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**Research article**

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## **Moral Orientations as a Factor in the Development of Ideas About Ideal Fatherhood Among Students**

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction.** For the period until 2025, the most important goals and concerns of the state youth policy of the Russian Federation should be focused on instilling traditional family values, ensuring a positive attitude towards family and marriage among young people, as well as creating the image of a successful young family focused on having many children. The implementation of these goals raises the question of what determinants contribute to the formation of harmonious, complete, and adequate ideas about fatherhood among student youth. **Methods.** This study reports and generalizes the content of the related psychological and pedagogical literature. The Personal Moral Self-determination questionnaire by A. E. Vorob'eva and A. B. Kupreichenko was used to determine a dominant moral orientation. The study used the following psychological assessment instruments to diagnose the content characteristics of ideas about ideal fatherhood: (a) Osgood's semantic differential (a modified version), (b) the Incomplete Sentences Test, and (c) the Role Expectations and Claims in Marriage questionnaire by A. N. Volkova. Mathematical and statistical methods included criteria for comparing distributions, multiple regression analysis, and correlation analysis. **Results.** This study demonstrates for the first time a significant influence of moral personality orientations on the value of the 'ideal father' category for young men and women. This section includes a description of the content of ideas about ideal fatherhood depending on students' moral orientations and gender. **Discussion.** A comparative analysis of statistical data allows us to conclude that there are significant differences in the ideas about the ideal father depending on the moral orientation of young men and women. The presented data open the way for a number of promising directions of research in the subject area of the psychology of fatherhood, including 1) practice-oriented development of technologies for the formation of complete and adequate ideas about fatherhood by educating students with a humanistic and world-creating orientation; 2) identification of age-related differences in ideas about fatherhood depending on an individual's moral orientation to determine the age period as sensitive for the development of a value-positive attitude towards fatherhood among students.

## Keywords

ideas, image, fatherhood, ideal father, moral orientations, egocentric orientation, group-centric orientation, humanistic orientation, world-creating orientation, student youth

## Highlights

- ▶ Moral orientations are predictors of the value of the 'ideal father' category. Young men have a significant influence of group-centric and world-creating orientation. Humanistic orientation is characteristic of young women.
- ▶ The fullness of young men's ideas about the ideal father is determined by a dominant moral orientation. With the severity of the world-creating orientation young men's ideas about the ideal father are characterized by the completeness of the formation of the cognitive component and the actualization of role claims in the parent-educational sphere.
- ▶ Young women's ideas about fatherhood are determined by moral orientations. The image of the ideal father contains the features that are characteristic of emotionally involved fatherhood (empathy, patience, role expectations in the emotional and psychotherapeutic sphere).

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## Introduction

According to the order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2403-r of November 29, 2014 the provisions of the Fundamentals of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025 are focused on strengthening traditional family values, forming the image of a successful young family living in a registered marriage, and developing positive parenting and psychological and pedagogical competence in the field of child-parental relations. However, there is an increasing trend of negative influence of LGBT community activists promoting same-sex marriage, gender inclusivity, gender reassignment, etc. on modern youth. The problem of instilling the values of family culture in the youth environment raises the question of what socio-psychological determinants contribute to the development of family self-determination, the formation of harmonious, complete and adequate ideas about motherhood and fatherhood which are the indicative basis of activity in the implementation of the parental function.

In recent years, a public demand has been formed to support the institution of fatherhood, the implementation of a system of measures for the formation of responsible and productive paternal behavior. In modern psychology, the relevant areas of research in the phenomenology of fatherhood are the following:

- reasons for the crisis of fatherhood and masculinity (Kon, 2009; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Petts, Shafer, & Essig, 2018);

