


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COMPARATIVE STUDY
September 2016 – April 2017



CHANGES CAUSED BY THE
OPTIONAL COURSE
**“HARMONIOUS FAMILY
RELATIONSHIPS”**, AT THE
LEVEL OF PERCEPTIONS,
STEREOTYPES AND
ATTITUDES



The study “Changes caused by the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”, at the level of perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes” was conducted by the Center for Investigations and Consultation “SocioPolis”, at the request of the International Center for Protection and Promotion of Women’s Rights “La Strada”, within the project “Preventing gender violence among youth through a new school course “Harmonious family relationships”, with the financial was supported by the South African Medical Research Council through the Sexual Violence Research Initiative. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the either of the SAMRC.

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INTRODUCTION

A family is an interface between the individual and the society, as it supports the integration of its members into society, and at the same time, protects them from the stressful social life factors. The family develops the autonomous skills of its members and contributes to the education and healthy growth of new generations. The recent socio-economic crises, the changes in the family system and the family relations jeopardizes the fulfillment of duties in a family and causes deep consequences to its members (biologic, psychological and social) both in present, as well as in future. In such conditions, teenagers need to be informed and guided in developing their skills of non-violent life, in creating harmonious families, based on gender equality. The adolescence period is the most indicated for developing skills in building interpersonal relations.

The need of some educational programs for young generations, oriented towards creation of harmonious and sustainable families, with no violence, where problems would be discussed, analyzed and solved in a friendly manner, led to the development of the curriculum for the optional course "Harmonious family relationships" for students in 10th – 12th grade, by the International Center for Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights "La Strada".

During the academic year 2016-2017, the optional course was proposed to students from 22 educational institutions from the Republic of Moldova.

The goal of the study was to determine the impact of the optional course "*Harmonious family relationships*" on children and the teaching staff, and to identify the possibilities to improve some aspects of the optional course. As a result, we studied the opinions of students who attended the optional course (main sample), of students who didn't attend the course (control sample) and of teaching staff from those 22 institutions, at the beginning of the academic year (August-September 2016 – Baseline research) and at the end (April-May 2017 – Endline research).

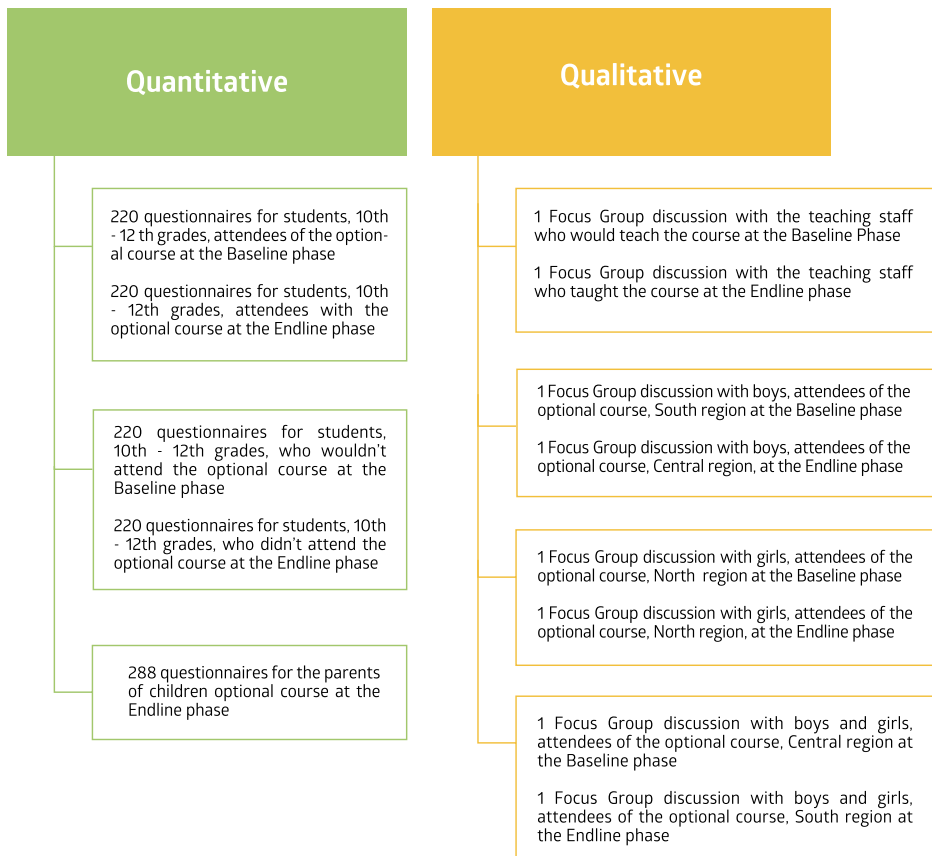
The specific objectives of both research studies targeted the evaluation of the changes produced in:

- perceptions and attitudes towards premarital relations, including abusive relations at the premarital phase;
- knowledge about the risk behaviors at the premarital phase;
- attitudes towards the values of a happy family;
- knowledge of gender stereotypes in the family;
- perceptions of and attitudes towards the role of women and men in the family and family responsibilities;
- knowledge about domestic violence and the institutions what provide assistance;
- the expectations of youth from the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”;
- the need for the optional course, according to parents’ opinion;
- the usefulness of the course “Harmonious family relationships”, in the opinion of youth and teachers.

