproductive role of women.

For women, the criteria defining a "good life" include health (70.7%), family (56%), material security (53.6%), and children (26.8%). Arranged in decreasing order of importance in the respondents' answers, the indicated responses nevertheless reveal that women value the material side of their lives, the family, their health, and, to a lesser extent, children. Nearly every second person is optimistic about the future, i.e., views it "with hope and optimism" (48.7%).

When determining prerequisites for the formation of social perception and self-identification in women, it is also imperative to consider their families. Approximately half of the respondents noted that they have normal relations with their parents (48.8%).

Recalling their childhood, respondents noted that they spent most of their free time with "friends," "siblings," "parents," and "grandparents."

The respondents also mention their childhood while recalling the time when they did not feel lonely: "with the parents" (31.7%), followed by the options "in a family circle with a husband and/or children" (29.2%) and "among friends" (26.8%).

When determining the success criteria for their current life and noting what they have already achieved, the respondents chose the following options (in order of decreasing importance):

- I have a family (53.6%);
- I have people who understand me (51.2%);

- I have a trusting relationship with my children (41.4%);
- I am healthy (38.5%);
- I have a good relationship with my parents (39%);
- I have many friends (14.6%).

According to the respondents, they lack:

- material well-being (51.2%);
- health (31.7%);
- faithful friend (14.6%);
- housing (14%);
- children (7.3%).

The respondents were also asked to select an option best reflecting their state at the time of the survey. Among those selected, the most popular include

- I need support from my children (51.2%);
- I consider myself self-sufficient (26.8%).

As reported by the respondents, the distribution of loneliness estimates on a five-point assessment scale is as follows (where 5 points—feeling of maximum loneliness and 1 point—absence of loneliness):

1 point—34.1%;
2 points—19.5%;
3 points—29.2%;
4 points—2.4%;
5 points—7.3%.

Thus, the answers are predominantly distributed from 1 to 3 points (in particular, 1 and 3).

Over half of the respondents (53.6%) noted that they sometimes turn to others for help, while 26.8% reported that they prefer not to rely on others.

Defining loneliness, the respondents give the following characteristics and definitions: "sad;" a state when there is "no support;" a state of emptiness; the absence of loved ones; when no one is around; when you are rarely remembered; when there is no one to confide in; etc. When defining the concept of happiness, respondents identify it with a state of self-sufficiency, health, time spent with your family, and situations when everything is going well.

Happiness Index

Considering social loneliness in the context of women's marital and reproductive behavior, significant factors can be identified that provide us with avenues to reduce such a social and personal deviation. In general, the factor system for minimizing social loneliness in women is expressed through their fulfillment (both personal and social) in three main social value-based spheres: professional (public), marital (family), and reproductive (children). In self-assessments, the significance and consistency of involvement are distributed from the professional through marital to reproductive spheres. In this connection, women define social loneliness as the lack or absence of fulfillment in one (or several) of the presented spheres. In contrast to this definition, the concept of happiness, as a state of satisfaction in relation to the research categories,

is a state of complete fulfillment in the presented social value-based spheres. All the categories are socially valuable and, therefore, subjective.

According to the study results, the term "women's happiness" can be interpreted as the fulfillment of women in a system of interrelated social value-based spheres: professional, marital, and reproductive.

In this connection, in addition to trying to assess the degree of happiness as a counterbalance to social loneliness, it is proposed to use the happiness index defined as the degree of fulfillment in the specified spheres as per women's self-assessments. This index is evaluated by means of a three-step measurement scale, where 0 means absolute social loneliness and 3 denotes absolute happiness (Table 1). Each point corresponds to the degree of fulfillment in women in the corresponding social value-based sphere on a 100 percent scale.

Table 1
Three-Step Measurement Scale of the Happiness Index

Degree of reproductive fulfillment	0.34
Degree of marital fulfillment	0.54
Degree of professional fulfillment	0.56
Total	1.44

Note. Source: Authors.

For the subsample, the general happiness index is estimated at 1.44, which, according to self-assessments, is largely determined by insufficient reproductive fulfillment (0.34), family and marital fulfillment (0.54), as well as professional fulfillment (0.56). However, while the pressure of fulfilling one's potential remains high in the professional sphere, it is much less significant in the marital and reproductive spheres of the social value-based system under consideration.

Of note is that the index should be considered in dynamics (not as an absolute indicator) as a means of estimating trend changes over time or for comparing age, social, and regional groups. When differentiating between the social value-based spheres under consideration, it is essential to introduce socially accepted criteria as a way to ascertain the inclusion of women in these spheres, including to ensure the comparability of assessments, e.g., over time or for a priori culturally or religiously diverse societies where the traditionally transmitted values of women's social roles have a given degree of significance.

Discussion

The study provides an insight into the emerging family and reproductive behavior preferences, which are characterized by increased social autonomy both for men and women. As evidenced by the desire of individuals to marry and have children, the problem of social loneliness is clearly reflected in the thesauri of both sexes; yet, with the significantly delayed age of marriage, social autonomy is characterized by a certain level of adaptation.

Loneliness can be viewed as a consequence of external influence on the personality, manifesting itself as poor adaptability of the individual. Partially defining the external social construct, this study determines the mechanisms of interaction between the individual and society in the context of social autonomy.

Psychosocial doctrines on loneliness comprise multiple factors, including problems of the modern family, with regard to which the conclusions of the study are primarily drawn and the typical constructs of families in the gender context are formed. Future work could attempt to define an integrated model of loneliness, drawing on the main findings of the study.

Conclusion

The study reveals no direct correlation between the respondents' social involvement, inner social fulfillment, as well as family and reproductive fulfillment.

The answers indicate no strong focus on the social role of women as wives and mothers. Also, the respondents expressed general concern about their financial situation, which, according to the respondents, constitutes a significant factor in the formation of families and the birth of children. In addition to their own health, women are also concerned about the health of their loved ones.

In accordance with the general motivation system, such a distribution of answers may indicate the insufficient satisfaction of such basic needs in women as material well-being, life stability, and health. This fact does not allow women to rationally move up the motivational pyramid while defining the social component (family, marriage, and children) as the dominant motivation in their future life.

The noted high expectations of women in relation to their children, as well as the strong desire to have their support, underlie the problem of intergenerational misunderstanding and/or the fear of its onset. In relation to their own parents, the respondents note the preservation of normal relations, which also prevents women from perceiving family-related factors, marriage and childbearing, as dominant motivation in their current lives. As a result of the basic motivational inadequacy to fulfill the social role of the wife and the mother, as well as the threat of motivational dissonance from the husband and particularly children, women are further demotivated to accept these social roles as significant.

Using the Pareto principle, it is possible to demonstrate the significant role of material well-being and health in reproductive behavior formation. In 80% of cases, the trend characteristics of female reproductive behavior are predetermined by the factors of material security and health. Noteworthy is that material security also comprises a social component of women's fulfillment, but within the context of a working community (team, colleagues, and friends). In 10% of cases, the dominant factor is the internal rejection of the social roles of the wife and the mother as a stable position in life. Conversely, the remaining 10% reflect social and internal readiness, contrary to external social prerequisites, to accept and fulfill these roles primarily due to inner desire and intrinsic motivation.

The findings can be used for assessing social loneliness in the context of marital and reproductive behavior in order to develop social mechanisms for increasing motivation in these spheres; create demographic programs both at the regional level and for the entire society; develop strategies for establishing the family institution, thus strengthening traditional family constructs.

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