- studying the father's influences, functions, and roles in child development and education (Garfield, Fisher, Barretto, Rutsohn, & Isacco, 2019; Cabrera, Volling, & Barr, 2018; Golombok et al., 2018; Tsvetkova & Rybakova, 2018);
- research of gender aspects of parenthood, i.e. identification of differences in the motivational-need, behavioral, and functional spheres of motherhood and fatherhood (Zinovieva, Kazantseva, Pleshkova, & Kostromina, 2019; Karabanova, 2015; Jeynes, 2016);
- determining the influence of fatherhood on the development of men's personality (Zakharova, 2015; Zavgorodnyaya, 2017; Saxbe, Rossin-Slater, & Goldenberg, 2018);
- identification of features of ideas about fatherhood and factors determining the content and structural characteristics of the image of the ideal father (Borisenko & Belogai, 2007; Vagapova, 2015; Zakharova, Karabanova, Starostina, & Dolgikh, 2019; Merzlyakova, Golubeva, & Bibarsova, 2020);
- development of technologies for social and psychological and pedagogical support of parents-fathers (Zagvyazinskii & Chekhonin, 2017; Borisenko, 2017; Semenova, Serebryakova, & Knyazeva, 2018; Golubeva & Merzlyakova, 2019).

Previous studies have suggested that the features of ideas about fatherhood (ideal father, I am a future father) are determined by gender (Vagapova, 2015; Merzlyakova, 2019), age (Borisenko & Belogai, 2007; Zakharova et al., 2019), the type of family self-determination (Merzlyakova & Bibarsova, 2018), and the structure of value-based orientations (Merzlyakova et al., 2020). In this article we consider moral orientations as a personal factor that determines the features of the image of the ideal father among students.

B. S. Bratus' distinguishes four levels in the personality structure: 1) egocentric level; 2) group-centric level; 3) prosocial or humanistic level; 4) spiritual or eschatological level (Bratus', 1993). A. B. Kupreichenko and A. E. Vorob'eva have developed diagnostic tools to determine which moral type is dominant – egocentric orientation, group-centric orientation, humanistic orientation, and world-creating orientation (Kupreichenko & Vorob'eva, 2013). The Justice – Caring questionnaire by S. V. Molchanov is designed to identify the orientation towards 'justice' or 'caring' when determining the level of development of moral judgments in accordance with the periodization of L. Kohlberg and K. Gilligan – N. Aizenberg (Molchanov, 2007). Numerous studies examined the features of moral orientation in primary school age (Karabanova, Kovaleva, Loginova, & Molchanov, 2014), differences in moral orientations among students in the field of economics, management, advertising, and psychology (Vorob'eva, 2016), the relationship of moral orientations and subjective well-being of youth of various ethnic groups (Bocharova, 2016).

*This study aims* to analyze the features of ideas about ideal fatherhood among students who differ in their moral personality orientations. We hypothesized that the features of ideas about ideal fatherhood are determined by gender and moral orientation. To verify this hypothesis, it is necessary to achieve the following objectives:

1) to determine the influence of the parameters of moral orientation on the development of ideas about ideal fatherhood by the value factor among young men and women to build a regression relationship between these characteristics;

2) to identify meaningful characteristics of ideas about ideal fatherhood depending on moral orientations of young men and women.

## Methods

To determine students' dominant moral orientations, we used the Personal Moral Self-determination questionnaire by A. E. Vorob'eva and A. B. Kupreichenko (Zhuravlev & Kupreichenko, 2007).

To identify the features of ideas about ideal fatherhood, we used the following psychological assessment instruments: (a) Osgood's semantic differential (a modified version) (Solomin, 2001), (b) the Incomplete Sentences Test (Yan'shin, 2021), and (c) the Role Expectations and Claims in Marriage questionnaire by A. N. Volkova (Volkova, 1990).

Mathematical and statistical methods were used during the analytical stage which made it possible to establish the reliability of the study results. All calculations were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 21. The analysis included descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov–Smirnov criterion for one sample, Shapiro–Wilkes criterion, Spearman rank correlation ( $r_s$ ), Pearson linear correlation ( $r$ ), and multiple regression analysis.

## Results

The sample comprised 490 students of Astrakhan universities, 126 (25.7 %) of whom were young men and 364 (74.3 %) of whom were young women.

To study the influence of the parameters of moral orientations on the idea of fatherhood by the value factor, we used multiple regression analysis which allowed us to model the dependence of the 'ideal father' variable on a number of predictors, including 'egocentric orientation', 'group-centric orientation', 'humanistic orientation', and 'world-creating orientation'. In the group of young men, the constructed regression model had a high level of significance because statistics of the F-criterion  $F = 4.661$  at the  $p = 0.002$  significance level. Table 1 shows that such variables as 'group-centric orientation' and 'world-creating orientation' make a significant contribution to the explanation of the response variance. The multiple regression model is adequate and explains more than 13 % of the total response variance. Consequently, moral orientations are one of the factors determining the development of the value of ideas about the ideal father among young men.