The Study Changes caused by the optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*”, at the level of perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes was developed for the representatives of the Ministry of Education, for managers of educational institutions and teaching staff, for all the social actors involved in the development of educational policies related to family life, but also for parents and students from the Republic of Moldova.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methods at the Baseline and Endline phases



In order to achieve the goal and the objectives of the research, a complex methodological approach was applied, focused on measuring the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students towards couple relationships, at the initial and final phases of the project, which allow data triangulation. At the Baseline phase, the goal was to assess the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students and teaching staff, and at the Endline phase the aim was to measure the changes caused by the course "Harmonious family relationships", at the level of knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers, as well as the difficulties during the course implementation.

1. A validation technique combining several data collection methods for diminishing the inherent distortions for each of them. Triangulation allows for verifying the veracity and stability of results.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



The optional course *“Harmonious family relationships”* is a source of information for the teenagers from 10th – 12th grade, but also a course for meditation and assessment of knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes, a laboratory where students acquire new competences in assertive communication, in managing family conflicts, in developing sustainable relationships and harmonious future families.

Generally, more changes in knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes regarding risk behaviors at the premarital phase, the role of women and men in the family, family responsibilities, domestic violence and the institutions that provide assistance were identified among the students who attended the optional course *“Harmonious family relationships”*, rather than among the students who didn't attend this course.

48,6% of students attending the course mentioned that it is very useful, 39,1% said it is useful, only 11,4% stated it is not that useful, and 0,9% - absolutely not useful. The top of the most useful topics discussed during the course (according to students' opinion) includes: the violence, including manipulation at the premarital stage and rape – 40,7%, the couple, the family: legal aspects – 40,2%, the subtleties of falling in love, and of love – 35,5%, the dynamics of the couple relationship – 22,6%.

The need for studying the optional course *“Harmonious family relationships”* was mentioned by 88,2% of parents who participated in the research, compared to 6,9% of those who said they don't know and 4,9% of parents who stated that this course should not be taught in school, because a child can also learn these things at home. It was pointed out that the course should be taught by competent and trained persons, and parents' experience is limited.

According to the opinion of the majority of students and teaching staff who taught the lessons, the optional course *“Harmonious family relationships”* should become mandatory for high school students, because of the current challenges in the Republic of Moldova: high

number of divorces, absence of one/both parents due to migration, lack of positive family models in many modern families etc.

A special role in the student's learning process has the teacher, as a source of knowledge, as a model of values, as an implementer of interactive methods, as availability of communication and interaction. Students mentioned that the course teacher must be "*understanding*", "*calm*", "*balanced*", "*to know the psychology of children*", "*to respect gender equality*", "*to do his/her job with passion*", "*a bit severe*"; an open person who would get along with all the students in class. Other teacher's mandatory features mentioned by students are: accepting diversity of opinions, creating a learning-friendly environment, using different interactive teaching methods, finding the right arguments to explain concrete situations etc.

KEY FINDINGS

Need for and usefulness of the optional course

- Students stated that the optional course is “useful”, “a lesson of life for family” with multiple effects in future – “it teaches us how to behave in our family, how to have a harmonious family”, “how to be equal in rights”, “how to get over aggressive relationships... how to stop such a relationship”. The teaching staff mentioned that the optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*” is “welcomed”, “useful”, “a spelling book of family life”, “a guide”, because it brings into discussion problems that families in modern society are facing.
- The teaching staff mentioned that they were impressed by the students’ interest and activism during classes, as well as by the results of the organized activities. The students were very creative and clever, presented statistical data, various information, drawings, pictures and symbols etc., in an original way. An important role in the course implementation was assigned to the didactic strategies and methods used, particularly the case study, the individual work, the group project, the games: “*The Traffic Light*”, “*The Gallery Tower*”, “*The Blind Hand*”, “*The Star Explosion*”, that unleashes students and actively involves them.
- The main challenges faced by the teaching staff while teaching the course include: insufficient time, lack of informational support for students (manuals), insufficient audio-visual materials, too many individual tasks in the Student’s Notebook, difficulties in understanding specific topics, the evaluation process.
- Some teachers emphasized the need for a tighter cooperation with the parents of students who attend the optional course. This could be achieved by inviting parents to school from the beginning of the school year, by watching the movie “*Colors*” together with students and by explaining the importance of the course for students’ future, by engaging parents into discussions on specific topics.

Changes in knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes related to premarital relationships

- The optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*” favored some changes in students’ perception of and attitude towards premarital relationships. The number of students who disagree that a girl who lives with a boy before marriage is frivolous increased (+21,8 p.p. for those who attended the course, compared to +14,1 p.p. for those who didn’t attend), as well as the number of those who disagree that if a boy has sex with a girl before marriage, he is not responsible for her (+20,0 p.p. for the students who attended the optional course, compared to -5,0 p.p. for those who didn’t). And last but not least, the number of students who disagree that if there is a big sexual attraction, there is also big love also increased (+17,3 p.p. for the students who attended the course, compared to +6,4 p.p. for those who didn’t). As noted by teachers, the analysis of changes related to the aspects above also reflects particular progress (see Table 1).

