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## **LIFE GOALS AND LIFE ORIENTATIONS OF MODERN BELARUSIAN YOUTH (ACCORDING TO RESULTS OF REPUBLICAN RESEARCHES)**

### **ЖИЗНЕННЫЕ ЦЕЛИ И ОРИЕНТАЦИИ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ БЕЛОРУССКОЙ МОЛОДЕЖИ (ПО РЕЗУЛЬТАТАМ РЕСПУБЛИКАНСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ)**

**Abstract.** The article contains the results of the republican researches related to the life goals and life orientations of modern Belarusian youth. The character of goals and expectations about family and work indicates their greater pragmatization while their significance for the young Belarusians still remaining high.

**Keywords:** life goals, life orientations, Belarusian youth, family, work, career.

**Аннотация.** В статье представлены результаты республиканских исследований по вопросу жизненных целей и ориентаций современной белорусской молодежи. Характер целей и ожиданий в отношении семьи и работы свидетельствует о большей прагматизации данных целей при сохранении их высокой значимости для молодых белорусов.

**Ключевые слова:** жизненные цели, жизненные ориентации, белорусская молодежь, семья, работа, карьера.

*Statement of the main material of a research.* Almost every fifth resident of Belarus nowadays is a young person from 14 to 31, so the youth of the republic is 20% of the total population. Young people plan their adult life and its development depends largely on their values and orientations that are crucial when choosing life strategies. Such values and expectations are always of interest for the bodies of command that develop the state youth policy which encompasses socio-economic, political, organizational and legal measures to support the young citizens of the country. But these values orientations and life plans should be first studied.

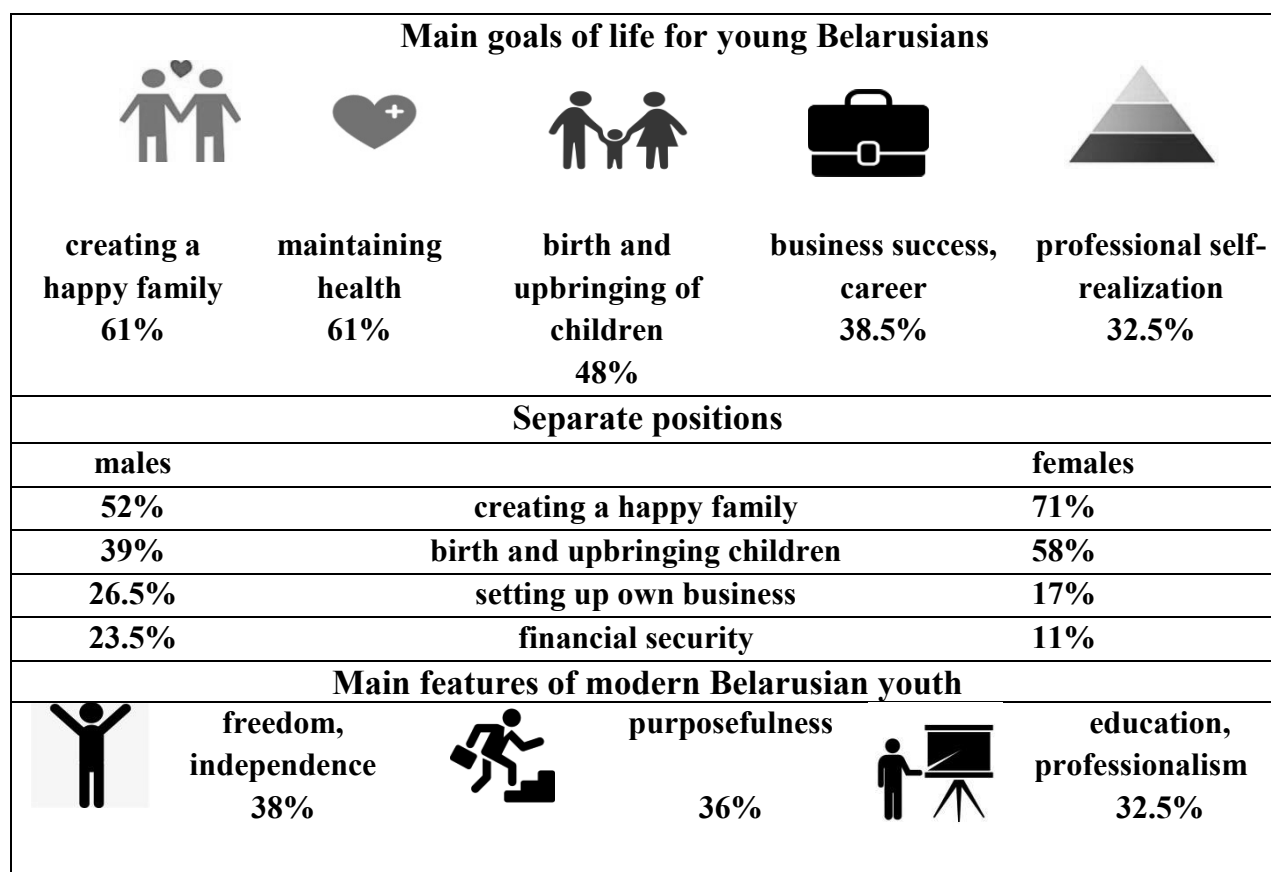
The article contains some results of a number of researches aimed at learning the values and life strategies of modern young Belarusians.