Variables	B	SH <sub>B</sub>	β	t	p
Constant	-0.143	0.099		-1.438	0.153
Egocentric orientation	-0.110	0.100	-0.097	-1.095	0.276
Group-centric orientation	-0.299	0.105	-0.272	-2.857	0.005

Table 1

*Multiple regression analysis of the influence of moral orientations on the idea of ideal fatherhood among young men*

<u>Variables</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SH<sub>B</sub></u>	<u>β</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Humanistic orientation	0.000	0.102	0.000	0.004	0.996
World-creating orientation	0.385	0.103	0.391	3.731	0.000

*Note: R = 0.365; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.134; F = 4.661; p = 0.002.*

Similarly, in the group of young women the constructed regression model has a high level of significance:  $F = 4.548$  at  $p = 0.001$ . The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the 'humanistic orientation' independent variable makes a significant contribution to the explanation of the variance of the 'ideal father' response. The multiple regression model is adequate and explains more than 4 % of the total response variance. Thus, moral orientations are one of the factors determining the development of the value of ideas about the ideal father among young women.

Table 2

*Multiple regression analysis of the influence of moral orientations on the idea of ideal fatherhood among young women*

<u>Variables</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SH<sub>B</sub></u>	<u>β</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Constant	0.208	0.045		4.679	0.000
Egocentric orientation	-0.078	0.047	-0.091	-1.679	0.094
Group-centric orientation	-0.019	0.049	-0.022	-0.383	0.702
Humanistic orientation	0.136	0.062	0.149	2.174	0.030
World-creating orientation	0.057	0.061	0.062	0.937	0.349

*Note: R = 0.220; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.048; F = 4.548; p = 0.001.*

The next step of the study was the analysis of the differentiation of the image of the ideal father depending on the moral orientation of young men and women. Using correlation analysis, we studied the relationship between the 'ideal father' variable and the content characteristics of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of ideas about fatherhood. Further, as a result of the ranking procedure by the value of the correlation coefficient at the level of statistical significance, a hierarchy of meaningful characteristics in the ideas about the ideal father was established from the most important to the less significant.

### ***Ideas about the ideal father among students with an egocentric personality orientation***

We found that 19 young men (15.1 %) and 31 young women (8.5 %) had an egocentric personality orientation. Figure 1 demonstrates that the content and hierarchy of qualities in the image of the ideal father of young men and women do not coincide. Young men with an egocentric personality orientation have elements of cognitive and emotional components in their ideas of the ideal father. We observed the following hierarchy of content-based characteristics: 1) personal independence ( $r_s = 0.764$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 2) positive attitude towards future children ( $r_s = 0.708$  at  $p = 0.001$ ); 3) industriousness ( $r_s = 0.702$  at  $p = 0.001$ ); 4) caring ( $r_s = 0.675$  at  $p = 0.002$ ); 5) patience ( $r_s = 0.663$  at  $p = 0.002$ ); 6) respect for others ( $r_s = 0.631$  at  $p = 0.004$ ); 7) balance ( $r_s = 0.627$  at  $p = 0.004$ ); 8) positive attitude towards family as a social institution ( $r_s = 0.559$  at  $p = 0.013$ ); 9) performance of duties ( $r_s = 0.529$  at  $p = 0.02$ ); 10) achievement ( $r_s = 0.467$  at  $p = 0.044$ ).