Table 1. Attitudes towards premarital relationships, students, %

Students disagree with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.) ⁶	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
A girl who lives with a boy before marriage has an indecent behavior.	47,3	69,1	+21,8	52,3	66,4	+14,1
If a boy has sex with a girl, he is not responsible for her in any way.	53,6	73,6	+20,0	63,6	58,6	-5,0
A girl can prove her partner that she loves him only through intimate relations.	87,7	96,4	+8,7	91,4	94,1	+2,7
If you don't have intimate relations with your partner, you could lose him/her.	70	72,3	+2,3	62,3	63,2	+0,9
If there is strong sexual attraction, there is also big love.	53,2	70,5	+17,3	55,9	62,3	+6,4

2. The progress shows the changes (in knowledge, perceptions, stereotypes, attitudes) in percental points (p.p.), that occurred among students, the sample being divided in students who attended the optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*” (main sample) and those who didn’t attend the course (control sample), in the period between the Baseline and Endline studies. During the research, while analyzing the progress, we will consider more the disagreement of students towards specific perceptions, stereotypes or attitudes and less the total or partial agreement towards correct attitudes or perceptions.

- Before having the course taught, a part of teenagers paid increased attention to the physical appearance when choosing their partners, but the Endline data reveal that they became more informed about the aspects they should learn about the partner. They understood that they should analyze things as a whole. Currently, they are more concerned not only about the physical appearance of the person, but also about the moral features.
- The Baseline data indicated that the majority of teenagers do not perceive and do not understand the abusive relations at the premarital phase. Only 1/3 of teenagers could identify them correctly. The Endline research reveals that some knowledge in this area was improved after attending the course. Over 50% of students could correctly name specific signs of manipulation and abuse. Also, some changes in the knowledge of the teaching staff about the signs of manipulation and abuse at the initial phase of a relationship were identified.
- The knowledge of teenagers about the risk behaviors improved. The majority of teenagers understood the importance of getting informed, assuming responsibilities and controlling the behavior, to prevent unplanned pregnancies, abuse and manipulation at the premarital phase. Thus, the share of those who expressed their disagreement with the fact that protection from pregnancy is the responsibility of women increased from 51,4% to 69,5% (+18,1 p.p.). Still, there are gender differences on this subject. The number of girls who disagree is higher than the number of boys – 72,7% and 62,9% accordingly.
- During the optional course, the teenagers learned the ways to say “no” to a partner who insists on sexual relations that were taught during the course: (i) assertive communication to say you are not ready yet, (ii) explaining that you are not ready for a serious relationship and you cannot make this step, (iii) informing adults in case the partner insists.
- The Endline research reveals positive tendencies in hanging perceptions and some stereotypes towards rape: the number of students who attended the course and disagree that girls and women from financially secured families do not become victims of rape increased by 23,7 p.p., compared to an increase by only 1,8 p.p. among students who didn't attend the course, also, there is an increase in the number of those who disagree that a man from a financially secured family cannot be a rapist (+ 21,8 p.p., compared to +6,8 p.p.). Changes in the opinions of students who attended the optional course

were also related to their disagreement with the statement that if a girl or a woman is improperly dressed, she is guilty because she provoked the rape – from 35,5% to 46,8% (+11,3%), and also to their disagreement with the fact that if a girl or a woman didn't shout and didn't show resistance during a forced sexual intercourse, it is not considered rape - from 23,2% to 35,5% (+12,3 p.p.). Positive changes in the perception of rape were also identified among the teaching staff who implemented the optional course. Nevertheless, the Endline research data show that changing stereotypes on this subject is a difficult process, and as long as teachers do not change their positions, we cannot expect big progress from students. (see Table 2).

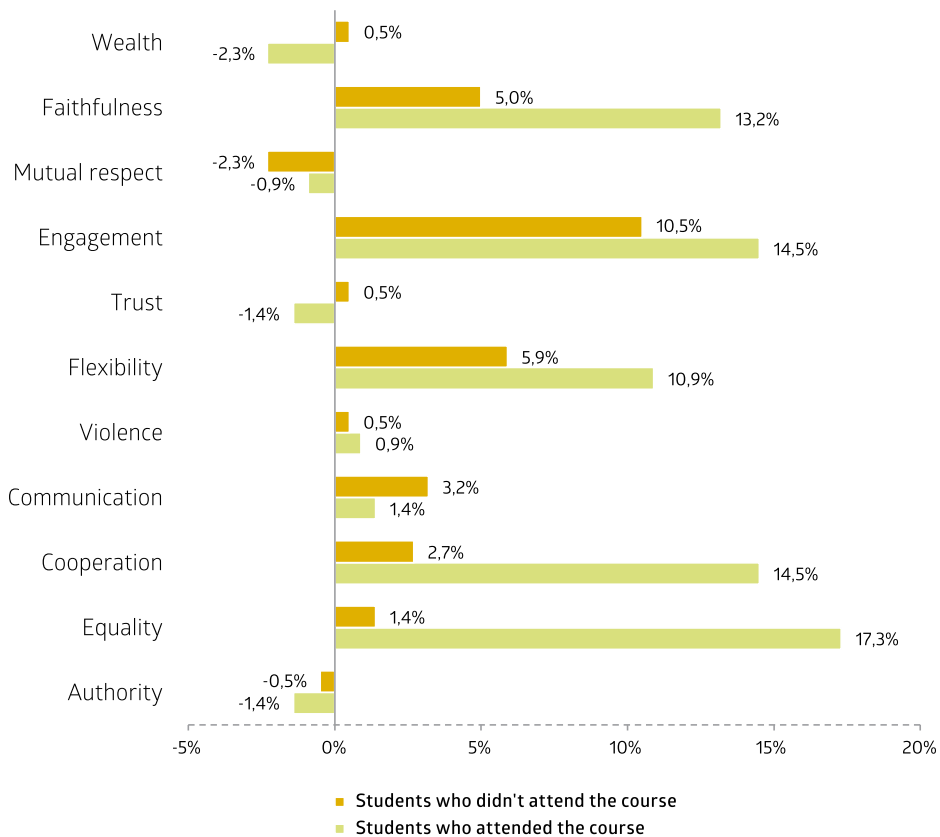
Table 2. Perceptions of and attitudes towards rape, students, %