In April 2018 the Information and Analytical Center at the Administration of the

President of the Republic of Belarus (IAC) carried out a republican sociological survey to identify the Belarusian youth's life goals and orientations. 1490 respondents living in the capital, regional and district centers, countryside settlements were interviewed.

The results of the survey show that the main features of modern Belarusian youth are freedom, independence (38%); purposefulness (36%); education, professionalism (32.5%). Young citizens of Belarus are primarily focused on creating a happy family and maintaining health. These life goals were chosen by 61% of respondents respectively. Top 5 of the life goals identified by the young Belarusians also included birth and upbringing of children (48%); business success, career (38.5%); professional self-realization (32.5%).

Comparison of individual positions on the gender principle revealed a difference in the life goals of males and females. In particular, creation of a happy family, birth and upbringing of children are more important life goals for females (71% and 58%, respectively) than for males (52% and 39%, respectively). Career and security options demonstrate an opposite situation: setting up own business serves as a life guide for 26.5% of males and only 17% of females, financial security – for 23.5% of males and 11% of females [1] (see Fig. 1).



Source: [1].

Fig. 1. Main goals of life for young Belarusians

The orientation of young people in the country to create a family is confirmed by some increase in the number of marriages concluded in 2017 – 66,200, as compared with 64,500 ones in 2016. However, the divorce rate remains high: 32,000 divorces in 2017;

32,600 ones – in 2016. Like many European countries, Belarus has faced with a tendency of increased average age of those who first get married. In 2017 it was 25.8 years for women, 27.9 years for men (in 2011, 24.5 and 26.6 years, respectively).

Various studies show that today's young people consider that money, full-time and safe work, personal autonomy are more important values than family, children, health and good partnership. They have a higher level of optimism about their future than the elderly, but they are distinguished by pessimistic views on the future of society. Those who are in a less favorable material position are more interested in income, job security and free time, while women and those who are in a better material position demonstrate a desire for interesting work and its high performance [2].

However, the uncovered tendency of shifting the romantic ideas about marriage to some pragmatic alternatives does not mean a decline in the spiritual and moral culture of relations between young people. Rather, it means that the young have put the elements of some practicality and maturity into their ideas, proving their greater psychological readiness for the realities of marriage.

In this regard, the results of a recent research carried out by Galina Vergibok are more indicative [3]. She notes that the student youth of the republic is aimed at creating a family with children. Their judgments about family have a complex multi-stage character; they are connected with the readiness of cognizing oneself and others, reflection of the value-semantic sphere, actualization of the need to receive and master the information about future marriage and parenthood. The ideas of the young reveal the significance of family itself and its positive potential, where common interests contribute to the stability of future relations between its members. Gender differences in the semantic units of family values are of little significance.