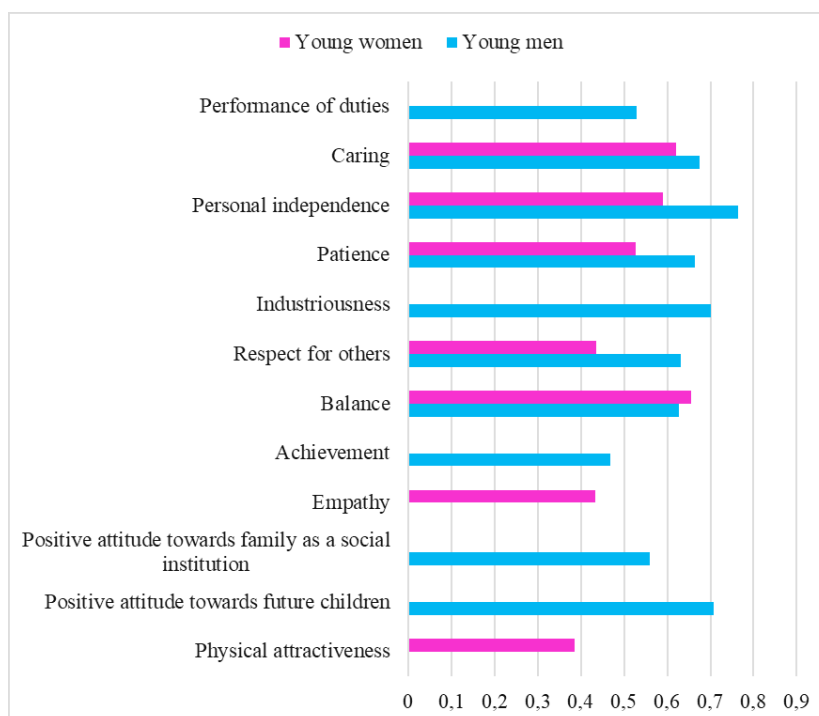


Figure 1. The image of the ideal father among students with an egocentric personality orientation, correlation coefficient

Among young women, the image of the ideal father consists of fewer content-based characteristics compared to young men; it includes elements of cognitive and behavioral components. The content-based characteristics form the following hierarchy: 1) balance ( $r_s = 0.655$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 2) caring ( $r_s = 0.62$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 3) personal independence ( $r_s = 0.589$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 4) patience ( $r_s = 0.526$  at  $p = 0.002$ ); 5) respect for others ( $r_s = 0.435$  at  $p = 0.014$ ); 6) empathy ( $r_s = 0.433$  at  $p = 0.015$ ); 7) physical attractiveness ( $r_s = 0.386$  at  $p = 0.032$ ).

When forming ideas about the ideal father, young women with an egocentric personality orientation are guided by the image of their father, as we found a significant positive correlation between these variables ( $r_s = 0.474$  at  $p = 0.007$ ).

### ***Ideas about the ideal father among students with a group-centric personality orientation***

When analyzing the results, we identified 16 young men (12.7 %) and 34 young women (9.3 %) with a group-centric personality orientation. The band diagrams (Fig. 2) clearly show that the ideas about the ideal father of young men and women of this typological group do not coincide. Among young men, the image of the ideal father consists of 5 elements of the cognitive component which have the following hierarchy: 1) personal independence ( $r = 0.815$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 2) industriousness ( $r = 0.676$  at  $p = 0.004$ ); 3) patience ( $r = 0.63$  at  $p = 0.009$ ); 4) caring ( $r = 0.529$  at  $p = 0.035$ ); 5) empathy ( $r = 0.517$  at  $p = 0.04$ ).