Students disagree with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
Girls / women from financially secured families do not become victims of rape.	53,6	77,3	+23,7	66,8	68,6	+1,8
A man from a financially secured family cannot be a rapist.	55,9	77,7	+21,8	60,9	67,7	+6,8
If a girl / a woman is raped, it is also her fault.	58,2	58,2	0	62,3	53,2	-9,1
If a girl / woman is improperly dressed (short skirt, high heels, make-up etc.) she is guilty in the case of rape, because she provoked the rapist with her appearance.	35,5	46,8	+11,3	38,6	38,6	0
It is not considered rape if the girl/ woman didn't shout or didn't show resistance during a forced sexual intercourse.	23,2	35,5	+12,3	29,5	28,2	-1,3

Changes in knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes related to harmonious families

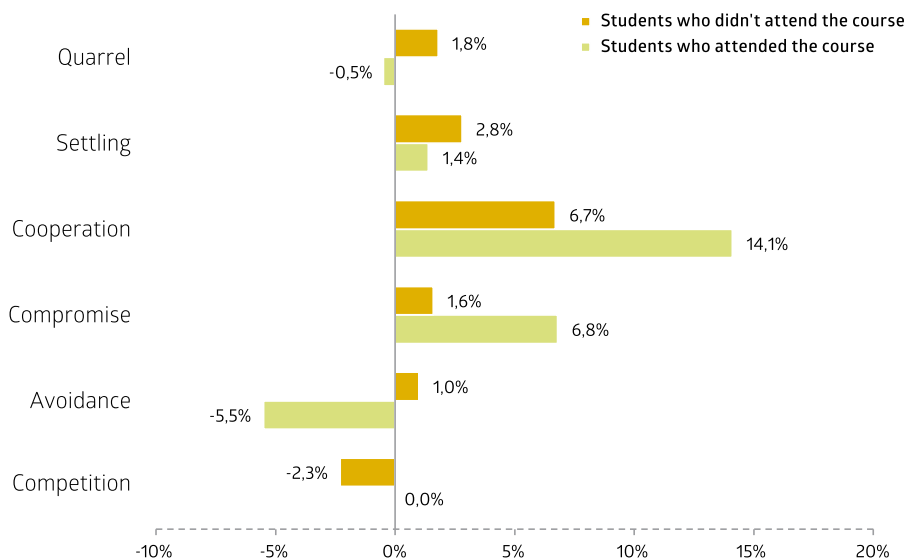
- The research studies made show slight improvements in the views of students who attended the optional course, related to harmonious relations in the family and a happy family, compared to those who didn't attend the course. In the main sample, the share of students who disagree that the perfect partner must comply with all expectations increased from 25,5% to 41,4% (+15,9 p.p.) (and only +4,1, p.p. among the students who didn't attend the optional course).
- There are difficulties in changing the stereotypes about happy families among students, but also among the teaching staff. Thus, a great part of them support the idea that a family is happy only if parents have children, or that a family is happy only if it is financially secured etc.
- In the opinion of teenagers before and after attending the course there are 7 most important family values – trust, mutual respect, communication, equality, faithfulness, cooperation, engagement. Still, we noticed that the importance of specific values increased. For example: equality (+17,3%), engagement (+14,6%), cooperation (+14,5%), faithfulness (+13,2%), flexibility (+10,9%) (see Chart 1). The analysis of opinions by gender shows that there are still differences between the values of girls and of boys. The boys who attended the optional course appreciate more the cooperation (71,4%), wealth (18,6%), authority (11,4%). While the girls, emphasize such values as: trust (97,3%), mutual respect (95,3%), communication (92,7%), equality (90,7%), engagement (40%), flexibility (26%).

Chart 1. The progress of answers to the question “Which values should a family have in order to be happy?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %



- Positive tendencies are also observed regarding the strategies for managing family conflicts. There is an increase in the share of students who understand that the family quarrels should be solved through cooperation strategies (+14,0 p. p.) and compromise (+6,8 p.p.) (see Chart 2). At the Baseline phase, approximately one in three boys mentioned that the best strategy for solving family conflicts is avoiding them. The number of boys who didn't know any strategy for managing family conflicts was also quite high – 7,7%, compared to 1,7% among girls. The Endline research indicates an increase by 29,4 p. p. of boys who believe that family quarrels should be solved through cooperation, but also a decrease by 6,3 p. p. of those who do not know any strategy for approaching family conflicts.

Chart 2. The progress of answers to the question “Which strategies should be used to manage family conflicts?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn't attend the optional course, comparative data, %



- The Baseline identified the presence of stereotypes related to gender equality in the family and in the society, both among students and teaching staff. To change the stereotypes, while teaching the optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*” the

teaching staff used different interactive methods: role plays, case studies, debates, social theater. Through these different behaviors were presented, and students had the chance to think about the advantages and disadvantages of each.

- The optional course favored the decrease of the stereotype that the man is the one to financially secure the family and his wife is the only one responsible for raising and educating children. Thus, the number of students who disagree with this statement increased from 32,7% to 58,2% (+25,5 p.p.) among those who attended the course, compared to the increase from 31,8% to 45,5% (+13,7 p.p.) among those who did not attend the optional course. We can observe that from the gender perspective, there are significant differences in opinions on this subject. The indicator of girls who disagree with this statement is 65,3%, compared to 42,9% of boys.