The image of an ideal family is described with the following parameters: marriage age of 23-25 years, equality between husband and wife, obligatory presence of children because they have a positive impact on relations in a young family, desirable separate residence, financial independence from parents. Childbirth is noted as a responsible issue: the young will not have children if they are not sure that they provide them with all necessary things. The final conclusion of the research by G. Vergibok is that modern students in Belarus have quite conservative views on family relations that allow them to maintain an adequate understanding the concepts of marriage and family in a changing society.

Conservative views on family relations determine birth and upbringing of children as a life goal. For the Belarusian youth it is birth and upbringing of children that serves a priority motive for entering into marriage and creating a family (table 1). E. Bergard notes that young Belarusians' motives for getting married indicate their aim at the child-centered model of family [4].

Getting married implies material support of family by earning a high income. High income is resulted from achieving a business success as a life goal. Career-related goals (38.5%) are ranged fourth in the top five of the main life goals of the Belarusian youth.

Knowledge and skills of young citizens are in demand in all sectors of the national

economy in Belarus. The question is how one can build a career and realize oneself in the professional area. Recently, the concept of careerist bore a negative value, compared with egoism and greed. However, today any independent person who succeeds in professional activity can be called a careerist.

So, the issue is if the Belarusian youth is determined to build a career and how its attitude towards business career has changed in recent years. Let's recollect some results of the 2010 research conducted by Mogilev Institute for Regional Social and Political Studies to reveal the Belarusian youth's value attitudes towards profession. They have some indicative points. The largest number of the respondents demonstrated readiness to get their own way at any cost, and 58.2% of them are males. It is 2 times as much as the number of those who are determined to work honestly (21.7%), no matter how social life changes. Talking about the first place of work, the students ranked high earnings first (72.0%), career – second (67.4%).

Table 1

## Motives for getting married and creating a family (%)

Motives	Total	Females	Males
Birth and upbringing of children	81.3	43.8	37.5
Improvement of financial state and solving of housing problem	59.3	32.0	27.3
Need for love and recognition	75.3	41.0	35.3
Ability to feel relative stability	67.0	36.3	30.7
Satisfying physiological needs	45.2	19.2	26.0
Ability to live separately from parents	46.3	22.5	11.9
Acquisition of the status of wife, husband	35.2	19.2	16.0

*Source: [4].*

The desires of young people are quite understandable: a successful career in a prestigious organization is always associated with stability of life, confidence in the future and privileged position. Money and career were identified as the life goals for most undergraduates of the Belarusian universities just a decade ago.

The 2010 research revealed not only a rather broad orientation of the Belarusian youth towards career growth, but also its greater degree of pragmatism as compared with the older generation. At the same time, many respondents showed naive expectations of a rapid career growth that were largely shaped by the mass media with the stories about show-business. A need to “serve as a soldier before becoming a general” is viewed as failure, waste of time and energy [5].

HR services began gradually to note that the Belarusians are now searching not for work as such, but for the desired level of income, and an employee and his employer may have radically different ideas about it. A modern employee quits the work easily and can spend some time “in search”, after joining the army of the unemployed and non-registered in employment centers. One of the reasons for the situation is the change of generation X (children born in mid-1980s) to generation Y (children born in late 1980s – early 2000s). A

new generation wants to spend money at will. And if the young man is not satisfied with his salary, he will either often change his place in search of a “dream job” or will not work at all.

The theory of generations was developed in the USA in the 1990s and became widely applied in marketing. According to the theory, generation X determined to chase the “long ruble” is replaced by “kids” with such traits as narcissism, laziness and unwillingness to enter adult life. Yers (the term of millennials appeared later) avoid monotonous many-decade work, trying themselves in different areas instead, gaining diverse experience, becoming “advanced users” of everything related to IT. Their lack of desire to work permanently for decades gives grounds for the experts to conclude that many Yers will never become proficient in one field.

The studies of the Belarusian sociologists confirm the theory at least in part. Belarusian youth perceives any work as temporary. 56% of the young want to leave their current job, while same desire is expressed by 35% of older employees. The place to work is determined after making a number of tries and mistakes, a desired payment being given priority.

The director of the research center “HeadHunter Belarus” S. Shaporeva notes that the millennials are not attracted by the spheres of priority for the Belarusian economy. They prefer a job with good income and fast result: sales and IT-area, a post of assistant that entails fast career growth. Their main requirements to a new job encompass good salary, engagement in interesting projects and a flexible schedule [6].