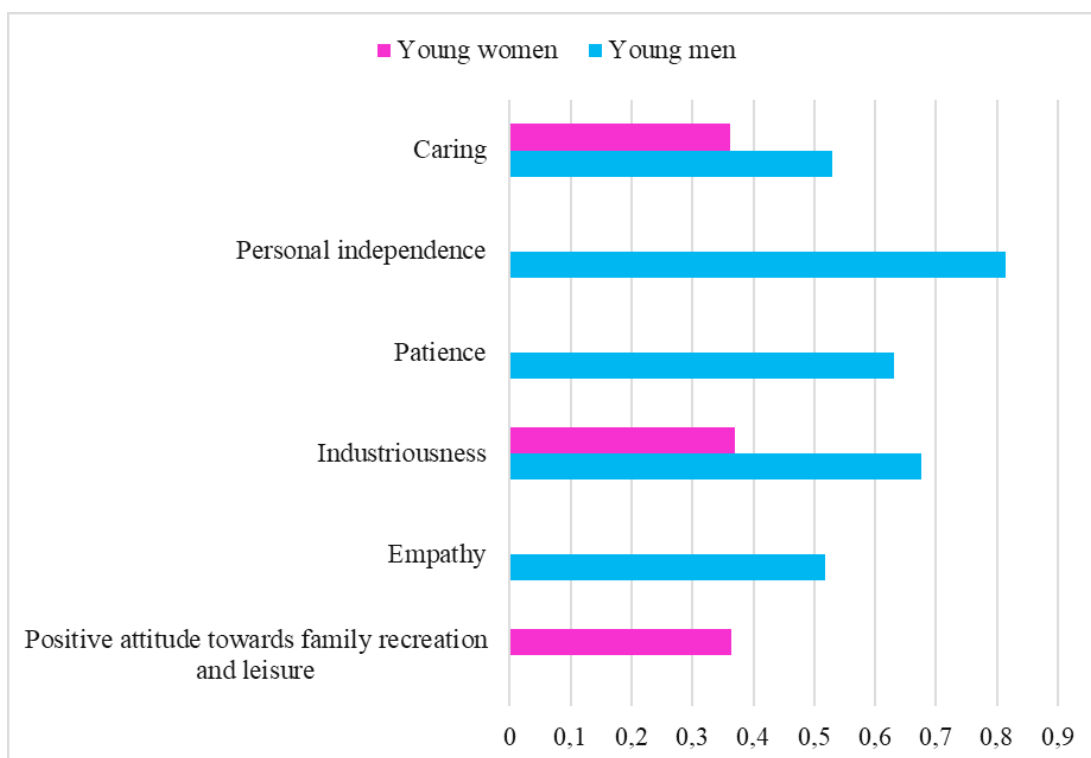


Figure 2. The image of the ideal father among students with a group-centric personality orientation, correlation coefficient

Young women's ideas about the ideal father contain elements of cognitive and emotional components. We observed the following hierarchy of content-based characteristics: 1) industriousness ( $r_s = 0.369$  at  $p = 0.032$ ); 2) positive attitude towards family recreation and leisure ( $r_s = 0.363$  at  $p = 0.035$ ); 3) caring ( $r_s = 0.362$  at  $p = 0.036$ ).

### ***Ideas about the ideal father among students with a humanistic personality orientation***

In our study 17 young women (13.5 %) and 74 young men (20.3 %) had a humanistic personality orientation. The content characteristics and their hierarchy in the image of the ideal father of young men and young women do not coincide (Fig. 3). Young men's ideas about the ideal father contain 5 elements of the cognitive component. We observed the following sequence of qualities in the image of the ideal father: 1) performance of duties ( $r = 0.699$  at  $p = 0.002$ ); 2) caring ( $r = 0.696$  at  $p = 0.002$ ); 3) achievement ( $r_s = 0.67$  at  $p = 0.003$ ); 4) industriousness ( $r = 0.649$  at  $p = 0.005$ ); 5) respect for others ( $r = 0.587$  at  $p = 0.013$ ). The positive correlation between the variables of 'my father' and 'ideal father' ( $r = 0.547$  at  $p = 0.023$ ) indicates that young men of this typological group are guided by the image of their own fathers.