Table 3. Perceptions of harmonious family relationships and of a happy family, students, %

Students disagree with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
If a man earns sufficient money, his wife should stay home and take care of the house and children.	32,7	58,2	+25,5	31,8	45,5	+13,7
In a family, the husband should be older than his wife.	51,8	58,6	+6,8	45	53,6	+8,6
In a family, the wife should be shorter than her husband.	55	65,5	+10,5	50	53,2	+3,2
A man who apologizes to his woman for his actions is a weak man.	93,2	96,4	+3,2	93,2	91,4	-1,8
A man or a woman who has already been married and then divorced does not deserve to be trusted.	71,8	81,8	+10,0	75	78,6	+3,6

- At the Endline phase, over 73% of girls totally or partially agreed that if the husband wants to go out to meet his friends alone, he should inform his partner, but boys agreed less with this statement (65%). Comparatively, 77% of girls and 82% of boys believe (totally or partially agree) that if the wife goes out alone to meet her friends, she should inform her partner. Also, 13 teachers agreed (totally or partially) that the husband must always ask for permission if he wants to go alone out to meet his friends or vice versa.
- The Baseline research indicated the presence of stereotypes among teenagers, related to the image and roles of women and men in the household. Thus, a good housewife and wife must know how to cook (85,2%), to like cleaning (70,2%), to express her own opinion (61,6%), always listen to the opinion of her husband (49,8%), to be able to forgive her husband if he upsets her, but apologizes (40,2%), to be beautiful (25,5%), and to have higher education degree (22,5%). The Endline research reveals some changes in the perceptions of students related to the roles of women and men in the family. The changes are more significant among students who attended the optional course, rather than among those who didn't attend this course. Thus, among the first sample, there is an increase in the share of students who believe that it is important for a „good housewife“ to have her own opinion (+17,7 p.p.), and a decrease in the number of those who appreciated beauty (-12,3 p.p.), „forgiving“ husband when he offends his wife (-7,7 p.p.), cleaning responsibilities (-4,5 p.p.), obeying husband (-4,1, p.p.) etc. (see Chart 3).
- Stereotypes related to the role of the man in the family were also identified. The Baseline research reveals that in the opinion of students, a good householder and husband must have a well-paid job (72,3%), have his own opinion (63,6%), always listen to his wife's opinion (57,0%), be able to forgive his wife if she shouts at him, but then apologizes (53,9%), know how to cook (44,3%), like cleaning the house (30,0%), have a higher education degree (26,8%), be strong or have a shaped muscled body (25,2%), be handsome (18,6%). The Endline research shows significant changes in the perceptions of the man's role in the family: on one side, there is an increase in the share of students who appreciate the householder's own opinion (+20,4 p.p.), and involving in house cleaning (+15,2%), on the other side, decreased the importance of handsomeness (-11,2 p.p.), shaped muscles, obeying the wife (-8,0 p.p.), and forgiving the wife when she shouts (-7,1 p.p.) (see Chart 4).

Chart 3. The progress of answers to the question “In which situations we can say that a woman will be “a good housewife” and “a good wife?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %

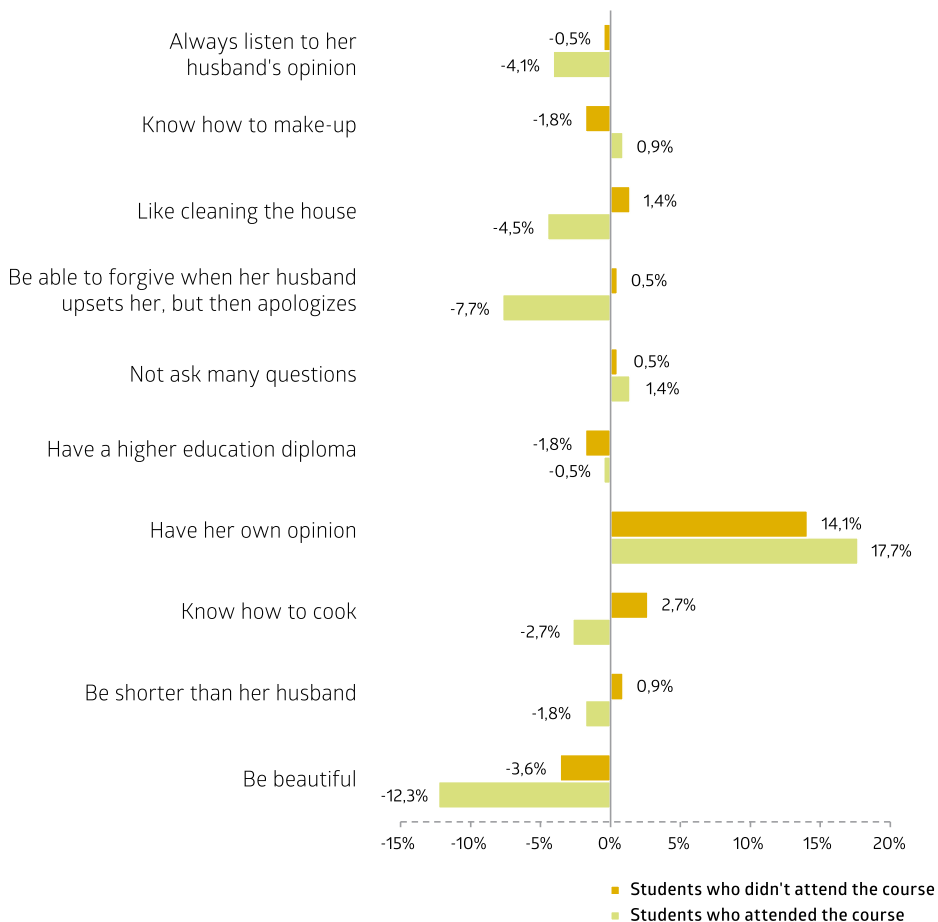
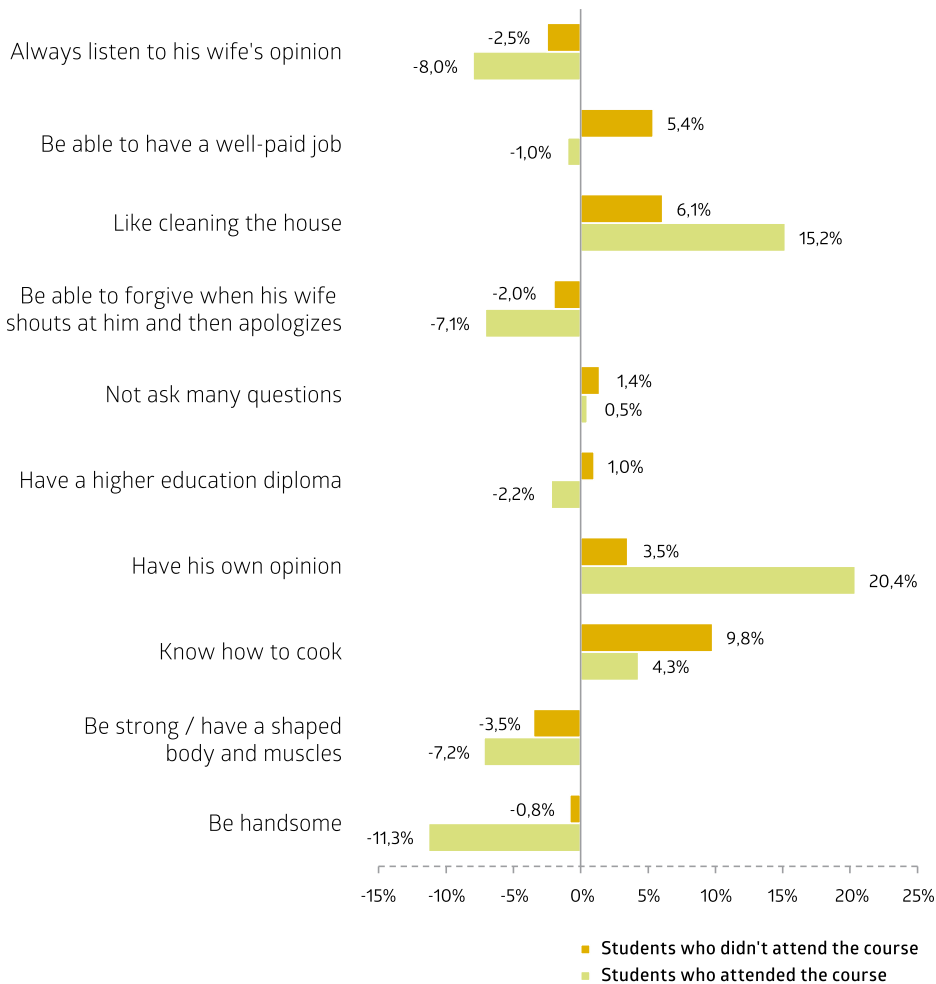


Chart 4. The progress of answers to the question “In which situations we can say that a man will be “a good householder” and “a good husband”?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %



- The vision of teenagers related to family responsibilities is influenced by the education provided in the original family. Still, the research data indicate that the course *“Harmonious family relationships”* caused significant changes in the attitudes of over 20% of teenagers towards family responsibilities: the disagreement with the fact that the most important thing for a woman is taking care of the house and cook increased by 20,5 p.p. (+14,1 p.p. among those who didn’t attend the course), by 24,5 p. p. increased the disagreement with the fact that changing diapers, bathing and feeding children is the responsibility of women (+10,5 p. p. comparatively), by 25,9 p. p. increased the disagreement with the fact that men should have the last word when taking decisions in the family (+4,1 p. p. comparatively), and by 20,4 p. p. increased the disagreement with the fact that the man should have the last word when spending the family money (+2,7 p. p. comparatively) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Attitudes towards family responsibilities, students, %

Students disagree with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
The most important thing for a woman is to take care of the house and to cook.	35,0	55,5	+20,5	32,3	46,4	+14,1
Changing diapers, bathing and feeding children is the responsibility of mother.	32,3	56,8	+24,5	34,5	45,0	+10,5
The man must have the last word when taking decisions in the family.	36,8	62,7	+25,9	36,4	40,5	+4,1
The man must have the last word when spending money.	58,2	78,6	+20,4	58,2	60,9	+2,7

Changes in knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes related to domestic violence

- The Endline research indicates slight improvements in informing students about aggressiveness and violence. There is an increase by 13,2 p.p. in the share of students who disagree that the aggressor can be easily identified at the first date, compared to only 2,3 p.p. among students who didn’t attend the course. The share of stu-

dents from the main sample who disagree that a woman should tolerate violence for keeping her family together also increased by 10,4 p.p., compared to only 5,9 p.p. in the control sample (see Table 5). Gender differences on this subject are lower: 88% of girls disagree, compared to only 82,1% of boys who attended the course.