The excessive demands for income and working comfort made by the new generation were not created from nothing. HR director of the transport and logistics company E. Esipovich believes that the market dictates an unjustifiably high salary of IT specialists, so students begin to work for IT-companies, expecting high pay [6].

Belarusian IT-employers want candidates aged from 25 to 37, since they consider this age most productive. Most employees have one or two higher educations. A lot of them start working early, gaining experience in various fields. Such Y-employees are ideal for companies that are oriented to mobility and quick solutions, develop technologies, gadgets, product promotion, produce goods with a creative approach etc. But they are absolutely not suitable for monotonous work, requiring great effort and perseverance.

A conclusion may be made that for generation Y in Belarus career is also more important than family but it is refuted by the results of some recent studies. Thus, the results of a sociological survey conducted by the Minsk Research Institute of Social and Economic Problems in 2015 showed that family, children and love remain the basis of life for the majority of Minsk residents. When asked about the priorities of life, only 19.3% of the respondents indicated a financially secured life; 11.4% – career and high position in society; 5.8% – wealth. The majority of respondents (84.7%) consider that an ideal family should have more than one child, and every fourth thinks – more than three children. Over 2/3 of the respondents (79.8%) call a family with two or more children as desired, and 74.5% plan to have two or more [7].

The results of the 2018 republican poll conducted by the IAC confirmed a certain

consistency in the life goals of the Belarusian youth with regard to creating a family that cannot be happy without children. One of the conditions of a happy family is material well-being as a result of parents' productive work and a successful career. No doubt that the money issue should concern young Belarusians, since high income enables to solve many material problems. But one can't get a highly-paid job without one's appropriate level of education. The results of the survey show that the money issue is most relevant for 50% of the Belarusian youth, education and study – for 44%, and housing problem – for about 37% of the young people. Anyway, employment is included in the list of prior life plans for the majority of students of Belarusian universities. Moreover, 70% of them are sure that they will be able to find work due to their specialty at home, in Belarus.

The results of a sociological study conducted by the youth laboratory of sociological researches of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union in March 2017 confirmed again the interrelation of education and successful employment. 35% of the students believe that they can find a job because their specialty is in demand, 32% believe that they have sufficient skills in their field of knowledge to compete in the labor market, 31% rely on their strength and believe in luck. Another 25% are confident in successful employment, because they have already got experience in the specialty. More than half of respondents (75%) do not regret choosing their specialty of higher education. The students identified the most significant criteria for successful employment: work experience (57%), qualitative education (54%), predisposition to the professional field, talent (45%), ties in professional circles (35%), charisma and visual appeal (30%) [8].

As for the most common motives for choosing a particular specialty, the respondents indicated emotional connection with the profession (what the soul likes) – 47%, cognitive interest in a branch of knowledge – 35%, demand for their country's labor market – 20%, demand for specialties worldwide – 15%, ease of learning – 13%. Only 10% of respondents indicated the motive of high remuneration of professionals. In this regard, the researchers' conclusion that the Belarusian youth is most concerned about the money issue seems somewhat early. Indeed, earning money is a vital purpose of life for the younger generation of the Belarusians (respondents assessed the importance of the salary level with 9 points out of 10), but not the purport of life (see. Fig. 2).

In the third quarter of 2018, the Republican Institute of Higher School from Belarus State University conducted a republican study of the entrepreneurial potential of Belarusian students, the results of which may also be relevant for identifying their life orientations. In this regard, significant are the respondents' replies about the perspectives for future employment, desire to run own business and factors influencing the choice of a future profession.