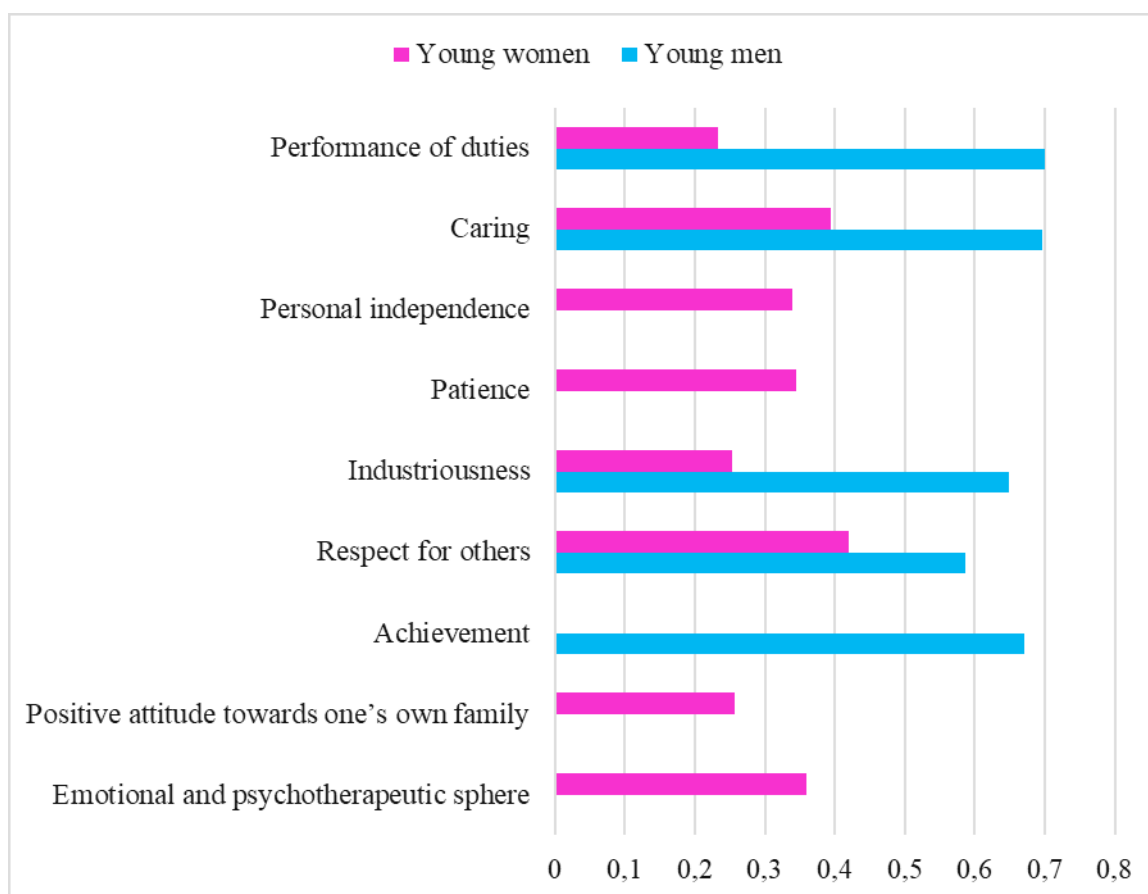


Figure 3. The image of the ideal father among students with a humanistic personality orientation, correlation coefficient



Young women's image of the ideal father contains a greater number of content-based characteristics than among young men and consists of elements of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. We revealed the following hierarchy of content characteristics: 1) respect for others ( $r_s = 0.42$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 2) caring ( $r_s = 0.395$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 3) role expectations in the emotional and psychotherapeutic sphere ( $r_s = 0.359$  at  $p = 0.002$ ); 4) patience ( $r_s = 0.345$  at  $p = 0.003$ ); 5) personal independence ( $r_s = 0.339$  at  $p = 0.003$ ); 6) positive attitude towards one's own family ( $r_s = 0.256$  at  $p = 0.028$ ); 7) industriousness ( $r_s = 0.254$  at  $p = 0.029$ ); 8) performance of duties ( $r_s = 0.233$  at  $p = 0.046$ ). The 'ideal father' variable positively correlates with the 'my father' variable ( $r_s = 0.312$  at  $p = 0.007$ ), i.e. the image of the father is a guide in the formation of ideas about ideal fatherhood among young women with a humanistic personality orientation.

### ***Ideas about the ideal father among students with a world-creating personality orientation***

We found that 53 young men (42.1 %) and 160 young women (44 %) had a world-creating personality orientation. Figure 4 shows that the content and hierarchy of characteristics in the image of the ideal father of young men and women do not coincide. Among young men, we identified 11 elements of cognitive and behavioral components in the ideas of the ideal father. The following hierarchy of content-based characteristics was observed: 1) caring ( $r_s = 0.716$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 2) personal independence ( $r_s = 0.53$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 3) balance ( $r_s = 0.522$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 4) respect for others ( $r_s = 0.499$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 5) industriousness ( $r_s = 0.48$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 6) responsibility ( $r_s = 0.46$  at  $p = 0.001$ ); 7) role claims in the parental and educational sphere ( $r_s = 0.384$  at  $p = 0.005$ ); 8) achievement ( $r_s = 0.364$  at  $p = 0.007$ ); 9) performance of duties ( $r_s = 0.357$  at  $p = 0.009$ ); 10) empathy ( $r_s = 0.338$  at  $p = 0.013$ ); 11) patience ( $r_s = 0.319$  at  $p = 0.02$ ). When forming ideas about the ideal father, young men are guided by the image of their own fathers ( $r_s = 0.47$  at  $p < 0.001$ ).