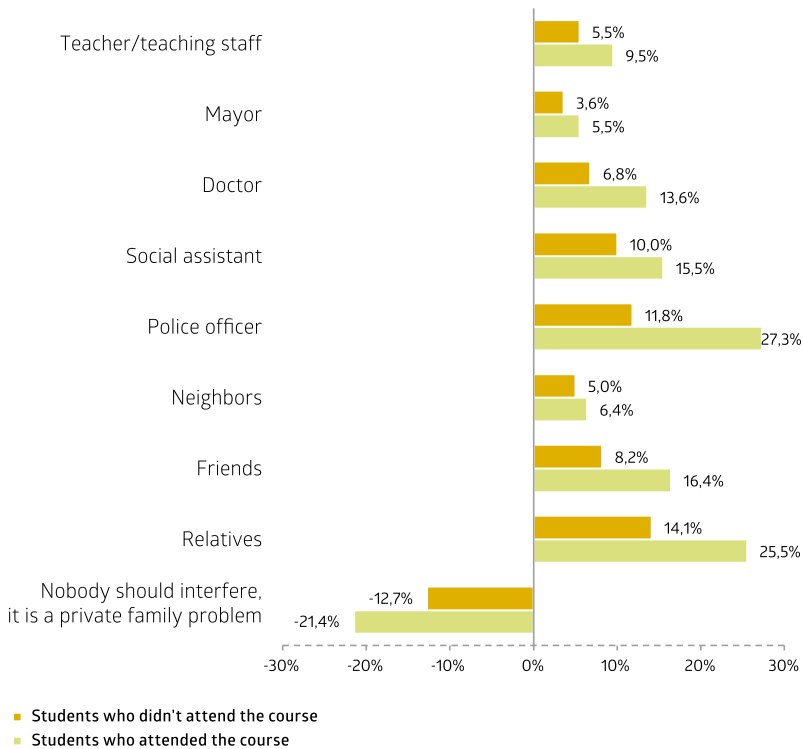
Table 5. Perception of aggressive behavior and violence, students, %

Students disagree with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
It is easy to identify an aggressor during the first date.	32,3	45,5	+13,2	29,5	31,8	+2,3
A woman should tolerate violence and abuse, to keep her family together.	77,3	87,7	+10,4	74,1	80	+5,9

- Students' knowledge of forms of domestic violence was insufficient at the Baseline phase. Only 25% of students knew about the economic violence, 28% – about spiritual violence, 43% – about sexual violence, 79% – about psychological violence and 85% - about physical violence. During the Endline research, an increase of knowledge of the forms of violence was identified: sexual violence by 30,9 p.p., economic violence by 18,6 p.p., spiritual violence by 15,0 p.p., and psychological and physical violence by 12,3 p.p. both. The comparative analysis of these changes indicates that the attendees of the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” almost doubled their knowledge of the forms of violence, compared to the students who didn't attend this course.
- The Baseline research showed that students had difficulties in perceiving situations of domestic violence. Most of them associated domestic violence with beating or hitting a family member, and rarely with use of ugly words, shouting etc. The optional course allowed for a better understanding of situations of domestic violence, especially when children beat/hit their parents (+22,3 p.p.), when wife beats/hits her husband (+15,9 p.p.), when husband shouts at his wife or vice versa (+15,5 p.p.), when a family member is afraid of another family member (+13,2 p.p.), when husband and wife name each other with bad words (+13,2, p.p.), when parents name their children with bad words (+11,8 p.p.), when parents shout at children (+10,0 p.p.).

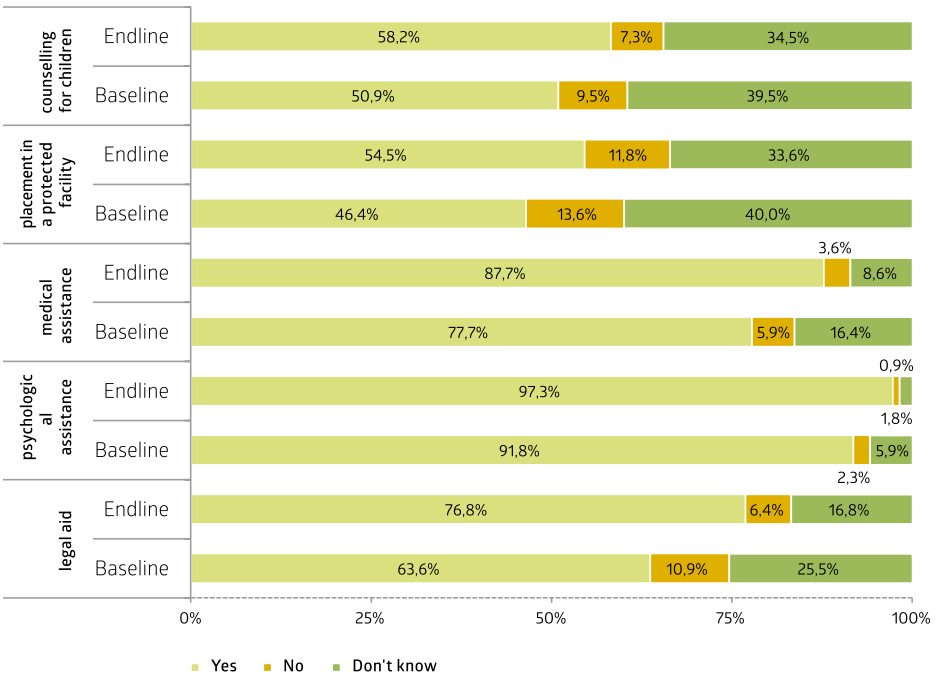
- Among the attendees of the optional course, the number of those who believe that nobody should interfere in cases of domestic violence, since this is an internal family issue, decreased from 50,9% to 29,5%. At the same time, we can see that there is an increase in the number of students who know that in cases of violence the police officer should interfere (from 26,6% to 53,6%), relatives (from 23,6% to 49,1%), social worker (from 24,1% to 39,5%), friends (from 10,9% to 27,3%), doctor (from 6,4% to 20,0%), teaching staff (from 5,9% to 15,5%) (see Chart 5). The research data reveal that the level of information on this subject also increased among the students who didn't attend this course, but in a lower proportion than among the attendees of the course *"Harmonious family relationships"*. This can be explained by teaching the violence topic during the course of Civic Education.