The first question was developed to identify the expectations regarding one's professional position immediately after graduating from university and 5 years after graduation. The replies show that immediately after graduation, the majority of respondents expect employment in private commercial organizations, among them 32.4% in small companies, 34.9% in medium-sized companies and 24.7% in large companies. The smallest number of respondents expect engagement in research activities (7.5%), inherit the family

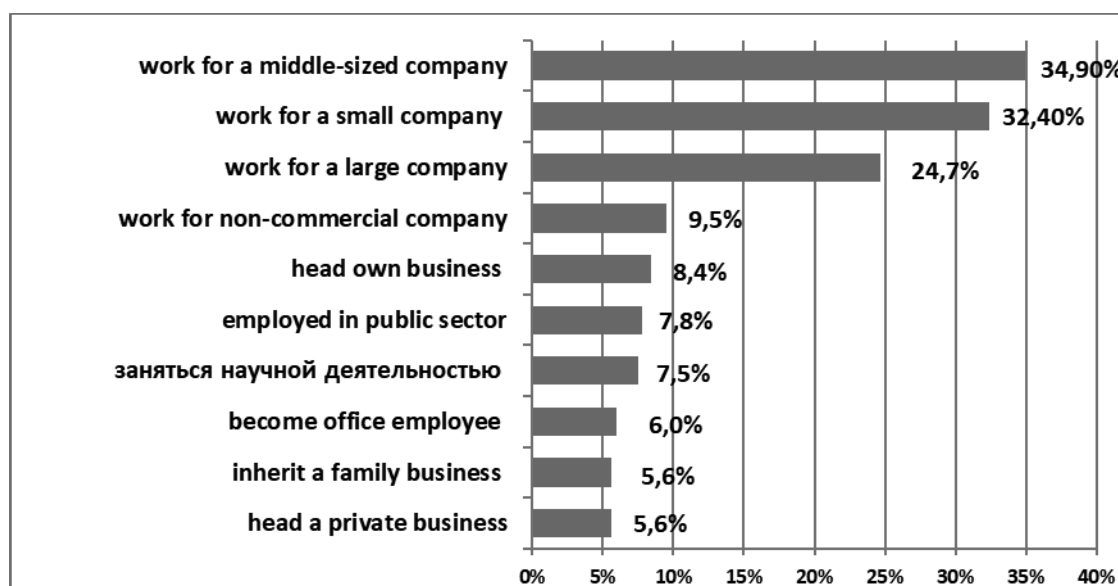
business (5.6%) and head a private business (5.6%).



Source: [8].

Fig. 2. Assessment of various characteristics of workplace by Belarusian youth (maximum 10 points)

The lowest interest was expressed in choosing a career in the public sector (7.8%) and in working as office employees (6.0%) (see Fig. 3).



Source: own development based on survey data.

Fig. 3. Expected employment of Belarusian students immediately after graduating from university

According to the responses of future graduates, in five years their life goals will differ slightly. In particular, the hierarchy of employments is preserved, with an exception of the respondents' confidence in career growth that sharply increases. So, 41.5% of respondents plan to head their own business and 25.9% – plan to head a private business. Thus, it can be concluded that after having graduated from university the respondents are focused on employment and career building in the commercial sector.

The 2018 IAC survey data showed that young Belarusians have got a fairly high entrepreneurial potential: 36.5% of males and females would prefer to start their own business, another 17.5% – to work for a private enterprise [1]. One of the most attractive employment for the current digital generation is the IT sector. Since IT-companies – residents of the High-Tech Park – maintain close ties with universities and look for the needed candidates among students, 49% of the IT-employees start their work before 21, i.e. when they study at the institutions of higher learning, and 27% – at the age of 22-24. In general, according to the Statistical committee of Belarus, every second digital employee in the country is under 31.