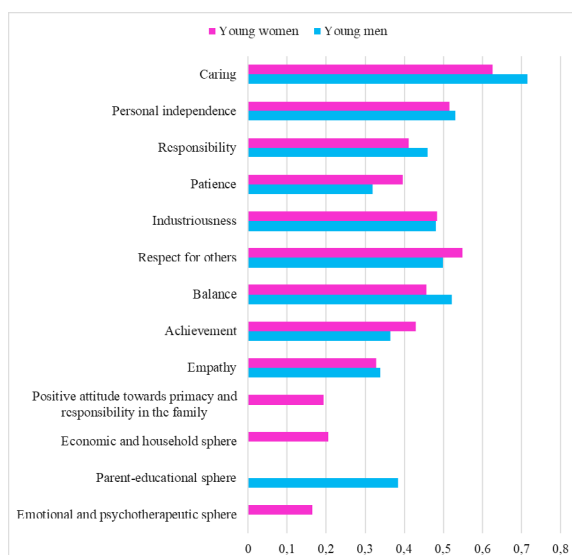


Figure 4. The image of the ideal father among students with a world-creating personality orientation, correlation coefficient

Compared to young men, the ideas about the ideal father among young women contain more characteristics and include elements of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. The meaningful characteristics of the image of the ideal father form the following hierarchical structure: 1) caring ( $r_s = 0.626$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 2) respect for others ( $r_s = 0.549$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 3) personal independence ( $r_s = 0.515$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 4) industriousness ( $r_s = 0.484$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 5) balance ( $r_s = 0.457$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 6) achievement ( $r_s = 0.43$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 7) responsibility ( $r_s = 0.411$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 8) patience ( $r_s = 0.396$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 9) performance of duties ( $r_s = 0.382$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 10) empathy ( $r_s = 0.328$  at  $p < 0.001$ ); 11) role expectations in the economic and household sphere ( $r_s = 0.206$  at  $p = 0.01$ ); 12) positive attitude towards primacy and responsibility in the family ( $r_s = 0.193$  at  $p = 0.015$ ); 13) role expectations in the emotional and psychotherapeutic sphere ( $r_s = 0.165$  at  $p = 0.039$ ). The positive correlation between the variables of 'ideal father' and 'my father' ( $r_s = 0.411$  at  $p < 0.001$ ) means that when forming ideas about the ideal father young women are guided by their own fathers.

## Discussion

The findings from this study obtained with the use of regression analysis indicate that moral personality orientations are a personal factor determining the value of ideas about the ideal father among modern students. Among young men, a significant contribution to the development of ideas about the ideal father (according to the value factor) is made by a group-centric and world-creating orientation. There is a humanistic orientation among young women. Thus, there are multidirectional trends in the formation of ideas about the ideal father among young men and women depending on moral personality orientation. In addition, the content-structural characteristics in the ideas about ideal fatherhood among young men and women with the same moral personality orientation do not coincide. This is consistent with research data that there is a gender specificity in the ideas about parenthood (Zakharova et al., 2019; Borisenko & Belogai, 2007; Merzlyakova et al., 2020).

In the conducted empirical research we managed to fix and analyze the differentiation of ideas about ideal fatherhood depending on moral personality orientations of modern youth. Caring is an invariant characteristic in the image of the ideal father. Students' ideas about the ideal father are dominated by the cognitive component; the content of the emotional and behavioral components has a mosaic character. Similar results were obtained earlier (Borisenko & Belogai, 2007; Merzlyakova et al., 2020).