Chart 5. The progress of answers to the question "Who should interfere in situations of domestic violence?" between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn't attend the optional course, comparative data, %



- The level of knowledge of the protection measures for victims of domestic violence increased in the main sample in a bigger proportion, rather than in the control sample. Thus, the knowledge about the availability of legal aid increased from 63,6% to 76,8%, of psychological assistance from 91,8% to 97,3%, of medical assistance from 77,7% to 87,7%, of hosting or placement from 46,6% to 54,5%, and of counselling for children from 50,9% to 58,2% in the main sample. Also, an increase was observed in the level of information of teaching staff about the protection measures that victims of violence have the right to. We can say that the great majority of teaching staff are aware of the protection measures for victims of domestic violence, but, there is still need for improvements in this area (see Chart 6).

Chart 6. Knowledge of protection measures that victims of domestic violence have the right to, students who attended the course, %



- The knowledge of the institutions where victims of domestic violence could address was low during the Baseline phase. 52,3% of students from the main sample and 54,1% from the control sample said they do not know any institution to which they could address in cases of violence. During the Endline phase, the number of those who didn't know any institution where they could address for help decreased by 25 p.p. in the main sample, and by 19,6 p.p. in the control sample. Improvement of knowledge was also possible in the control sample due to the course of Civic Education, but in a lower proportion. After the students analyzed the mentioned institutions, it was clear that the information they learned during the optional course "*Harmonious family relationships*" and during the mandatory course of Civic Education was different. Thus, the number of students who knew the number of the Trust Line **08008 8008** increased by 33,6 p.p. among those who attended the optional course, compared to only 5,5 p.p. in the control sample.

Other changes caused by the course "Harmonious family relationships"

- Teachers stated that due to this optional course, students had the chance to get to know their colleagues and themselves better, to increase their self-respect, became more united, more tolerant, more communicative, more balanced emotionally etc.
- Some knowledge gained by students was put in practice in their groups of friends and in their family: *"I explained to my mother that there are several solutions in each situation and that a teenager should have the chance to choose"; "I am trying to find a compromise, to observe and to respect the opinion of my partner"*, and also caused changes in the relationships of students with their parents *"we got close with my mother while discussing the course subjects"*.
- Last but not least, we can observe that besides the positive changes in knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes among the teaching staff, the optional course "*Harmonious family relationships*" also caused practical changes in their families: solving conflict situations, changing their status from concubinage into marriage etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study give floor to the following recommendations:

For the Ministry of Education:

- The optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*” to become mandatory, since it is a requirement of time, caused by current challenges that families are facing, changes in the family relations, migration of parents, lack of some family models etc. We must understand that family is the most important value of a society, and school must prepare the student to face life;
- Allow doubling the number of hours from 35 to 70 and teaching the course during two years;
- Organize public discussions, in order to identify the grades in which it would be better to teach the course – in the 9th, 10th or in the 11th, 12th grade. In the opinion of some students, the course should be implemented starting with the 9th grade, because “the majority of teenagers make mistakes before they get to high school. In high school, it is already too late”.

For the International Center “La Strada”:

- Promote the course at the national level, through a video showing moments from actual classes and the conclusions of students and teachers;
- Allow the teachers who taught the course to revise the structure of the curriculum, taking into account the students’ preferences;
- Need to discuss and define the peculiarities of teaching the subject “*Domestic violence*” during the optional course “*Harmonious family relationships*”, compared to the topics that are taught on this subjects during the course of Civic Education;

- Develop a “*Harmonious family relationships*” manual for students;
- Prepare some audiovisual materials on specific topics, that would support the teachers in teaching the course and students in assimilating new knowledge and in developing new skills;
- Propose several types of evaluation which could be applied by teachers;
- Develop some case studies related to the topics in the curriculum, which would be debated during classes;
- Train the teachers who will teach the course in other educational institutions;
- Support the creation of a teachers’ network connecting facilitators of the course “*Harmonious family relationships*”.

For educational institutions’ management:

- Promote the course within different school and community events through videos showing the actual course and the conclusions of students and teachers;
- The teachers of this course should be well trained in the subject, and be open to get along with all the students in the class.

For the teaching staff:

- Promote the course among students and parents;
- Involve parents in some course lessons: “*Family roles and duties*”, “*Traditional family and modern family*”, “*What is a happy family?*”, “*Values and mentalities related to family*”;
- Invite particular specialists to lessons (once or twice per year): a doctor, an attorney or a legal specialist, a police officer etc.;
- Value and use the experience of teachers who implemented the course in other educational institutions.

It is distributed free of charge.