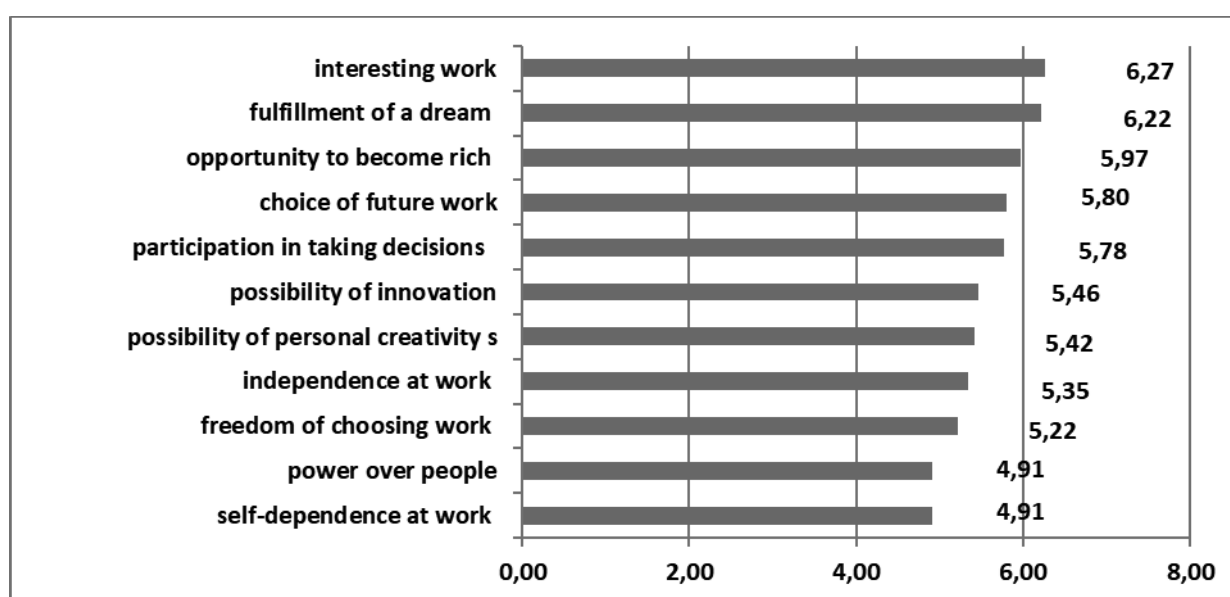
The goals related to professional self-realization (32.5%) close top 5 of main life goals of the Belarusian youth. Their implementation is closely connected with the factors of a future profession choice. An employee's professional self-realization occurs more efficiently if the employee is engaged in interesting and promising work, has power, freedom and independence, ability to take decisions, possibility to create something new, realize one's creativity etc. (see fig. 4).

The most important factors determining the choice of a future profession are as follows: interesting work – 6.27 points out of 7, fulfillment of a dream – 6.22 and opportunity to become rich – 5.97. However, the scatter of estimates is insignificant, and the average score of all factors is high. The young Belarusians' responses enable to single out three fundamental factors that influence their future career:

1 factor – freedom when carrying out professional activities (freedom; independence, being your own boss; possibility to take decisions);

2 factor – professional self-realization (exciting job; realization of one's dreams; ability to create something new, opportunity to realize creative abilities);

3 factor – obtaining high social and professional status (promising job, power, possibility to earn money and become rich).



Source: own development based on survey data

Fig. 4. Significance of various factors for career (points, maximum 7)



Among other life priorities of the young Belarusians is their active life position. They have ample opportunities for self-realization in social, political and socially useful areas via various forms of involvement in self-government, public associations and civil initiatives. The youth is represented in local representative bodies of power.

The most widespread among youth organizations is the Belarusian Republican Youth Union. As of August 1, 2018, the Belarusian Republican Youth Union united 20% of the total number of the young people living in the republic. 1,786 of its activists were included in the prospective personnel reserve by the structures of governmental bodies in 2017. Besides, the young Belarusians under 31 constitute about 20.5% of the members in the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus. Young Belarusians under 31 constitute 31% of membership in “Belaya Rus” public association.

*Conclusions.* Thus, the empirical data of recent studies have stated the transition of the Belarusian youth to a greater autonomy, internalization of modified values, new forms and patterns of behavior that indicates the dynamic nature of the process of qualitative changes. Its responses about future family, work, and well-being confirm in general the researchers' opinions that in the youth environment creation of a family, birth and upbringing of children, health are the priority goals of their desired future. Despite the fact that Western orientations are biased towards free relations and child-free families, the Belarusian student youth is more focused on family in its traditional sense.

If in the area of family relations the Belarusian young people demonstrate traditional values, in the area of labor relations, on the contrary, they see many opportunities and believe that they can find work with convenient conditions. In building their future careers, young Belarusians are determined to work in the private commercial sector, with the possibility of starting their own business several years after graduating from university, and they consider freedom needed to carry out their professional activities, self-realization, high social and professional status as fundamental factors.

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