In a group of young men, caring and industriousness are common personal qualities in the image of the ideal father. Among young men with an egocentric orientation, the image of the ideal father is complemented by elements of cognitive (performance of duties, personal independence, patience, respect for others, balance, and achievement) and emotional (positive attitude towards the family as a social institution and future children) components. Among young men with a group-centric orientation, the idea of the ideal father is complemented by such elements of the cognitive component as personal independence, patience, and empathy. Among young men with a humanistic orientation, the image of the ideal father contains such elements of a cognitive component as performance of duties, respect for others, and achievement. Among young men with a world-creating personality orientation, the ideas about fatherhood are characterized by the greatest fullness of the cognitive component and include all the studied qualities. The behavioral component of ideas about ideal fatherhood is actualized. The image of the ideal father

is complemented by role-playing claims in the parental and educational sphere, which speaks in favor of young men's desire to fulfill child rearing responsibilities. For young men with humanistic and world-creating personality orientations, their own fathers are a guide in the formation of ideas about ideal fatherhood.

In the ideas of the ideal father young women with egocentric, humanistic, and world-creating orientations have common elements of the cognitive component – personal independence, patience, and respect for others. Among young women with an egocentric orientation, the image of the ideal father is complemented by elements of cognitive (balance, empathy) and behavioral (physical attractiveness) components. Young women with a group-centric personality orientation have ideas about the ideal father that are characterized by such qualities as industriousness (in the cognitive component) and a positive attitude towards family recreation and leisure (in the emotional component). Among young women with a humanistic orientation the image of the ideal father additionally includes elements of cognitive (performance of duties, industriousness), emotional (positive attitude towards their own family) and behavioral (role expectations in the emotional and psychotherapeutic sphere) components. Among young women with a world-creating personality orientation the cognitive component of ideas about fatherhood includes all the parameters under consideration. There is an actualization of individual elements of emotional (positive attitude towards the primacy and responsibility in the family) and behavioral (role expectations in household and emotional-psychotherapeutic spheres) components. Young women with egocentric, humanistic, and world-creating personality orientations perceive their fathers as an example of ideal fatherhood.

We should note that in the image of the ideal father young men and women with egocentric and world-creating orientations have balance, patience, and empathy. At the same time, according to the results of an earlier study, students have a low level of emotional intelligence development (Merzlyakova & Bibarsova, 2020). The obtained research results stimulate the development of psychological and pedagogical support programs aimed at the development of emotional intelligence among students in the field of marital and family relationships.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, in the conducted empirical research we tried to establish the objective dependence of ideas about ideal fatherhood (by the 'value' factor) on moral personality orientation among young men and women. The dominant moral personality orientation determines the content and hierarchical structure of the characteristics of the image of the ideal father among modern students. Basically, the cognitive component prevails in the notions of fatherhood. The greatest distinction of the emotional and behavioral components is the idea of the ideal father among young women. Young women with humanistic and world-creating orientations have a more differentiated image of the ideal father than young men with the same moral orientations.

Therefore, the initial hypothesis that the features of ideas about ideal fatherhood are determined by respondents' moral personality orientation and gender was generally confirmed. The results of this study provide the basis for the reasoned implementation of psychological and pedagogical work on the formation of complete and adequate ideas about the father's role which determine the implementation of parental behavior through the education of students of humanistic and world-creating personality orientations. The implementation of psychological and pedagogical support of the process of self-determination of students in the field of marital and

family relations is quite possible within the framework of the implementation of the discipline of Psychology of Family Self-determination (Golubeva & Merzlyakova, 2019), when planning and organizing educational activities in institutes of higher education in compliance with the provisions of Federal Law No. 304-FL of July 31, 2020, On Amendments to the Federal Law on Education in the Russian Federation on the Education of Students. Further work in this area should examine the content and hierarchical structure of the images of the ideal father and 'I am a future father' among young men, depending on moral personality orientation, as well as specific characteristics of ideas about fatherhood at different stages of age development.

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### Author Contribution

**S. V. Merzlyakova** supervised the study, worked with sources, wrote the overview part of the article, contributed to study design, carried out statistical data processing, interpreted findings, and prepared the manuscript for publication.

**N. V. Bibarsova** selected study participants, contributed to data collection and statistical data processing, and prepared the manuscript for publication.

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